

SSE “Social and Solidarity Economy, youth employment and the fight against poverty: the case of Public Works and Employment Programmes in Brazil”¹

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“Brazil has about 50 million young people aged between 15 and 29 years who have shown determination to ensure their rights and occupy a prominent place in the development process of the country. Today, despite the progress that has been conquering youth, not only in Brazil but in many countries, we know that many of the more than one billion young people of the planet remain without access to basic rights such as health, education, work and culture not to mention specific rights for which they have been struggling for in an increasingly significant way in recent years” (BRASIL, 2013).

Introduction

The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) is cross-cutting and inter-sectoral in that it is capable of mobilizing different areas of public and social intervention. SSE initiatives and ventures and the respective actions and effects may lead to opportunities for integration into society and employment, particularly for disadvantaged groups such as young people with few prospects from vulnerable communities. The debate can be furthered by considering the potential of *Public Works and Employment Programmes* (PWEPs), which are large-scale government job creation initiatives for vulnerable groups based on SSE principles. An analysis of a number of international experiences currently underway shows that such programmes are becoming increasingly important at global level and can contribute towards socio-economic inclusion, particularly for more socially and economically disadvantaged groups (Morais, 2013). Recent experience in Brazil under the “*Brasil sem Miséria*” programme is a particularly interesting example.

As mentioned above, the SSE is capable of mobilizing different areas of public and social intervention, since the actions involved encompass economic objectives (job and income creation), social objectives (enhanced social interaction and stronger regional links), political objectives (creation of public forums in which problems are analyzed, discussed and resolved), cultural objectives (new production and consumption patterns) and environmental objectives (pro-sustainability environmental re-education).

1 This article was inspired an early version (Morais, 2013 a), made in paper for the 3rd International Academy on Social and Solidarity Economy, International Labour Organization, ILO (Agadir, Marrocos).

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Also, the SSE has potential for insertion disadvantage groups such as young people, women, migrants. This is because different SSE programmes include training, capacity-building, marketing and credit policies, along with other mechanisms focusing on collective production units which fall within the definition of solidarity-based economic enterprises (SBEE). SBEE are: a) collective and supra-family organizations (associations, cooperatives, self-managed companies, production groups, exchange clubs, etc.) involving urban and rural workers who self-manage their activities and the distribution of their results; b) permanent organizations (rather than casual ventures); c) organizations that may or may not be legally registered, their de facto existence or regular functioning being more important; d) organizations that engage in economic activities such as goods production, provision of services, credit funds (credit cooperatives and community revolving funds), marketing (purchase, sale and exchange of inputs, products and services) and food banks; e) individual or complex, i.e. organizations of various degrees or levels, provided the above characteristics are met (SENAES, 2012).

The debate can be furthered by considering the potential of Public Works and Employment Programmes (PWEPs). These large-scale government job creation initiatives for vulnerable groups are regarded as medium to long-term structural programmes, the main objective of which is to address structural unemployment and poverty (Lal et al, 2010).

According to Lal et al (2010:11), "*Employment Guarantee programmes have multi-faceted economic, social and regional benefits*" (p.11), these programmes include activities such as the regeneration and cleaning of streets and public spaces, road building in rural areas and the extension of basic sanitation. They therefore extend and improve regional infrastructure while prioritizing the integration into society and employment of socially and economically disadvantaged people.

What PWEPs have to offer in this respect is relevant and can help to strengthen SSE activity while seeking to integrate disadvantaged groups with few prospects from peripheral regions and to ensure that the public sector creates work, employment and income. Despite the positive effects observed in some countries researched, however, it is still premature to make authoritative judgments.

In Brazil, a programme was recently launched (2011) which is consistent with the rationale underlying PWEPs: "*Brasil sem Miséria*" [Brazil without Misery]. This programme seeks to eradicate poverty by means of integration into working life and is geared towards Brazilians in households with an income of up to R\$70 per person (around US\$35). According to the 2010 Census by the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (IBGE, 2013), this involves 16.2 million people.

In terms of integration into working life, these initiatives will incorporate incentives for generating jobs and income via social entrepreneurship and the SSE and the provision of careers guidance, vocational training and labor force intermediation to meet public and private needs.

