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## Social programmes and job promotion for the BRICS youth

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# **SOCIAL PROGRAMMES AND JOB PROMOTION FOR THE BRICS YOUTH**

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Ashleigh Kate Slingsby**

The International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, UNDP

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# **SOCIAL PROGRAMMES AND JOB PROMOTION**

## **FOR THE BRICS YOUTH\***

Pedro Lara de Arruda and Ashleigh Kate Slingsby\*\*

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

'Youth' as a concept engenders a multiplicity of definitions. This multiplicity and the context-specific nature of the term are recognised internationally. Therefore, in this paper we begin by exploring the diverse definitions of youth among prominent international organisations and the BRICS nations (Brazil, Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa). The paper then provides insight into the re-politicisation of the youth category in light of the 2008 financial crisis and the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, which have prompted an increasing focus on the creation of decent and productive employment for youth.<sup>1</sup>

In light of such initiatives, the paper goes on to explore the BRICS nations' youth agendas as well as their respective labour market concerns considering that the current central aim of the BRICS is to capitalise on the demographic dividend of a sizeable youth population. With this purpose, we look at some secondary data based on UNDESA (Population Division) to qualify the age structure and demographic dividends of each specific BRICS country. We also analyse some World Bank data related to employment and unemployment, as well as to other aspects of the BRICS societies, to assess whether their markets alone have been successful in balancing the demand and supply of both professional qualifications and labour force of the youth.

More specifically, we provide some understanding on the extent to which the 2008 financial crisis might have increased the mismatch between the demand and supply of professional qualifications and labour force in these countries. At the same time, we contextualise the effects of one such possible adverse effect on both the well-being of the present generation and the long-term development prospects of the BRICS vis-à-vis the singular moment of their demographic transition.

After qualifying the causes and consequences of the expected adverse effects of labour-market imbalances on the inclusive production of the youth, the text moves on to investigate the following questions: Can (or could) available social assistance programmes solve or mitigate eventual labour-market distortions disfavoured the productive inclusion of the youth? Could these initiatives facilitate a smooth demographic transition that favours inclusive growth among the BRICS countries? Are such initiatives actually designed or able at all to accommodate the particular demands of the youth of the BRICS countries?

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\*\* The International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, UNDP.

## 2 DEFINITIONS OF YOUTH

Intrinsically related to what has been called the rise of the South is the phenomenon of the re-politicisation of youth. Multifaceted and subject to various interpretations, the challenges and possibilities of this phenomenon are revealed in the multiplicity of definitions that exist for the concept of youth. Although there are some widespread references that identify youth in terms of age groups, no government or UN body assumes asserting these definitions without considering context-specific characteristics that frame youth, nor without considering the global challenges faced by them, such as the transition from childhood to adulthood with the subsequent challenge of entering the labour market for the first time and materialising the aspirations and values that accompany the new generation.

In the context of the International Youth Year (1985), the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) defined what is conventionally called the ‘universal concept’ of youth—taxonomically defined by the group of people aged 15 to 24 years old.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, the UNGA reaffirmed this age cut-off in the context of the World Programme of Action for Youth, released in 2000.<sup>3</sup> Within this age group, young people up to 18 years old belong to the sub-group of adolescents, and the others belong to the group of young adults. As defined by UNICEF, the age group of children includes newborn babies to persons 15 years old.<sup>4</sup>

The rights of children extend to people up to 18 years old. This is the cut-off age that defines children under the Convention of the Rights of the Child.<sup>5</sup> For practical purposes, official statistics on youth in the UN System cover the age group 15–25 years of age, although there is no restriction on additional data considering other age groups,<sup>6</sup> and it is common to come across divergent age groups. Thus, even UN agencies and programmes are not restricted to the ‘universal concept’ of youth—often supplying complementary data that are obtained when considering other age groups. Although UNFPA and UNGA regularly follow the ‘universal concept’, in many cases UNESCO (1982), for example, considers the age group 14 to 34 years old, while the WHO expands this age group up to the age of 44 years (1992).<sup>7</sup>

These variations often arise in the context of regional or national reports, to accommodate official definitions of youth in force in the country or region concerned. In the case of Africa, for example, the African Youth Charter defines youth as the age bracket between 15 and 35 years old, which is, therefore, the official definition of the term used by South Africa<sup>8</sup> in its documents ranging from the early National Youth Commission Act (1996)<sup>9</sup> to the more recent National Youth Policy (2009–2014).<sup>10</sup>

The same occurs in the case of agencies and programmes producing reports on India, where the official definition of youth is unorthodox and quite diffuse. The first National Youth Policy (2003) defined the age bracket from 13 to 35 years of age, whereas the most recent one (2013) suggests the definition should be narrowed down to 15 to 29 years of age.<sup>11</sup> The Constitution approved by the Working Group on Adolescents and Youth Development, set to influence the 12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan (FYP), suggested that the cut-off age should be 30 years.<sup>12</sup> The final approved version of the 12<sup>th</sup> FYP document (2012–2017), however, used the age bracket 10 to 35 years old to estimate current data on Indian youth. Even so, the same document also suggested narrowing down the age bracket to that of 15 to 30 years old.<sup>13</sup>

In the case of the People’s Republic of China, its National Bureau of Statistics defines youth as the age bracket of 15 to 30 years of age, whereas its League Prospectus accommodates those between 14 and 28 years old, and China’s Youth Federation includes a wider age group ranging from 18 to 40 years of age.<sup>14</sup> Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan define youth as between 10 and 24 years of age.<sup>15</sup>

In Brazil, until recently there was uncertainty regarding the official age bracket defining youth, which oscillated between the UN's universal concept and the seven years following the country's age of criminal responsibility (18 to 25 years old). Since 2004 the National Youth Plan (revised every 10 years) defined this group based on the age bracket 15 to 29 years old.<sup>16</sup> In 2010 there was a Constitutional Amendment (No. 65)<sup>17</sup> which led to the creation of a Youth Statute (created in 2013),<sup>18</sup> which incorporated the age definition of the National Youth Plan of 2004. The Strategy for State Youth Policy in the Russian Federation defines the youth cohort as ranging from 14 to 30 years old.<sup>19</sup>

### **3 THE RE-POLITICISATION OF YOUTH IN LIGHT OF THE POST-2015 AGENDA**

The most evident dimension of the re-politicisation of youth reveals itself in the many protests that emerged in the aftermath of what was originally known as the Arab Spring. Although this phenomenon is less reported by the press, it is still relevant to the current political momentum of the youth—carving out a solid space within states' long-term planning and management of social responsibilities. As demonstrated in the global post-2015 agenda, there is an almost consensual interest, especially among the countries of the South, in prioritising the creation of jobs for youth as a goal in the upcoming global efforts. Following the recommendation of the UN Secretary-General, the UN System has created the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Goals: a system composed of more than 60 UN agencies and coordinated by ECOSOC and UNDP.<sup>20</sup> In its 2012 report, the creation of decent and productive employment for youth was listed as one of three key steps for the promotion of the third core dimension: 'inclusive social development'.<sup>21</sup>

