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INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY ASSOCIATION

# Social security for all: The BRICS countries



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# The challenge

Today, 75 per cent of the world's population does not have access to comprehensive social security.

Extension of coverage is one of social security's most important goals, and one of its greatest challenges. The International Social Security Association (ISSA) and its member organizations are committed to

- extending social security coverage, and
- promoting the role of social security institutions in achieving this objective.

# The actors

The BRICS countries – Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa – represent 42 per cent of the world's population and 30 per cent of its land mass. In 2011, together these countries accounted for 25 per cent of global GDP.

This diverse group of states has a shared priority: the extension of social security coverage to all. Their combined size and economic strength are matched by their commitments to social protection and the extension of social security coverage. Their achievements in these areas are remarkable.

# The BRICS countries



# The project

In 2008, the *ISSA strategy for the extension of social security coverage* was drafted to guide the Association's activities in this area. The strategy, adopted in 2010,

- outlined a process to help social security institutions define plans to work towards extending coverage, and
- defined the ISSA's role in supporting its member organizations to implement their plans.

The experience and progress of the BRICS countries in social protection are models of the successful extension of coverage. The ISSA began to analyse the social protection programmes of the BRICS countries in order to bring their experiences to a larger audience.

The ISSA analysis focused on the following key areas:

- Which country-specific innovations have led to extended and improved coverage?
- What are the roles of social security administrations in extending coverage?
- What challenges did these countries face as they implemented their extension of coverage programmes?
- How did administrations overcome these challenges?

As the ISSA looked at these countries, it became apparent that social security administrations and governments worldwide could learn from and possibly replicate the experience of the BRICS countries.

In 2011, the ISSA embarked on a collaborative project with social security organizations in the BRICS countries to

- document the BRICS' innovative approaches in social protection,
- share information and experiences related to the BRICS countries' challenges of extending social security coverage, and
- assist ISSA member organizations in their efforts to extend coverage.

The result is a detailed study that corresponds to the objectives of the *ISSA strategy for the extension of social security coverage*.

# Country successes

## Extension of coverage



### Brazil

Universality of coverage and services, and equal treatment for urban and rural populations are enshrined in the 1988 Brazilian Constitution. This has driven and supported extension coverage initiatives in the intervening years.

Notable achievements include

- the Bolsa Familia Programme, which was launched in 2003 to reduce poverty and inequality and stop the intergenerational transmission of poverty, and from which around 13 million households currently benefit, and
- the social pension payable to rural workers, which has significantly reduced poverty for all ages especially for the elderly population.



### Russian Federation

The Russian Federation has been able to build on what was a universal social security system in Soviet times. Significant social, economic and demographic changes have undermined universal coverage in the country. Due to a number of targeted reforms and policy measures, the Russian Federation has enhanced the coverage and adequacy of benefits.

Notable achievements include

- Facilitating access to social security for self-employed and agricultural workers through a reduction in contribution rates for these groups, and
- Increased coverage to foreign workers through the widening of eligibility conditions. Since 2012, foreign workers employed for at least six months are covered by the mandatory pension scheme.





## India

Over the last decade, a number of initiatives supported by innovative ICT measures in both contributory and non-contributory programmes have been introduced to address increasing rural to urban migration and changes in family structures.

Notable achievements include

- Introduction of a Universal Health Insurance Scheme, which has more than 10 million members paying a premium for basic medical cover, and
- Successful roll out and utilisation of ICT by the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana scheme that provides health coverage for those living under the poverty line, and uses a smart card system for beneficiaries.



## China

China has achieved a substantial increase in coverage of its population through the introduction and extension of different social security programmes that are supported by management and administrative transformation and the innovative use of ICT.

Notable achievements include

- Extension of the health insurance scheme which now covers over 95 per cent of the whole population, and
- Establishment of a nationwide unified personal social security identification system using a unique identity number for each citizen, which has facilitated better coordination.



## South Africa

The South African Constitution guarantees a legal right to social security. Benefit coverage is widespread and all traditional risks are covered by a mixture of contributory and non-contributory schemes plus cash transfer programmes.

Notable achievements include

- Extension of coverage through broadening eligibility conditions to old age benefits, family benefits and disability grants, based on minimum residency requirements, and
- Improvement of access to hard-to-reach groups through the creation of 40 mobile offices to facilitate affiliation for the rural population.



# The results

The ISSA report *Social security coverage extension in the BRICS: A comparative study*, published in December 2012, is a key output of the ISSA's collaborative efforts to provide members with guidance in their extension of coverage efforts.

In addition to the full study, the *Social security coverage extension in the BRICS: Executive Summary* is available in English, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian and Chinese.

The ISSA's research on extension of coverage in the BRICS countries has resulted in a number of related projects that will be developed in 2013, including:

- Innovative application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in BRICS member institutions
- Improvement of front-line social security networks/services in BRICS countries
- Extension of social security coverage to rural, informal sector and migrant workers in BRICS countries.



The ISSA publication *Social security coverage extension in the BRICS: A comparative study* and the executive summary in English, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian and Chinese are included [on the attached CD](#).

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