These programmes must therefore be subject to further scrutiny and impact assessments and their continuity must be discussed at greater length in the light of political cycles and changes in power, a challenge this paper seeks to address. This paper therefore intends to examine the relationship between SSE and PWEPs, specifically with regard to the potential of generation employment and income for young people in vulnerable socioeconomic groups.

It is understood that this work falls into a specific study inserted into the mesolevel of discussion that includes the SSE and points to the need to establish and-or strengthen, in the political sphere, the legal and regulatory frameworks that ensure the SSE as a "State Policy", not a "government policy".

In this sense, this article aims to discuss the potential of SSE as a tool to contribute to the generation of employment and income for young people. It is structured as follows: in the first part, we discuss about the SSE and Public Works and Employment Programme (PWEPs), based on the presentation of the Sustainable Integrated Agro-Ecological Production (PAIS), which is a federal government-funded social technology. In the second part, we will present briefly the Programme "*Brasil sem Miséria*" and discuss the recent Brazilian experience in terms

of its objectives and PWEPs. Besides, in this topic we will show some governmental programmes to insert youth people (as Public Work, Employment and Income Scheme; National Programme for Access to Technical Education etc) in the labour market and other international experiences.

1. The SSE and Public Works and Employment Programmes

PWEPs, large-scale government job creation programmes for vulnerable groups, are regarded as medium to long term structural programmes rather than mere “safety nets”.

Box 1 – Potential of Public Works and Employment Programmes (PWEPs)

PWEPs ultimately seek to counter structural unemployment and poverty. According to Lal et al (2010:11), “*Employment Guarantee programmes have multi-faceted economic, social and regional benefits*” (p.11). These programmes include activities such as the regeneration and cleaning of streets and public spaces, road building in rural areas and the extension of basic sanitation. They therefore extend and improve regional infrastructure while prioritizing the integration into society and employment of socially and economically disadvantaged people.

In terms of social protection, PWEPs can contribute towards interaction between different social assistance and cash transfer programmes. For the authors, employment guarantee programmes can be complementary to other forms of social protection and assistance programmes which seek to stimulate consumption, promote investment in human capital and help to mitigate inequality and social and economic vulnerability. The principal positive effects of these programmes are set out below.

- a) In terms of social inclusion these programmes can have an immediate impact by reducing unemployment, particularly during economic crises and/or in vulnerable run-down areas. The authors take the view that programmes of this nature seek to generate income opportunities as social protection rather than as charity, and also allow poverty to be viewed as a multidimensional issue, thus facilitating a more comprehensive response interlinked with other areas of involvement, enabling excluded social groups to be integrated. It is therefore “*superior to other types of social programmes*” (p.12).
- b) In socio-economic terms these programmes help to mitigate the problem of insufficiency/lack of basic household income by generating employment, work and income for beneficiaries who, by doing the work, guarantee a cash income. PWEPs also reduce the length of time beneficiaries are unemployed, which subsequently ensures better conditions for reintegration into working life and for restoring social links and networks that have been lost or weakened during periods of unemployment and exclusion. They can also help to reduce the informality of the local/regional/national labour market and integrate young people – particularly the vulnerable with few prospects – into the labour market. It should be noted that the integration of young people into the labour market is an objective which is being pursued at global level. Information from the *General Conference of the International Labour Organization*, Geneva (2012), draws attention in *Report V*, entitled: “*The youth employment crisis: Time for action*”, to the following:

Box 2 - The youth employment crisis: Time for action

"In 2012 close to 75 million young people worldwide are out of work, of which many have never worked, with many more millions mired in low productivity and insecure jobs; 4 million more youth are unemployed today than in 2007 and [that] more than 6 million have given up looking for a job; this unprecedented situation can result in a long-lasting "scarring" effect on young people, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds; [that] persistent youth unemployment and underemployment carry very high social and economic costs and threaten the fabric of our societies" (ILO, 2012: p.163).

- c) In terms of local and regional development, these programmes are "countercyclical" in that they help to reduce the negative effects of business cycles as well as other effects that significantly curb the momentum of the region concerned. When they come into effect, they also stimulate the development of local infrastructure: road building/maintenance, sanitation works, irrigation, schools, hospitals, etc.

As the authors state:

"it generates multiplier and accelerator effects for local development. By stimulating demand at the local level, it can help 'recover' local activities and establish ties that were either adversely affected by the crisis or were inadequately developed in the region; it can interact with the productive sectors to create stable, good jobs and foster the development of productive infrastructure" (p.12).