Also in the 18 Think Pieces prepared so far by the UN Task Team, there is an explicit recognition that the creation of jobs for youth should be a core part of new strategies.<sup>22</sup> In accordance with a study by the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2012),<sup>23</sup> the Think Piece on job creation notes that, to return to 2007 unemployment rates, there needs to be an increase in the number of net new jobs per year in the range of 45–50 million over the next five years, especially for youth and women.<sup>24</sup>

In the Think Piece on macroeconomic stability, which includes growth and employment, it is recognised that 75 million of the 200 million unemployed people in the world are young. The same document also characterises the severity of the situation by recognising that although mitigation policies are efficient and welcome in the fight against poverty and the promotion of human rights, it is nevertheless unquestionable that "productive and decent employment is the most important source of income security".<sup>25</sup> It is, therefore, within this same logic that the Think Piece on social protection, while recognising that 80 per cent of the global population does not have access to comprehensive social programmes, categorically states that in addition to their basic buffer and mitigation functions, social programmes must also be understood as a means to promote decent jobs.<sup>26</sup>

### **4 THE BRICS YOUTH AGENDA**

Since the five<sup>27</sup> BRICS countries have the potential to become the largest aggregate economy in the world by 2050, they instituted an inter-regional mechanism for cooperation and joint

action for that purpose in 2006: the BRICS grouping. Subsequently, the protection of youth and the promotion of jobs have emerged as leading areas of their growing social agenda. Having had their first summit meeting in 2009, by 2010 the Heads of State of the BRICS countries agreed to support technical and financial cooperation to promote social development and social protection focusing on vulnerable groups, such as poor people, women, youth, migrants and persons with disabilities, as a means of fighting poverty.<sup>28</sup> Also, in the same document, there is a commitment to explore innovative and sustainable technologies that promote job creation.<sup>29</sup> In the 2011 Summit Declaration, the leaders intensified these commitments: “We underscore our firm commitment to strengthen dialogue and cooperation in the fields of social protection, decent work, gender equality, youth, and public health, including the fight against HIV/AIDS.”<sup>30</sup>

From 2012 onwards the Summit Declaration began to include Action Plans with the aim of enhancing the institutional and practical effects of inter-regional cooperation. In the same year the commitment to the protection of youth gave rise to two new areas of cooperation: the BRICS Youth Policy Dialogue and cooperation in population-related issues.<sup>31</sup> The responsibility to promote jobs was also emphasised in points 6 and 28 of the 2012 Summit Declaration. Sidelining the G20 meeting in 2012, young leaders from BRICS nations conceptualised a BRICS youth summit to be held in 2013 along with the main BRICS summit.<sup>32</sup>

In 2013 the issue of youth protection set the tone for the 2nd BRICS Urbanisation Forum and the 3rd Friendship Cities in Local Government Cooperation Forum,<sup>33</sup> while the areas of cooperation previously created were maintained as central to the social agenda of the inter-regional mechanism.<sup>34</sup> On 1 November 2013 the BRICS National Youth Consultative Forum was held by the South African Foreign Ministry, at which time South Africa suggested the creation of a BRICS Youth Employment Fund to be set up by 2014 with the main purpose of increasing investments to counter youth unemployment in BRICS nations, predominantly through “technical and vocational education, training and exchanges between our countries”.<sup>35</sup> The chairperson of South Africa’s National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), Ms. Pillay Yershen, also proposed that the BRICS Development Bank (to be officially launched in 2014) should focus on providing access to finance for young entrepreneurs in BRICS countries.

## **5 LABOUR-MARKET CONCERNS REGARDING THE BRICS YOUTH**

Except for South Africa, all the BRICS nations have contradicted the global trend of experiencing labour market contractions following the 2008 financial crisis. There was, however, a slowdown in employment generation among all BRICS countries between 2007 and 2012, which was particularly felt by their respective youth populations. This was highlighted by an increase in the youth-to-adult unemployment ratio in all BRICS countries between 2007 and 2012 despite a stabilisation of the indicator at the global level. With the exception of Brazil, the youth unemployment rate of the BRICS countries also followed a similar global downward trend.

The particular effects of the job crisis on youth across the BRICS nations is even more apparent when observing the relationship between the youth employment-to-population rate (YEPR) and the employment-to-population rate (EPR), wherein youth lagged far behind the broader working-age population. Of the BRICS, only Brazil has demonstrated proportionally equal advances for these two indices, while China has maintained its standing among both

indices. Russia, India and South Africa, however, have witnessed respective gaps between YEPR and EPR, of four, two and one percentage points less than their broader working-age population. Table 1 and the sections below explore these findings further.

TABLE 1

**Youth Unemployment — Global Trends and the BRICS Countries**

	Youth unemployment rate (%)		Youth employment-to-population rate (%)			Employment-to-population rate (%)			Youth-to-adult unemployment ratio	
	2007	2011/2012	2007	2011	% variation	2007	2011	% variation	2007	2011/2012
<b>Global averages</b>	11.5*	--/14.8*	44.0	41.8	(-)2.2	60.7	59.7	(-)1	2.7*	2.7/--*
<b>Brazil</b>	16.8	15.4/--	52	53	(+)1	64	65	(+)1	2.1	2.3/--
<b>Russia</b>	14.4	15.2 / 14.8	35	33	(-)2	58	60	(+)2	2.4	2.3/2.7
<b>India</b>	---(1)	-- / 10.7	36	34	(-)2	54	54	0	2.3	--/3.2
<b>China</b>	---	7.6**	51	51	0	68	68	0	-----	1.9**
<b>South Africa</b>	46.5	49.8/54.5	15	13	(-)2	40	39	(-)1%	2.1	2.0/2.2

Note: (1) Available data for India refer to 2005, indicating a youth unemployment rate of 10.0 per cent.

Sources: Table organised by the authors based on data from the World Bank. Only data for the global youth unemployment rate and the global youth-to-adult unemployment ratio are from the ILO, because the World Bank does not provide such data.

\* Based on ILO (2013) data and not World Bank data.

\*\* These are not official Chinese numbers but ILO (2013) estimates. There are no official Chinese numbers available for these data sets.

