



# BRAZIL



## A TRADE UNION FOCUS ON THE SDGs

#HLPF2017



### ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Brazil is facing significant challenges. While the Brazilian government claims to be implementing the SDGs, trade unions denounce the policies which it is simultaneously introducing as contrary to the spirit and objectives of the 2030 Agenda. The SDGs had been integrated into the multiannual plan elaborated by the government of Dilma Rousseff, which, although formally followed by the current administration, is progressively being dismantled.

Officially, six ministries and two research institutes are in charge of ensuring the implementation of the SDGs in Brazil. However, there is little to show for this work and one of the research institutes has claimed that its input was not included in the country's Voluntary National Review.

No consultations on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda with civil society, including trade unions, have taken place. While an official dialogue structure was

convened at the end of 2016, there was no discussion on the form it would take, its operating mechanisms or purpose. There was an additional lack of transparency in how participants were to be elected. So far, no meetings in the framework of this dialogue have been convened or held.

There is no ongoing social dialogue between the trade unions and the government, as many trade unions do not recognise the legitimacy of the government, which they believe came to power as a result of a *coup d'état*.

Trade unions denounce a lack of transparency and access to information with regards to all government policies, including those on the SDGs. They further highlight that, far from providing additional resources to the implementation of the SDGs, the government has cut spending in areas that had been contributing towards their achievement.



#### TRANSPARENCY

access to key documents on SDGs programming and/or implementation



#### CONSULTATION

existence of an official multi-stakeholder platform on the SDGs



#### SOCIAL DIALOGUE

dialogue among worker, employer and government representatives on SDG implementation



## IS THE (DECENT) WORK BEING DONE?

Brazilian trade unions alert that the country is facing significant challenges to achieving the SDGs, in particular **SDG 1 (eradicating poverty)**, **SDG 5 (gender equality)** and **SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth)**.

Until 2015, indicators for **target 1.1 (eradicating extreme poverty)** showed improvement. Brazil's human development index (HDI), increased from 0.685 in 2003 to 0.754 in 2015, and the percentage of the population below the poverty level dropped drastically from 12.76% in 2003 to 3.66% in 2014. However, a constitutional amendment passed by the parliament in December 2016 will result in significant cutbacks in public spending over the next 20 years. This measure will directly affect the provision of services such as healthcare and education, resulting in negative outcomes and an enhanced risk of poverty for larger segments of the population. The government is also in the process of introducing a social security system reform, which, if implemented, will go directly against **target 1.3 (implement nationally appropriate social protection systems)**. The proposed reform plan raises the retirement age and is likely to disproportionately affect the poorest segments of society, rural workers as well as women.

Progress on **target 5.4 (recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies)** is stilted in view of the lack of funding provided in the budget for public policy measures such as shelters for victims of domestic violence. **Target 5.5 (ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life)** is also unlikely to be reached due to the abolition of a number of government agencies which had played a key role in its implementation: the Ministries for Women, Youth, Racial Equality and Human Rights.

While until recently, indicators for **target 8.5 (full and productive employment and decent work for all)** had demonstrated significant improvement, with unemployment rates dropping from 12.9% in 2003 to 4.3% in 2014, the current situation in Brazil is concerning for workers. **Target 8.8 (protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers)** is threatened by the proposed reform of the labour law, which proposes the primacy of negotiated agreements over national legislation, lengthening the working week to 60 hours, the flexibilisation of employment contracts and weakening of the role of trade unions and collective bargaining.

## WHERE TO NEXT? TRADE UNION RECIPE TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Many Brazilian trade unions refuse to recognise the legitimacy of the current Brazilian government, which they consider to have come to power as a result of a *coup d'état*. As the government's policies are a direct attack on the implementation of the SDGs, trade union opposition to the government can in itself be considered as the promotion of the 2030 Agenda.

Thematically, trade unions prioritise their struggle for decent work and job security, the right to healthcare, gender equality and environmental protection. Specifically, Brazilian trade unions call on the current government to withdraw its proposed reforms of the labour law and the social security system, which they believe to be a direct attack on the rights of citizens and a backwards step in the process of reducing poverty and inequalities.



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