Box 3 – Other actions and impacts of a successful pro-PWEP policy

"A PWEP may contribute to the identification of direct employment-intensive investment policies and/or the strengthening of services to and ties with more employment-intensive sectors. Other relevant actions and policies include: policies promoting investments in education, training, institutional and human capacities; physical infrastructure development so as to increase productivity and competitiveness; increasing the capacity of the private sector to contribute to job creation; implementing targeted active labour market policies and programmes; and ensuring improved governance of labour markets through improved participation of worker and employer representatives in the formulation of employment policy. Designed appropriately, an employment guarantee can contribute to the creation of assets and infrastructure that themselves help to increase the productivity and competitiveness of the private sector" (Lal et al, 2010: p.13).

A noteworthy example that allows SSE elements and organizations to be linked with the objectives of PWEPs (a developing theme) and the potential for integrating the younger population is a Brazilian initiative, **Produção Agroecológica Integrada Sustentável – PAIS**⁴ [Sustainable Integrated Agro-Ecological Production]. PAIS is a federal government-funded

⁴ PAIS, a recent process that has expanded rapidly throughout Brazil, develops simple technologies for social inclusion based on "social technology". According to the **RTS – Rede de Tecnologia Social** [Social Technology Network], this involves the use of mostly low-cost tools, techniques and processes that can be **reapplied** in different parts of the country, provided the community takes part. What is produced is **agro-ecological** because it does not use environmentally damaging processes such as the application of pesticides, burning and deforestation; it is **integrated** because it couples animal breeding with crop production and also uses the holding's own inputs throughout the production process; it is **sustainable** because it preserves the quality of the soil and water sources, and encourages producers to form associations and solidarity-based marketing channels for produce.

social technology⁵ that brings together simple farming techniques that can generate positive social and environmental impacts. The starting point is to provide families with the “*Pais Kit*”, i.e. two-years’ technical consultancy and monitoring to implement all the stages involved, from the selection and preparation of land to the sale of the respective produce. *PAIS* now has units in over 40 municipalities and 14 Brazilian states. *PAIS* social technology is a solution for the production of healthy food in order to achieve food security and generate a marketable surplus to provide a supplementary income, thereby creating a new alternative source of work and income for small farmers. This is essentially a two-stage process: i) an increase in the sustainable production of high-quality food to generate food security and reduce problems and diseases arising out of malnutrition and others related to poor nutrition, and ii) the consolidation of ecological and solidarity-based agribusiness founded on surplus household production.

Box 4 – PAIS and its links with the SSE and PWEPs

It should be reiterated that this programme contributes towards:

- the creation of work and income opportunities for the people involved (particularly young people in regions where there are few prospects of work or income);
- environmental preservation;
- encouragement of the formation of producers’ associations or cooperatives;
- the marketing of produce by means of cooperatives, solidarity-based open-air markets and public procurement, where the municipal government purchases surpluses from producers to provide food in state schools.

⁵ Consistent with other national regional development programmes based on the formation of associations and cooperatives to market surplus production, after meeting the nutritional needs of the families involved. These are programmes which contribute towards the advancement of sustainable family agriculture, such as the *PAA – Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos* [Food Acquisition Programme]; *PRONAF – Programa Nacional de Agricultura Familiar* [National Family Agriculture Programme] and the *PNAE – Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar* [National School Food Programme]. The Ministries for Agricultural Development (MDA) and Social Development (MDS) have also contributed. The MDA, for example, via the Regional Development Service of the National Programme for Sustainable Rural Development, has taken part in the discussion, dissemination and consolidation of regional development policy for interaction between and the promotion of public policies and institutional arrangements capable of raising the degree of social, political and institutional belonging to the spatial dimension. This grassroots work adapts to local and regional circumstances by means of dialogue with local stakeholders to build appropriate solutions that stakeholders can identify with. The MDS, meanwhile, introduced a financial support scheme for marketing family agriculture at open-air markets, using public tenders which prioritise projects that respect local culture and encourage sustainable, high-quality low-cost agro-ecological production. The proposal seeks to realise the human right to food, now enshrined in the Federal Constitution, and the creation of work and income for small farmers, particularly young people who would otherwise be forced to migrate to other regions in search of a livelihood and work.