## 5.1 YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

It is worth noting that, although about 40 million jobs are generated per year, about 30 million people were rendered unemployed between 2008 and 2011 as an effect of the financial crisis, and another 40 million people gave up seeking a place in the labour market.<sup>36</sup> Between 2007 and 2011 the number of unemployed youth increased by more than 4 million.<sup>37</sup> However, the ILO's latest report (2013) points out that 0.8 million youth were employed between 2011 and 2013. Even so, recent job creation is not enough to outpace global demographic dynamics of unemployment. Therefore, the absolute increase in new jobs is not yet translating into decreasing unemployment rates for the youth. Between 2007 and 2012 the global youth unemployment rate<sup>38</sup> grew from 11.5 per cent to 14.8 per cent, with a reduction observed between 2009 (12.7 per cent) and 2011 (12.3 per cent), after which the rate increased again.<sup>39</sup> The ILO projections also suggest that in 2018 this rate is likely to be 12.8 per cent, with growing regional disparities, particularly in Asia. The same document also notes that regional averages of the employment-to-population rate for women is between 25 and 50 per cent below that observed for men.<sup>40</sup>

The latest data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)<sup>41</sup> and the ILO<sup>42</sup> indicate that the youth unemployment rate in Brazil fell steadily between 2007 (21.8 per cent) and 2013 (13.7 per cent). The data presented by the World Bank also reinforce this trend, showing that the youth unemployment rate in Brazil fell from 16.8 per



cent to 15.4 per cent between 2007 and 2011.<sup>43</sup> Disaggregating these data in terms of gender, we note that the rate for young males fell from 12.9 per cent to 12.2 per cent,<sup>44</sup> while that of young females fell from 21.9 per cent to 19.8 per cent:<sup>45</sup> a finding that contradicts the trend of lower absorption of young women into the labour market observed both at the global level as well as among the other BRICS countries.

In the case of South Africa, whose series of OECD and ILO reports lacks data for 2007, there was an overall increase in the youth unemployment rate from 44.5 per cent in 2008 to 51.2 per cent in 2012.<sup>46</sup> Slightly different data from the World Bank, covering the period 2007–2012, show lower growth in the youth unemployment rate, from 46.5 per cent in 2007 to 51.5 per cent in 2012.<sup>47</sup> Disaggregating these data in terms of gender, we note that the rate for young males rose from 41.1 per cent to 47.1 per cent,<sup>48</sup> while that for young females went up from 52.8 per cent to 56.9 per cent.<sup>49</sup>

The other BRICS countries were not included in the study by the OECD and ILO, but according to the World Bank, between 2007 and 2012 the youth unemployment rate in Russia rose from 14.4 per cent to 14.8 per cent,<sup>50</sup> and in the specific case of young males this rate went from 14.5 per cent in 2007 up to a peak of 18.1 per cent in 2009, after which there was a progressive reduction until it returned to 14.5 per cent in 2012.<sup>51</sup> In the case of young Russian females, the youth unemployment rate increased from 14.4 per cent in 2007 to 18.9 per cent in 2009, after which it decreased to 15.5 per cent in 2012.<sup>52</sup> As pointed out by the ILO, it is important to bear in mind that around 50.9 per cent of all young Russian workers were informally employed (49.7 per cent of young females and 51.9 per cent of young males, with the younger persons exposed to more informality than persons in their early adulthood), and that Russian “National figures conceal large regional disparities, with youth unemployment rates ranging from 5 per cent in Moscow to 51.3 per cent and 86.7 per cent in Chechnya and Ingushetia, respectively.”<sup>53</sup>

The series by the World Bank shows that India’s youth unemployment rate between 2005 and 2012 increased from 10 per cent to 10.7 per cent,<sup>54</sup> up from 9.8 per cent to 10.4 per cent in the case of young males<sup>55</sup> and from 10.4 per cent to 11.6 per cent among young women.<sup>56</sup> The case of India is still representative of situations in which youth employment is not necessarily a positive or productive phenomenon, as pockets of extreme poverty mean that youth have to resort to precarious work, when study and training would render a greater pay-off in the medium and long term. The ILO has evidence that, in India, youth unemployment rates are higher for families with incomes over the USD1.25 poverty rate (10.5 per cent) and for higher-skilled young persons than for those with incomes below the poverty line (9.7 per cent), despite a scarcity of skilled labour being a problem perceived by 67 per cent of employers in the country. It is also estimated that 37.7 per cent of young employees in India live below the poverty line of USD1.25, in contrast to an expected rate of 28.5 per cent for the adult population.<sup>57</sup> More recent data from 2014 show that:

“By the current poverty line (equivalent to about USD1.25 per day in terms of purchasing power parity or PPP), one-fourth of all workers—about 118 million—are poor. They are largely either casual workers or own-account workers. If the current poverty line is raised to about USD2 per day (in terms of PPP), the percentage of working poor will increase to nearly 58 per cent and the number of such workers would be around 276 million.”<sup>58</sup>

When it comes to China, no official national data on youth unemployment are available from the World Bank, but according to estimates by the OECD<sup>59</sup> based on the OECD and ILO 2012 report on the short-term labour market in the G20 countries,<sup>60</sup> in 2012 youth unemployment stood at 7.6 per cent. However, we cannot ascertain whether this reflects an upward or downward trend.

## 5.2 YOUTH EMPLOYMENT-TO-POPULATION RATES

According to the ILO, the global youth employment-to-population rate between 2007 and 2013 decreased by 60 per cent more than the overall employment-to-population rate, from 44.8 per cent in 2007 to 42.3 per cent in 2013, with the overall rate falling only 1 per cent in the same period (from 61.7 per cent in 2007 to 60.7 per cent in 2013).<sup>61</sup> For 2018, it is projected that the global youth employment-to-population ratio will drop to a mere 41.4 per cent.<sup>62</sup>

The ILO does not provide data for the youth employment-to-population rate for the BRICS countries individually, but the World Bank series, 'Employment to population, ages 15–24',<sup>63</sup> presents relevant data in this regard, which may even be contrasted with the series that the World Bank presents on general employment-to-population rates, 'Employment to population, 15+, total'.<sup>64</sup>

Between 2009 and 2012 the youth employment-to-population rate in Brazil increased from 52 per cent to 53 per cent,<sup>65</sup> while the overall employment-to-population rate went up from 64 per cent to 65 per cent.<sup>66</sup> In the same period the youth employment-to-population rate in Russia fell from 35 per cent to 33 per cent,<sup>67</sup> while the overall rate increased from 58 per cent to 60 per cent.<sup>68</sup> In India the youth employment-to-population rate fell from 36 per cent to 34 per cent between 2009 and 2012,<sup>69</sup> while the overall rate remained stable at 54 per cent.<sup>70</sup> The same rates remained constant in China for both overall and youth-specific figures, which remained at 68 per cent<sup>71</sup> and 51 per cent,<sup>72</sup> respectively. In South Africa there was a further decrease in the youth employment-to-population rate (from 15 per cent down to 13 per cent during the period),<sup>73</sup> which was a sharper fall than the one observed for the overall employment-to-population rate (from 40 per cent to 39 per cent).<sup>74</sup>

