

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT AMONG YOUTH IN BRAZIL:

**Reflections by Representatives of the Subcommittee on the
National Decent Work Agenda for Youth**

2015

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context

In Brazil, the National Decent Work Agenda for Youth - NDWAY was established in a process of tripartite social dialogue with the NDWAY Subcommittee. The discussion was organized by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment (MTE), the National Youth Secretariat (SNJ), and the National Youth Council (CONJUVE). Creating the agenda required dialogue and coordinated efforts between the government, trade union centres, and company confederations.

The National Decent Work Agenda for Youth Subcommittee was created by the Brazilian government to join key players in discussing and finding solutions to reduce informal employment among Brazilian youth. Thirty-two institutions are represented on the Subcommittee. Of these, 13 are from various government ministries that develop public policies geared toward youth; 4 are from employer confederations; 7 are from trade union centres;¹ and 7 are from non-governmental organizations engaged in labour rights for young women and men, including the ILO.

The main goal of the NDWAY Subcommittee is to find ways of providing good quality opportunities for young people in the labour market. Subcommittee members must be knowledgeable about the social, political, and economic context of the problem, overall, they must be able to make mature considerations on how to best address the issue.

The main results presented by the Subcommittee include the text of the NDWAY that contains the proposals and priorities established by the committee members and the discussions regarding the Plan that will contain activities and strategies that aim to reach the goals established by the NDWAY.

During interviews conducted in December 2014, NDWAY Subcommittee members emphasized everyone's strong involvement in promoting decent work and the high level of consensus that was attained between the government, employers, and worker organizations on the main causes of the precariousness of youth employment in Brazil.

Results

According to the Subcommittee members that were interviewed, the causes of high informal employment among young people are related to three main issues: 1) youth characteristics; 2) structural, cultural, and historical issues related to Brazil's economic

¹ Although the DIEESE is not a trade union centre, it was included in this group due to its affiliation with the trade union movement.

and social development model; and 3) lack or inadequacy of public policies that would encourage young people to enter the labour market.

The interviews also demonstrated that the diversity of young people – along the lines of gender, race, social status, place of residence, and other attributes – translates into unequal access to formal employment and better working conditions. Furthermore, most respondents indicated that the interweaving of gender, race, and class categories strongly influences the quality of the opportunities that young people have for joining the labour market. There was also a shared view that recent affirmative action policies have helped decrease racial inequalities for young people in the labour market.

Most respondents recognized that advancements in youth labour policies reduced labour informality among young people. Some recognized that significant improvement was made for groups facing greater challenges in finding formal employment, such as women and blacks. However, none of the trade union representatives agreed that the advancements in policies have been successful. Although they acknowledged government efforts and identified the National Youth Secretariat as a significant step forward, they did not see the policies as having been effective in actually reaching young Brazilians.

Another positive result of the interviews shows that the respondents believe the institutions represented in the Subcommittee play an important role in promoting decent work for young people. Furthermore, it was clearly demonstrated that they are aware of their individual roles in dealing with informality, while also recognizing when and where employers, the government, and employees must work together.

The types of actions and initiatives conducted by the different institutions – government, employers' associations and workers' associations – to reduce youth informality and unemployment fall into these groups: 1) public policies; 2) studies and research; 3) social dialogue; 4) public oversight; 5) training; 6) mobilization and organization, and 7) promotion of labour rights.