2. “*Brasil sem Miséria*”: recent Brazilian experience and PWEPs

A programme was recently launched in Brazil (2011) which is consistent with the rationale underlying PWEPs: “*Brasil sem Miséria*” [Brazil without Misery]. This programme seeks, inter alia, to eradicate poverty by means of integration into working life and is geared towards Brazilians in households with an income of up to R\$70 per person (around US\$35). According to the 2010 Census by the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (IBGE), this involves 16.2 million people.

Box 5 – *Brasil sem Miséria* and its basic objectives

According to the official site⁶, the objective of the Plan is to combine cash transfers, access to public services in the areas of education, health, social assistance, sanitation and electricity supply and integration into working life. With a range of actions involving the creation of new programmes and the broadening of existing initiatives, in partnership with states, municipalities, public and private companies and civil society organizations, the federal government seeks to include the poorest sections of the population (particularly young people) in the opportunities generated by Brazilian economic growth.

In terms of integration into working life, these initiatives will incorporate incentives for generating jobs and income via entrepreneurship and the SSE and the provision of careers guidance, vocational training and labour force intermediation to meet public and private needs. The aim in terms of training is to meet the needs of people who fall within the profile of the programme by means of coordinated government action:

- ***Sistema Público de Trabalho, Emprego e Renda (SPTER)***⁷ [Public Work, Employment and Income Scheme]: this is a broad range of federal government measures and programmes such as labour force intermediation, vocational training, socio-economic integration of young people, granting of production-based microcredit, etc. with a view to creating employment and income.
- ***Programa Nacional de Acesso à Escola Técnica (PRONATEC)***⁸ [National Programme for Access to Technical Education]: founded in 2011, the principal objective of this programme is to expand, internalize and democratize the provision of vocational and technological education courses for the Brazilian population. It accordingly encompasses a series of subprogrammes, projects and technical and financial assistance measures that will together offer 8 million places over the next four years.
- ***Programa Nacional de Inclusão de Jovens (PROJOVEM)***⁹ [National Programme for the Integration of Young People]: this aims to promote the social integration of 18 to 29-year-olds who, although not illiterate, have not completed basic education. It seeks to reintegrate them into education and working life in order to provide them with opportunities for human development and the effective exercise of citizenship.

In terms of family agriculture and SBEEs in rural environments, the programme seeks to organize food production on the basis of own-consumption, marketing of surpluses and income creation, as well as access to public and private markets. It also seeks to expand the purchase

⁶ <http://www.brasilsemisericia.gov.br> (accessed on 11.06.2013).

⁷ <http://portal.mte.gov.br/spetr/>

⁸ <http://pronatec.mec.gov.br/pronatec.html>

⁹ <http://www.projovem.gov.br/>

by public and philanthropic institutions of produce from family farmers for hospitals, schools, universities, crèches and custodial institutions, as well as by private establishments such as supermarkets.

According to the Ministry for Social Development (MDS)¹⁰, the Government will coordinate actions under the above-mentioned SPTER and PRONATEC in order to facilitate the integration of beneficiaries of the *Bolsa Família* programme into the labour market by providing training courses adapted to each region's economy.

The *Programa Bolsa Família* (PBF) is a direct cash transfer programme for households in poverty and extreme poverty throughout the country. The PBF includes the *Brasil sem Miséria* (BSM) plan and comprises three main strands: cash transfers, conditions and complementary actions and programmes. Cash transfers ensure immediate poverty relief. Conditions reinforce access to basic social rights in education, health and welfare. Complementary actions and programmes focus on family capacity-building so that beneficiaries can overcome their vulnerability ("third generation" of this programme). The programme covers over 13 million households throughout national territory (MDS, 2012).

In Brazil, although more specific studies on the impact and perspectives of the "third generation" are still at a stage of elaboration, some considerations on the Brazilian case can be tentatively outlined. As showed Morais & Bacic (2009), there is a more favourable environment for carrying out policies and practices that are consistent with the idea of making the "emancipation" for the beneficiaries possible, although the crucial idea is how to pass from a merely welfare programme to an emancipatory one.