## 5.3 YOUTH-TO-ADULT UNEMPLOYMENT RATIO

According to the ILO's most recent data, globally the youth-to-adult unemployment ratio has hardly changed in recent years, and it is expected to remain at 2.7 from 2013 to 2018.<sup>75</sup> Since the ILO does not provide country-specific data for such an indicator, the ratio can be calculated based on World Bank data in each country. In Brazil it is observed that between 2007 and 2011 there was a slight increase from 2.1 to 2.3 in the youth-to-adult unemployment ratio. In the case of Russia, for example, there was a slight improvement between 2007 (2.4) and 2011 (2.3), with a subsequent deterioration of the indicator in 2013 (2.7). The ratio in India rose from 2.3 in 2005 to 3.2 in 2012.

South Africa observed a slight decrease between 2007 (2.1) and 2012 (2.0), followed by an increase in 2013 (2.2). China does not share this information with the World Bank, but based on the ILO's estimates of youth unemployment in the country (7.6 per cent) and an overall national average unemployment estimated at 4 per cent, the youth-to-adult unemployment ratio in the country can be expected to be somewhere around 1.9, though we are unable to assess whether this figure reflects an increasing or decreasing trend.

## 6 CONTEXTUALISING THE BRICS YOUTH JOBS CRISIS IN TERMS OF THEIR DEMOGRAPHIC REALITIES

Beyond the prominent role of the financial crisis in explaining the precarious employment situation of young people in the BRICS countries (e.g. less money available for pathway initiatives, public training and vocational training), there is also a demographic configuration that allows for understanding why the situation is being particularly felt by young people. Looking to the past, it is clear that these countries have never had such a high representative share of young people in their demographic curves as has been the case in recent decades. This has the obvious result of generating an unprecedented demand for jobs for the youth.

This situation is an outcome of decreasing fertility rates and increasing life expectancy among all the BRICS countries between the 1960s and the late 1990s. This has drastically reduced their dependency rates. The effect of this demographic situation, however, is generally positive, rather than negative. On the one hand, it generates an unprecedented demand for jobs for the youth, imposing challenging adjustments on the State and the market. On the other hand, it is extremely likely that, if fully utilised, this surplus workforce (demographic bonus) can generate enough wealth and structural transformations capable of fostering endogenous and consistent development shifts. Therefore, it can be argued that the central challenge of the demographic situation of the BRICS is that the financial crisis coincided with a time when these countries should invest extensively in the youth to profit from their low dependency rates.

Looking to the future, current estimates of the time span still left for the BRICS countries to profit from their low dependency rates are characterised by a sense of urgency. Such investments should have been made already; after all, countries such as Russia and China are already starting to experience an increase in their dependent populations as a percentage of their total populations. Brazil will probably experience a similar reality between 2020 and 2030, and India and South Africa might be able to reach 2050 without experiencing an increase in the rate of their dependent population. Hypothetically, if no measures are taken to counter this trend, the Russian and Brazilian dependent populations will overtake the working-age population by the 2050s. China's turning point could be almost 15 years earlier.<sup>76</sup>

Even so, countries and markets are expected to naturally foster behavioural and normative changes which could prevent reaching such a situation. China, for instance, is already re-evaluating its fertility rules and allowing certain families to have more than one child. Gender policies also present strategies to counter such calamitous trends. Such policies are being widely put into place by all the BRICS countries as a means of increasing the productivity of the workforce to compensate for the reduction in its size. In any case, it is always cheaper to profit from a natural demographic scenario than to spend extra resources to create a demographic surplus on which to capitalise. Therefore, it seems wise to invest in the youth now, even in light of the current economic crisis, or even as a way of building resilience to resist the ongoing effects of the crisis. Besides, the current youth of the BRICS represent approximately one fifth of their working-age population.<sup>77</sup> Neglecting this population would be both unproductive and undemocratic.

Looking to the past, it is clear that most state investments in creating youth-friendly markets and supporting the youth started taking place during and after the 1990s. Previous policies would either address the working-age population more broadly or target young children and elderly people.

Insights from the past, present and future of the BRICS countries make it imperative that this current generation of youth receive bigger and more structured investments leading to their productive participation in the market. Given the context of a global market crisis at the very time these States are meant to invest in the youth, as well as the leading role the BRICS countries play in anti-poverty initiatives, it seems natural to expect that such investments should be made not only through the market but also through social programmes and policies capable of targeting the most vulnerable and marginalised youth. This would ensure an optimised multiplying effect of investments in the youth by reducing inequality gaps that harm overall market conditions and hinder wealth production itself. On this note, we turn our attention to analysing initiatives undertaken by each BRICS country dedicated to capitalising on the demographic weight of their youth by means of pathway programmes and policies designed to complement other means of promoting and allocating jobs for the youth.

## **7 YOUTH-ORIENTED SOCIAL PROGRAMMES OF THE BRICS COUNTRIES**

Programmes to create jobs for young people in the BRICS countries fall into three broad categories: workfare; technical or professional training; and access to credit to promote self-employment and entrepreneurship.

Workfare programmes are particularly important in South Africa and India. South Africa's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) has a quota of 40 per cent of its positions for young people and also offers some on-the-job training. The Indian Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guaranteed Act (MGNREGA), the biggest workfare programme in the world, does not have a specific focus on or quotas for youth, yet does still actively employ and serve young people, as well as other groups. This programme aims to guarantee 100 days of unskilled labour per household, mostly in the form of construction jobs to build public infrastructure. In certain Indian states for which data are available, such as Tamil Nadu, the proportion of young people employed in the programme can reach as high as 35 per cent of the total.<sup>78</sup>

Similar to the MGNREGA, another effective Indian initiative is the *Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana*, which also seeks to provide food security for the Indian population by way of its payment scheme, half of which is made in kind in the form of 'food grains' provided by India's national food procurement agency, the Food Corporation of India (FCI).

Programmes that promote access to credit to stimulate self-employment and entrepreneurship, such as the *Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana* (SJSRY) and the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), are also central social policies in India. In South Africa the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) serves as the main organisation in charge of facilitating professional training and access to credit.

