

Decent jobs in the transition to a sustainable economy

ILO / UNEP

Brazil, Germany, Indonesia

Room B - CB

In the Rio+20 Outcome document "The Future we want", the international community undertook the commitment to reach sustainable development by raising basic standards of living, fostering equitable social development and inclusion while promoting the sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems".

Economic expansion and market forces cannot, in and of themselves, provide a solution to that equation. Countries need to put in place strong social, economic and environmental policies aimed at ensuring that development will be inclusive with effective income distribution, access to basic public services, particularly health and education, and targeted action on structural drivers of inequality, such as gender.

Promoting decent work for men and women stands out as a fundamental policy tool in that regard. Not only because it provides income security but also because of its social protection aspects. I would like to share a bit of my country's experience in that regard. As you know, Brazil has made considerable progress over the past years in the reduction of poverty and inequality. Since 2003, around 40 million people have been lifted out of poverty and many of them have joined the middle class resulting in an unprecedented expansion of our domestic market.

These transformations were brought about by a combination of mutually supportive social and economic policies. So, the necessary fiscal space was created for increased social expenditures that finance a number of initiatives such as Bolsa Família, a conditional cash transfer program that grants a monthly payment to poor families provided that their children are in school and undergo regular health checks. At the same time, income distribution was also improved by reforms in the tax system to make it less regressive and the adoption of a sustained policy of real increase of the minimum wage.

Huge social and economic impact of this policy = Brazilian minimum wage serves as the reference for the calculation of a number of social security benefits including retirement payments, unemployment insurance and benefits for disabled persons. Real increase of around 80% since 2004 without compromising macroeconomic stability.

The promotion of decent work is a fundamental part of this transformative process that is going on in Brazil.

The Government adopted a National Plan for Employment and Decent Work in 2007 as a result of a joint effort by various federal agencies under the coordination of the Ministry of Labor and Employment and on the basis a broad process of tripartite consultations in the framework of our Decent Work National Agenda.

Its main objectives are to tackle structural drivers of poverty and inequality in the labor market through reduction of unemployment, sub-employment and informal jobs, gender inequality and racial discrimination, the expansion of social protection coverage, increase in productivity, safety and health condition in work places, especially in rural areas.

The program is organized around three priority goals: a) generate more jobs with equal opportunity and treatment; b) eradicate slave labor and child labor, especially in their worst forms; c) strengthen tripartite stakeholders and social dialogue as a tool of democratic governance.

Between 2003 and 2011, 17,5 million formal job posts were generated in Brazil. As of 2011, there were 46 million workers under formal job contracts, an increase of 50% in nine years. Over the same period, the unemployment rate in major urban areas decreased from 11,6% to 5,5%

Another important program that is worth mentioning is Bolsa Verde (or Green Grant or Stipend). It is a conditional cash transfer scheme that targets communities in extreme poverty living in areas considered to be in danger of biodiversity loss and degradation. The beneficiaries receive income support and technical assistance from the Government in exchange for developing activities that promote conservation of natural resources in the areas where they live. The program is part of a wider initiative called Brazil Without Poverty which aims at bringing the populations living under 1 dollar and 25 cents a day within the reach of basic public services. It has already benefited more than 32,000 families since it was established in 2011. It is a good example of how we can integrate the social, economic and environmental agendas into public policies.

The fact that Brazil will host the two most important global sporting events over the next couple of years provides us with an invaluable opportunity to promote the decent work agenda. Efforts are being

undertaken in coordination with the ILO and other agencies of the UN System in order to raise awareness to the issue to effectively foster the creation of quality jobs associated to these events on the basis of close tripartite collaboration. Here I must mention a campaign launched jointly with the ILO entitled Decent Work Before and After 2014, Fair Games, Fair Play.

There is no reason why the Brazilian experience cannot be reproduced in other developing countries. To that effect, and in partnership with the ILO, we have engaged in a number of South-South cooperation projects focussed on Latin American and African countries and with an emphasis on the prevention and eradication of child labor, the strengthening of trade unions for dealing with social security issues, and the promotion of green jobs.

Hope that these examples of the Brazilian experience will be useful for the discussions here today.

Thank you.

#

#

#