According to Morais & Bacic (2008), the main problems found in the outline of what is intended to be developed as the "third generation" of these programmes refer to questions inherent in the profile of this target-public as well as to the profile of our political and social environment. In other words, the main problems can be defined as follows: a) macroeconomic factors (limit scope of action in dealing with serious structural problems such as unemployment and a low standard of living, which are determined by national and even international macroeconomics; b) lack of resources for investment; c) persistence of clientelistic and welfare elements in political relations; d) decentralization between secretariats, organs and programmes; e) lack of information about the objectives and methodologies of the programmes; f) risk of discontinuity of the projects. In this sense, it would be beneficial to create conditions for the development of small and micro entrepreneurs, whether associative in nature or not, based on the concession of (micro) credit, legal and administrative demands, infrastructure, partnerships between governments and non-governmental players, even international ones, as well as professional and entrepreneurial training.

Another facet of *Brasil sem miséria* concerns relations with cooperatives of collectors of recyclable and reusable materials, who will receive support for organizing their activities, bringing about improvements in working conditions and broader opportunities for socio-economic integration. The priority will be to work with metropolitan capitals and regions, supporting local government in selective collection programmes, empowering collectors and rendering infrastructure and marketing networks viable. The plan seeks to empower and strengthen participation in selective collecting and will involve measures to ensure infrastructure viability and to expand marketing networks.

In terms of links between the SSE, PWEPS and opportunities for the socio-economic integration of young people, it should be noted that studies by the DIEESE (*Departamento Intersindical de Estudos e Estatísticas Socioeconômicas*)¹¹ [Inter-Union Socioeconomic Research and Statistics Department] show that in the current decade the open unemployment rate for the adult population in Brazil has fallen but youth unemployment has risen substantially, preventing a fall in the general unemployment rate.

¹⁰ www.mds.gov.br (accessed on 11.06.2013).

¹¹ www.dieese.org.br

Because of the challenge of formulating and developing effective measures in response to this issue, the **Departamento de Políticas de Trabalho e Emprego para a Juventude – DPJ** [Department for Work and Employment Policies for Young People] was created within the Ministry of Labour and Employment in 2004 to promote more and better opportunities for work, employment and income generation for the young.

Initially dedicated to the task of integrating 14 to 24-year-olds with a low household per capita income and poor schooling into the formal labour market, in 2008 the DPJ adapted some of the vocational training measures for young people to the **Política Nacional da Juventude** [National Youth Policy], introduced by the federal government to unify ministerial action and optimize results, seeking a clean break from the vicious, selective and excluding circle of low levels of schooling coupled with the lack of social and vocational training for Brazilians in that age group and the worst social conditions.

In the above-mentioned proposal for bringing the action of several ministries together, coordinated by the **Secretaria Nacional de Juventude** [National Youth Office], the DPJ will be responsible for developing the **Programa ProJovem Trabalhador**¹² [Young Workers' Programme], one of the strands of the ProJovem unified programme, with the objective of providing training for 18 to 29-year-olds who have concluded basic education.

ProJovem Trabalhador is a compensatory social and vocational training policy that will be developed in partnership with states, municipalities and civil society. The aim is to prepare and intermediate the youth labour force for the formal labour market and to promote new opportunities to generate income and foster entrepreneurship among young people. The SSE is an important tool for generating work and income, based on SBEEs. The *Brasil sem Miséria* plan is a PWEF that makes mechanisms available (microcredit, consultancy, etc.) to promote small businesses among young people. By way of example, a recent one-year assessment of the Plan shows that the partnership between *Brasil sem Miséria* and the SEBRAE (*Serviço Brasileiro de Apoio às Micro e Pequenas Empresas* [Brazilian Small and Medium Sized Enterprises Support Service]) seeks to formalize and provide technical assistance for individual micro-entrepreneurs (IME¹³). Some 171,000 new IMEs in the *Cadastro Único* [a unique database] have been formalized, including 81,000 *Bolsa Família* beneficiaries. Almost 23,000 of the latter, a large proportion being 18 to 28-year-olds, received specialist technical assistance.

Another program that needs be mentioned refers to **Programa de Inclusão Produtiva, Formação Cidadã e Capacitação para Geração de Renda da Juventude Rural** [Productive Inclusion Program, Citizenship Education and Training for Income Generation of Rural Youth]. According to information on the official website of the Program, it aims to promote actions that coordinate and integrate the exchange of experience, training and citizen access to social technologies with a view to stimulate production and agroecological practices generating agricultural and non-agricultural sustainable income, strengthening the conditions for the permanence of young people in the field, through the following initiatives: Citizenship Education and Training in Agroecology with social technologies and production for income generation;

- 1) Integration with public policies that can meet the rural youth;
- 2) Income generation projects (agricultural and non-agricultural).