China has a tradition of workfare programmes which dates back to 1984, when the government launched the nationwide *Yigong-daizhen* ('To offer job opportunities to replace sheer relief') programme. Workfare programmes in China today focus on activities requiring low skills. Remuneration, which is now mandatory and must be made in cash, varies depending on the skill level of the worker. Estimates suggest that currently 70 per cent of jobs are allocated to youth. There are also important youth capacity-building initiatives for less developed counties, and other initiatives to provide employer incentives to hire substantial numbers of otherwise would-be-unemployed youth.

The Russian Federation has also taken up the mantle of reducing youth unemployment, by devising a new approach to active employment promotion. The New Employment Programme, announced in September 2013, aims to stimulate the employment of young people, persons with disabilities, and residents of depressed regions. It is expected to benefit 100,000 Russians in 2014 alone through annual funds to support employment generation among these target groups. An interesting aspect of this programme is that it will also promote intra-state flows of young professionals to fight the mismatch of skills and geographical inequalities.

Brazil does not have a workfare programme but is investing heavily in training schemes. According to its *Plano Plurianual* (PPA) 2012–2015, there are 16 federal youth-oriented programmes. However, Brazil has had some negative experiences with training programmes in the past, which is why one of its flagship training programmes, the *Programa Nacional de Acesso ao Ensino Técnico e Emprego* (PRONATEC), has sought to increase training programmes within proven quality institutions, such as Federal Professional and Scientific and Technological Education Schools. It has also concluded an agreement with the National Learning Services (Sistema S), which offers quality paid courses which were otherwise beyond the reach of poor people. PRONATEC not only finances the offer of free training courses to low-income workers but also includes a training grant to provide young people with access to paid training courses. Below we provide more in-depth analysis of country-specific youth-oriented policies and programmes to promote jobs.

## 7.1 BRAZIL

In Brazil, since 2006, with the creation of PRONATEC, there has been centralisation by the federal government of a number of initiatives aimed at capacity-building, promotion of employment and access to credit and financial support to vulnerable youth. The specific goal of the programme is that its sub-programmes receive a minimum investment of BRL24 billion before the end of 2014, to create 5.6 million vacancies for short training courses aimed at professionals and 2.4 million vacancies for technical training courses for high school students.<sup>79</sup> PRONATEC operates as per the following six sub-programmes:

- expansion of the **Federal Network of Professional, Scientific and Technological Education** (Rede Federal de Educação Profissional, Científica e Tecnológica) beyond its current 350 operating units;
- **Brazil Professionalised Programme** to expand the supply of professional education offered by municipal government high schools;
- agreement with the **National Learning Services** (Sistema S — i.e. SENAI, SENAC, SESC, SESI) to expand free courses to people with lower incomes, mostly to workers and to the youth;
- **FIES Technical and Firms** (*Técnico* and *Empresa*) to finance technical and professional courses for students and professionals in private technical schools and in the national learning services (SENAI, SENAC and others). The *FIES Empresa* finances initial and continuous training courses for professionals; and
- **Training Grant** (*Bolsa Formação*) to allow underprivileged youth to benefit by paying for technical capacitation. Some 3.5 million grants are meant to be distributed before the end of 2014.

PRONATEC, however, is just one of many efforts by the Brazilian government in this regard. As stressed by Lobato and Labrea (2013),<sup>80</sup> according to the PPA 2012–2015, which is the main document for youth policies up to 2015, there are 16 programmes and 26 goals, which have a total of 83 strategies targeting the youth.

Another flagship Brazilian programme aimed at promoting employment for youth is *Projovem*, which is sub-divided into four categories (urban, rural, workers and adolescents), aiming to promote reintegration into school and the provision of vocational training, besides involving its beneficiaries in the promotion of citizenship, sport, culture and leisure. Between 2008 and 2009 the four modalities benefited more than 1 million young people. Between 2008 and 2009 the urban *Projovem* stream alone helped approximately 350,000 young people, bringing the total number of young people benefiting since the launch of the programme to 500,000 in 2010. In 2009 the rural *Projovem* served more than 22,000 young people. And in 2010 more than 60,000 benefited. *Projovem* for Workers helped approximately 163,000 young people in 2009 and 200,000 in 2010. *Projovem* for Adolescents (which covers the age group 15–17) annually benefits over 500,000 youth.<sup>81</sup>

The Programme for Productive Inclusion, Citizen Empowerment and Training for Income Generation for Rural Youth promotes citizenship and income generation (agricultural and non-agricultural) among young Brazilians in the countryside through access to land; rural education; income generation and promotion of decent work; sport, culture and recreation; housing; and health.<sup>82</sup>

When it comes to access to credit for the youth, Brazil has the Young *Pronaf* (*Pronaf Jovem*), which enables credit with a three-year grace period, repayment periods of up to 10 years and interest rates of 1 per cent per year for farmers aged 16 to 29 years, with the conditionality that they enroll in certain training courses offered by the government. By 2010 some 24,717 young people had participated in the programme.<sup>83</sup> More focused on student loans, the ProUni programme provides full and partial scholarships to sponsor private higher education (university level) for low-income students and teachers in public schools who do not have college degrees. From its creation in 2005 to the first half of 2010, ProUni had granted 704,600 scholarships.<sup>84</sup>

There is also the Citizen Soldier Project (*Projeto Soldado Cidadão*), which aims to train youth fulfilling military conscription so that they can later enter the labour market. The programme covers an average of 20,000 young people annually, accounting for a total of 134,178 young people from its inception up to 2009.<sup>85</sup>

The Programme for the Integration of Vocational Training with High School Education has dedicated a stream specifically to youth and adults since 2005. It was created with the aim of expanding the supply of vocational courses to workers who did not have access to regular high school at the regular age. It is aimed at young people and adults aged 21 years or more. In 2009, 13,300 students enrolled in courses offered by the programme. The specialisation courses alone had trained 3004 teachers by 2009.<sup>86</sup>

The internationally renowned Brazilian conditional cash transfer programme, *Bolsa Família*, beyond stimulating youth education through its conditionality related to school attendance, also provides an additional youth grant (*Variável Jovem*) of around USD15 per teenager (16–17 years old) up to a limit of two teenagers per household. In 2008, the year the benefit was created, 1.97 million adolescents between 16 and 17 years had proven regular school attendance. In 2009, also as a result of the *Variável Jovem*, this figure stood at 2.15 million.<sup>87</sup>