The Program is structured around the following Axis:

¹² Further information at: http://portal.mte.gov.br/politicas_juventude/

¹³ Individual entrepreneurs are self-employed people who legally establish themselves as sole proprietors. People who wish to be classified as sole proprietors must have a turnover of no more than R\$60,000 (US\$30,000) per year, they must not have been involved with another company as a partner or owner and must have a contracted employee who receives the minimum or lowest wage for the job category. Supplementary Bill No 128 of 19/12/2008 established special conditions so that people known as casual workers could become legalized Sole Proprietors. Further information can be found at: <http://www.portaldoeempreendedor.gov.br>.

Axis 1 - Access to land and essential services for the production and rural development: rural youth to provide conditions for succession rural with access to land and agrarian reform, involving a set of policies to facilitate the production and rural incomes, enhancing sustainable rural development.

Axis 2 - Field Education: supporting the effectiveness of public education and in the field, free and quality at all levels and types of education (kindergarten, elementary, secondary, technical and higher), ensuring access and permanence in school, overcoming illiteracy and promoting continuing education.

Axis 3 - Income Generation and Decent Work: creating and public policies that promote specific *programmes* to the youth of peasant family farming and peoples and traditional communities, strengthening initiatives for income generation and rural youth and promote networking, the forms of cooperative and solidarity economy.

Axis 4 - Leisure and Culture: promote access to policies and programs that contribute to the internalization and globalization of cultural, sports and leisure, valuing and strengthening the cultural practices and local sports.

Axis 5 - Housing and Health: contribute to the universalization of infrastructure in the country, with access to the decent housing.

The general idea is cross axis: citizenship, social participation and equity, ensuring rural youth the right to citizenship, strengthening social participation and social control of public policies on youth councils and territorial development, promote gender equality and race – ethnicity and intergenerational actions, deepen their knowledge of the Brazilian rural youth; advance in addressing the social and cultural prejudice experienced by the youth of field, and expanding access to information technologies and communication.

2.1 – Other international experiences

The Brazilian experience is accompanied by other potentially successful international initiatives.

Box 6 - International experiences involving the SSE and PWEs

- *Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and Community Work Programme*, South Africa;
- *Plan Jefes y Jefas de Hogar Desocupados*, Argentina;
- *Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP)*, Ethiopia;
- *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)*, India;
- *Comité Sectoriel de Main-d'oeuvre Économie sociale et Action Communautaire*, Canada;
- *Hilando el Desarrollo*, Ecuador.

In **South Africa**, against a background of extremely high structural unemployment rates, particularly among the young, and lack of skills, the first phase of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) was launched in 2004, followed by the second stage in 2009. The programme is aimed at all unemployed people available for work in positions such as child care, home-and-community-based care and environmental rehabilitation, conservation and management, based on wage rates defined by the programme for up to 24 months. All government bodies are stimulated at national level to generate employment in their structures, provided it is technically and economically viable. The national government provides the provinces and municipalities with resources and infrastructure (together with assessment and monitoring services), and encourages the use of local funds to supplement the financial basis of these programmes.

In **Argentina**, the *Jefes y Jefas de Hogar* [Heads of Household] programme, launched in 2002 to offset the impact of unemployment at the time, was geared towards heads of households with children, people with disabilities or pregnant women, with an emphasis on the young unemployed among these categories. Beneficiaries worked for 20 hours a week in community services (childcare, soup kitchens, health projects, etc.), in building work and the maintenance of squares, streets, etc., as well as in education and training. At its peak the programme employed 2.2 million previously unemployed workers (around 22% of the Argentinian economically active population). It is 80% federal government-funded by means of specific credit lines and the provision of managerial support through the Ministry of Labour. Municipal governments were responsible for covering 20% of the project's costs, assessing community needs and resources and selecting beneficiaries.

Argentina is also responsible for two specific complementary programmes that help the low-income young to set up businesses: a) "Young People with More and Better Work" of the Ministry of Labour, targeting youth between 18 and 24 years in vulnerable situations with subsidies and vocational training; b) "Young Entrepreneurs" of the Ministry of Industry, focusing on youth between 18 and 35 and offering zero interest loans, initial training and technical assistance during the first year (ILO, 2012)¹⁴.