## 7.2 RUSSIA

Russian efforts at promoting jobs for the youth are mainly based on the 2006 Strategy for the Russian Federation's National Youth Policy<sup>88</sup> and on the 2011 Decree on the Approval of Strategy for Innovation Development of the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2020.<sup>89</sup> Within the context of the government Programme on Promotion of Employment (2012) there are provisions for active employment promotion and for the distribution of social aid to unemployed people from 2013 to 2020.<sup>90</sup> On 9 September 2013, Russian Deputy Premier Minister Olga Golodec declared that a new federal employment programme—the New Employment Programme—would be launched to stimulate the employment of young people, persons with disabilities, and residents of depressed regions. This programme is expected to benefit 100,000 Russians by 2014 by means of annual funding of RUB45 billion for three years to support the employment of disadvantaged groups. A singular aspect of this programme is that it will also promote intra-Russia flows of young professionals to fight the mismatch of skills and geographical inequalities which characterise youth unemployment in the country.<sup>91</sup>

Possessing a more indirect effect on the promotion of jobs for the youth, it is worth mentioning the Social Aid to Citizens initiative, intended to operate from 2012 to 2020 in the provision of aid and the improvement of social services to families, children and socially oriented non-profit organisations.<sup>92</sup> At the federal level, a Sustained Development of Rural Areas Programme is being drafted for implementation from 2014 to 2020,<sup>93</sup> while the government Educational Development Programme between 2013 and 2020 accommodates sub-programmes providing development in vocational training and the involvement of young people in social processes.<sup>94</sup> Since 2005 the National Project on Education has also required the federal government to provide means of transport to rural schools, further development of national universities and the supply of professional education in experimental military units.<sup>95</sup>

As the Russian federal set-up is singular in its many sub-divisions and different types of municipal and regional autonomies, it is also important to note how the responsibility to provide social protection adapts to this system. Since 1995 there has been a Federal Law on State Allowances for Citizens with Children, which stipulates that, whenever federal programmes do not cover these areas, municipalities have the responsibility to provide social assistance in the form of grants to: people not covered by compulsory social insurance in case of temporary disability and maternity; mothers who just gave birth (a lump sum); and families with children aged less than 18 months old.<sup>96</sup> However, since 2012 the responsibility for social assistance to families with children younger than three years old<sup>97</sup> lies with the regional administration.

## 7.3 INDIA

Indian social programmes (or *yojanas*, as they are called in the country) cover a wide variety of social sectors ranging from workforce programmes to the procurement and distribution of subsidised food, microcredit funding and structuring groups and, to a lesser extent, conditional cash transfer programmes. Because of India's social agenda and its vast population, the main Indian programmes tend to be the largest in the world in their respective fields.

In general, the main Indian social programmes are run by a highly federal arrangement in which the central government traditionally funds most of the costs and sets core norms

and rules of procedure while the units (*Panchayati Raj* institutions in villages, towns, districts and states) are in charge of active registration of beneficiaries and the final steps of delivering the benefit.

The Indian social programme that draws the most attention in terms of promoting employment is the MGNREGA, which, despite not having a programmatic focus on youth, serves as a pathway for young people in searching for jobs, mitigating crisis and acquiring practical work skills. As the largest programme of its type in the world, the MGNREGA is also India's largest social programme, consuming over INR335 billion during the fiscal year 2009–2010 (or 38 per cent of the entire government budget for social programmes in this period). Of the total budget of the MGNREGA, 65 per cent is allocated to the payment of wages to beneficiaries, 30 per cent to the purchase of materials, and the remaining 5 per cent covers all administrative costs.<sup>98</sup> By the fiscal year 2012–2013 the aggregate number of households benefiting from the programme totalled 50 million, and about 2.3 billion person-days of employment were generated during that fiscal year.<sup>99</sup> The programme guarantees every Indian household 100 days of unskilled labour, mostly building public infrastructure.

Employment under the MGNREGA by income category indicates that 40 per cent of households accessing the programme fall within the low-income group, with a monthly income of up to INR657. Another 42 per cent of MGNREGA households fall within the middle-income group with a monthly income up to INR1058.<sup>100</sup> The national average wage paid per day worked corresponds to INR133.<sup>101</sup> It is important to note that in certain states, such as Tamil Nadu, the rate of young persons employed in the MGNREGA workforce can be as high as 30 per cent or 35 per cent,<sup>102</sup> and that some studies highlight the absence of a gender wage gap among MGNREGA workers despite the Indian labour market at large having a gender wage gap of more than 20 per cent to the benefit of men.<sup>103</sup>

A similar programme to the MGNREGA is the *Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana* (Village Full Employment Programme), which, with an annual budget of INR100 million, focuses on jobs for poor and unemployed landless people. These people are employed in public works projects for building assets in rural areas, with wages paid 50 per cent in cash and 50 per cent in kind (food grains provided by the FCI). Unlike the MGNREGA, the *Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana* does not necessarily guarantee access to work, as work opportunities depend on the actual demand for infrastructure improvements. Thus the *Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana* beneficiaries are only hired if there are specific demands, which must be generated by the districts and municipalities. It is estimated that the programme creates 1 billion person-days of employment annually.<sup>104</sup>

Another important Indian programme for job promotion is the *Swarna Jayanti Rozgar Yojana Shahari* (SJSRY), which targets urban unemployed or underemployed poor people by encouraging the setting up of self-employment ventures or the provision of wage employment. Through its two sub-programmes, the Urban Self-Employment Programme (USEP) and the Urban Wage Employment Programme (UWEP), the programme provides access to credit, capacity-building and management advice for entrepreneurial initiatives of poor community groups.<sup>105</sup> Between 2010 and 2011 the programme budget totalled more than INR11 million, with an effective expenditure of only 42 per cent of its fund,<sup>106</sup> revealing the potential for expanding the initiative. Not restricted to the urban population, with a greater focus on youth and economically a far more robust programme is the Prime Minister's



Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP). For the period 2008–2012 the programme's goal was to create 3,737,500 direct jobs through a cumulative investment of INR44.85 billion.<sup>107</sup>

India uses the running of its big and numerous social programmes as a way of promoting jobs, as it very often hires implementing staff from vulnerable societies and social groups. In the case of the Targeted Public Distribution Programme (TPDS), the biggest food procurement and food distribution programme in the world, distribution to beneficiaries of the highly subsidised food takes place through Fair Price Shops—shops regulated by the municipality and managed by members of the community or village. The Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) programme involves the State hiring and training local young women to perform key roles in the delivery of several social benefits to vulnerable groups, namely the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). There is even a provision that, in tribal communities, such professionals should be recruited from tribal backgrounds and receive additional training to acquire basic and even advanced health skills. The Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are community committees stimulated by the State to promote community engagement with the social programmes being delivered to their villages, mostly with those involving microcredit.<sup>108</sup> Similar allocations can occur under the umbrella of the Neighborhood Groups (NHGs), Neighborhood Committees (NHCs) and Community Development Societies (CDSs).

#### 7.4 CHINA

Between 1984 and 1997, as part of a national anti-poverty strategy meant to assist the poor population through the transition from a socialist controlled economy towards a more market-oriented one, the Chinese government launched a nationwide programme to boost jobs: the so-called *Yigong-daizhen* ('To offer job opportunities to replace sheer relief') supplied labour-intensive, skilled and non-skilled work in the construction of public assets and infrastructure. Such work was previously proposed by the municipal authority and approved or not by the central government, and criteria for targeting workers and for rewarding them would vary considerably, ranging from universal mandatory work without salary (just access to better public services) to more traditional targeting of poor people in exchange for cash or in-kind remuneration. During its first period (1984–1997) the *Yigong-daizhen* generated assets worth nearly CNY30 billion.<sup>109</sup>

With the furtherance of the market-oriented economy and the dismantling of the food procurement and distribution mechanisms in the late 1990s, the *Yigong-daizhen* was transformed as social protection in China started being promoted by other means, mostly through contributory and semi-contributory social security. Social assistance in general started being more focused on the poorest counties of the country, and the workforce programmes became more standardised, usually targeting only poor people. Current workforce programmes in China focus on activities requiring low skills, and the values of remunerations, which are now mandatory and in cash, normally vary depending on the skill level of the worker. Estimates indicate that currently 70 per cent of the jobs created by workforce programmes in China are allocated to the youth. In 2009 alone the budget spent on such programmes was more than CNY655 million.<sup>110</sup>

In light of the increasing rural exodus since the 1990s, in 2004 the government created a programme (originally called *Yulu Jihua*) for the training of professionals in less developed regions, offering both training and opportunities in off-farm economic activities. To date the

programme has helped more than 4 million people, of whom 80 per cent were able to find off-farm professional employment with average salaries of between CNY300 and CNY400 more than the average salaries paid to untrained persons. This programme has a significant impact on young people and women, as these two demographic categories display high rates of rural–urban migration (over 30 per cent in both cases), mainly due to rural unemployment.<sup>111</sup> It is important to mention that beyond all the informal safety nets that are available for people who live in their birthplaces—where families normally live—there are also a number of safety nets provided by regional and county authorities that are only available if the citizen lives and works in his or her designated county or region.

In parallel, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the Ministry of Agriculture are supporting a network of municipalities so that governments of sending municipalities or counties cooperate with governments of receiving municipalities or counties to direct migrants to where opportunities really exist, and also to train those migrants according to more specific market demands.<sup>112</sup>

Since 1998 China has been implementing the Young Laid-off Employees and Promoting the Re-employment of Laid-off Young People Programme. It entails providing state support for the acquisition of managerial skills, networking and other inputs to aid young laid-off persons to start their own business.<sup>113</sup>

In 1999 the Chinese government implemented a programme that aims to identify high school, junior school and rural school students that will not follow the formal education system so that they can be enrolled in vocational courses lasting three years devoted to professional employment. By 2002 some 1.1 million young people had already benefited from this programme.<sup>114</sup> At the municipal level, initiatives such as those undertaken by the government of Shanghai also reveal a growing interest in offering on-the-job training: in this case the government provides a benefit to trainees and the companies that hire them. The initiative ensures accommodation and a livelihood for about 2000 young people who have benefited from this pilot programme.<sup>115</sup>

Bolstering these social programmes is a strong fiscal stimulus to promote entrepreneurship and the employment of young people in China. New companies with more than 60 per cent of their workforce comprised of formerly unemployed people from urban areas, for example, receive exemption from the tax rate levied on the profits of the company for a period of three years. After this period, if it is found that at least 30 per cent of the workforce is comprised of formerly unemployed people from urban areas, the company receives a discount of 50 per cent on taxes on their income for the next two years.<sup>116</sup> Similar initiatives are also observed at the municipal and regional levels.

## 7.5 SOUTH AFRICA

The main programme to foster job promotion in South Africa is the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). It consists of a *de facto* cash-for-work programme that includes a quota of positions for young people and is intended to include training. The EPWP is aimed at providing poverty and income relief through temporary work for unemployed people. Unlike the Indian MGNREGA, the EPWP does not assure people of a universal right to work for a minimum amount of days (hiring depends on the existence of a concrete demand for labour), nor does it provide work when there is no infrastructure work demanding labour. Between 2004

and 2009, during the first phase of the programme, the target was to create a minimum of 1 million jobs, of which at least 40 per cent had to be allocated to women, 30 per cent to youth and 2 per cent to differently abled persons. These targets were all beaten, with 1.6 million work opportunities being created in phase I.<sup>117</sup>

Phase II is meant to last from 2009 to 2014, creating a minimum of 4.5 million work opportunities, out of which 55 per cent must be allocated to women, 40 per cent to youth and 2 per cent to differently abled persons. By the end of the financial year 2012–2013 more than 3 million work opportunities were created,<sup>118</sup> out of which almost 1 million were created only during the financial year 2012–2013. Some 60 per cent were allocated to youth during this period.<sup>119</sup> On average, the programme provides 67 days of work per person per year. Beneficiaries receive an average amount of ZAR4600 (USD500) per person (for the average 67 days of work). Phase III, which is intended to start after 2014, will most likely increase the focus on youth employment and support for community initiatives as per the Community Work Programme stream of the EPWP.<sup>120</sup>

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) presents another set of initiatives that contribute to the promotion of jobs for the youth in South Africa. It basically consists of a loan system which pays for post-secondary education fees. The NSFAS provides loans and bursaries to students at all 25 public universities and 50 public further education and training colleges throughout the country. Its funding has grown from ZAR441 million in 1999 to ZAR8.5 billion in 2013. In 2012 the amount disbursed was ZAR7.7 billion, distributed among 382,943 students.<sup>121</sup>

With a greater focus on providing capacity-building to youth as a means of promoting their insertion into the labour market, South Africa has several programmes managed by the NYDA. Overall, the programmes offered by the NYDA offer training opportunities and entrepreneurship grants. From April 2012 to March 2013 the programme invested ZAR30 million via its Key Performance Area on Economic Participation, funding 1833 young entrepreneurs and supporting (non-financially) another 36,164, while also creating more than 3335 jobs. During this period, 14,078 young people attended NYDA workshops, and 2950 young people were assisted in rewriting their Matriculation.<sup>122</sup>

More recently the South African government has approved the Youth Employment Subsidy, which is intended to boost youth employment by sharing the costs of hiring an employee with firms that hire young persons.<sup>123</sup> Still in the process of being approved is the Employment Services Bill, an initiative which will provide job-matching via a national labour market database and will also coordinate the activities of public-sector agencies whose activities have an impact on the provision of employment services.<sup>124</sup>

With respect to social security, South Africa has the South African Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), which since the 2008 economic crisis has funded the 'training lay-off scheme' for promoting the re-insertion of laid-off people into the market. However, this initiative has no specific focus on job creation for the youth.

## 8 CONCLUSION

International organisations and governments alike are committed to actively prioritising the needs of the youth to capitalise on this recompensing source of human capital.

An international focus on inclusive social development, inclusive growth and social protection, facilitating decent and productive employment for youth, has demonstrated this, prompting this paper's concentration on the various youth-centred initiatives taking place in the BRICS nations.

Youth and job creation serve as central commitments in the BRICS social agenda, since their youth population is proportionally the largest it has been in history. These nations are aiming to capitalise on the demographic dividend of a surplus labour force by investing heavily in training and jobs for this population.

Therefore, at the domestic level, this paper has explored youth-oriented social programmes undertaken by the BRICS: specifically, those dedicated to youth job creation, namely via workfare; technical or professional training; and access to credit to promote self-employment and entrepreneurship. The paper provides in-depth analysis of country-specific youth-oriented policies and programmes to promote jobs.

This analysis has exposed Brazil's diverse range of policy and programme initiatives dedicated to youth empowerment. Unfortunately, unsuccessful experiences of the past have somewhat discouraged current efforts to promote workforce programmes that should prove useful if appropriately implemented. Beyond this, there is yet much to explore regarding the possibility of increasing the benefits of Brazil's expansive Food Procurement Programme towards young rural workers.

Russia has demonstrated numerous measures dedicated to the youth, namely catering to young professionals in an effort to fight the skills mismatch and geographical inequalities that characterise youth unemployment in the country. Unlike the other BRICS countries, Russian initiatives have very limited progressive targeting mechanisms and still lack the means of delivering benefits to those who need them most.

With respect to India and its vast social programmes, our analysis focused on the MGNREGA, which, like many other initiatives, benefits the youth without exactly having a youth focus—instead adopting a poverty- and vulnerability-centred approach. A major weakness to be overcome in India is the lack of training as a necessary complement to its credit and workforce programmes. While policies should be designed to cover the informal market, which includes 95 per cent of the country's workforce, the State must not neglect to offer incentives and means for the formalisation of work to promote the improvement of labour conditions. Overall, the many Indian schemes and initiatives lack integration. Furthermore, their management is systematically challenged by a lack of nationwide impact evaluation studies and the need for better-quality municipal administrative data. Not surprisingly, programmes in this country have highly varied impacts in different regions.

In the Chinese case, our main focus was on the *Yigong-daizhen* programme. It revealed that, like Russia, China's major employment challenge lies in geographic inequalities. However, unlike Russia, these challenges are exaggerated by the vast number of job seekers migrating from rural to urban centres. The Chinese geographic inequality issue and its effects on youth (un)employment also differ from the Russian case in light of its social protection network being partially responsible for the skills mismatch and for the dismantling of informal social safety nets (e.g. at family and community levels). This is due to social benefits being limited to the municipality of an individual's birth—the *Hoku* system. Therefore, to achieve the levels of accumulated human capital seen during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, China will need to pursue active efforts to provide nationwide social policies managed by the central government.

South Africa is facing the greatest challenges in terms of youth unemployment of all the BRICS nations. Even so, it seems to be making substantial advances towards creating youth-targeted policies through its direct income-generating social programmes. The EPWP includes a quota of positions for young people as well as onsite training. Scaling up its community-based sub-stream, the CWP, is a wise strategy for both promoting youth-employment and strengthening informal safety nets capable of mitigating the high levels of unemployment. Now that the programme is about to enter its third phase, the scenario seems very favourable to the implementation of such policy recommendations, which have been supported by the most recent monitoring and impact evaluation studies.

Overall, our integrated analysis of these BRICS initiatives and their broader labour force and demographic contexts suggests that youth-oriented social programmes can indeed play a role in improving labour markets, promoting productive inclusion and potentially maximising gains from the demographic transition. Naturally, such effects are much more efficient if social programmes targeting the youth are backed by a robust set of universal basic services and more vibrant economies, as is demonstrated in the Brazilian, Russian and Chinese cases. The Brazilian experience illustrates how such effects tend to improve exponentially as these programmes mature with time. China and the Russian Federation show the equally crucial necessity of adjusting to particular context shifts.

It is clear from our analysis that initiatives are being made internationally to enhance cooperation regarding the youth agenda. Similarly to the domestic scenarios, on the international front there is favourable momentum within the context of the post-2015 Development Goals and the increased institutionalisation of the BRICS Grouping accompanying the launch of the BRICS Development Bank, possibly still in 2014.

Our analysis at the global level revealed that, beyond the impact of the 2008 financial crisis, a demographic configuration comprising an unprecedented proportion of young people has generated a corresponding unprecedented demand for jobs for the youth. If this surplus workforce (demographic bonus) is fully utilised, it has the potential to generate enough wealth and structural transformation to alter a society's development at large. Therefore, the central challenge of the BRICS nations today is how to capitalise on this demographic bonus at a time when they are financially compromised.

Thus the youth require extensive and urgent investment. Initiatives undertaken today are already running late, with countries such as Russia and China already starting to experience an increase in their dependent populations. Therefore, it is clear that the BRICS nations require greater and more structured investments in the youth to facilitate their productive participation in the labour market. Considering the scarce resources and market limitations of the BRICS nations, and the leading role they play in global anti-poverty initiatives, such investments should be incorporated into social programmes and policies capable of targeting the most vulnerable and marginalised youth. This would ensure an optimised multiplying effect of investments in the youth by enhancing overall productivity and reducing poverty, which harms market conditions and restrict opportunities for inclusive growth.

The BRICS nations have undertaken numerous and diverse initiatives catering to their youth and addressing rampant unemployment. Whether the BRICS nations will be able to capitalise on this unique moment in time where they possess a vast surplus of labour is yet to be seen. Making the most of the demographic dividend demands extensive investment in training and job creation, without neglecting overriding investments in education and access to basic services.

Besides scaling up and improving the operationalisation of the initiatives designed to offer credit, work opportunities and vocational training to the youth, the BRICS nations, like all the nations of the globe, are faced with the pressing duty of finding means of including the youth productively in the labour market, in ways that genuinely represent the ambitions of this stage in the lifecycle, instead of merely covering educational gaps of the past or fast-forwarding them to the working reality of adults.

The demands of the youth go beyond the mere assurance of a basic income or technical preparation for the labour market: they include the desire to express creativity, to actively defend and promote new values, to be agents of social transformation, and to experience higher levels of sustainable autonomy. More than securing full and sustainable citizenship and enjoying socio-economic rights, the youth want to take part in the (re-)negotiation and (re-)definition of these very rights and how they frame aspects of citizenship in society.

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