In **Ethiopia**, where a food deficit affects much of the rural population, the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) was launched in 2005 to cover between 7 to 8 million people in poverty-stricken rural areas. This programme focused on the food-insecure by providing resources for sustainable community development and for improving the use of natural resources and social infrastructure (sanitation, irrigation, waterholes, etc.). The programme is funded by the Ministry for Rural Development (which in addition to financial resources also provides offices, advice and assistance) and is supported by the broad participation of the communities involved, which are responsible for identifying the activities and resources required. According to Lal et al (2010:13), "*Community committees propose which households are to participate in public works vs. which receive direct transfers*".

In **India**, in a context of significant and widespread rural poverty and unequal opportunities for livelihoods, the *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act* was enacted in 2005 and came into force in the following year. Funding is ensured by the Ministry for Rural Development, which guaranteed wage costs and 75% of the materials used, the remainder being covered by the state government. A core feature of the programme was to guarantee a "*rights-based framework making the government legally accountable for providing employment*". Between 2008 and 2009 the programme benefited 45 million people in 615 districts, the primary objective being "*to create durable assets and strengthen the livelihood resource base of the rural poor through works that address causes of chronic poverty such as drought, deforestation and soil erosion*".

In **Canada**, via the "*Comité sectoriel de main-d'oeuvre - Économie sociale et Action communautaire*" (CSMO-ESAC) [Labour Force Committee – Social Economy and Community Action], the government of Quebec supports labour force training and development on the one hand and seeks to adopt appropriate measures to maintain and stabilize jobs on the other. Note should also be taken of government incentives to universities to encourage their participation in promoting and supporting the SSE via the "*Alliance de recherche universités-communautés en*

¹⁴ This study also considers another Latin American case: Chile. According to the study: "*The Government member of Chile stated that 1 million young people (15–24) worked, with an employment rate of 31.5, and 9 per cent of those working being self-employed. This share was much lower than the total national average share of the self-employed (20 per cent of all employed). Entrepreneurs were mostly to be found among adults. The percentage of youth looking for another job was 9.3 per cent among those in wage employment, against 17 per cent among the young self-employed. Furthermore, young self-employed worked fewer hours than their counterparts in wage employment. Chile supported youth entrepreneurship as an employment-creation strategy and the Ministry of Labour had significantly reduced the time needed to establish an enterprise and the credit charges by banks on loans given to young entrepreneurs*" (p.68).

économie sociale” [Community-University Research Alliance in the social economy] (ARUC ES)^{15 16}, which is designed to produce and disseminate new know-how, transfer knowledge and support the Quebec SSE model. Strong support is also provided by the *Chantier de l’Économie Sociale*¹⁷, a civil society organization made up of SSE companies, social movements and local development networks. One of this body’s achievements was to persuade the Canadian Government to fund a project which is currently regarded as the financial tool of the organization, since such funding addresses the financial needs of the SSE initiatives developed by the *Chantier*. This gave rise in 2007 to the *Chantier* trust, a fund of approximately C\$55 million whose principal objective is to promote the expansion and development of collective enterprises by improving their access to funding and ensuring that they are better capitalized. The SSE, not only in Quebec but virtually throughout Canada, forms part of a regional and local development programme covered by a government action plan involving eight ministries, coordinated since 2008 by the Minister for Municipal Affairs and Regional Development¹⁸.

In **Ecuador** the 1998 Constitution committed the economy to principles of efficiency, solidarity, sustainability and quality. Some of the public resources made available are geared towards ensuring the protection of rural workers and small farmers. According to José Luis Coraggio, in an interview with the programme “*El poder de la palabra*”, from *Ecuadormediato*¹⁹:

“Ecuador is an exemplary country because social movements have managed to enshrine these issues in the Constitution; it is the only Constitution which contains anything as strong as the assertion that the economic system must be social and solidarity-based”.

Ecuador’s *Ministerio de Inclusión Económica y Social* (MIES²⁰ [Ministry for Economic and Social Inclusion]), which is tasked with promoting and encouraging economic and social inclusion, pursues SSE activities, programmes and actions as a way of enabling citizens to participate in the social, political, economic and cultural life of their communities. More specifically, within this Ministry the *Instituto Nacional de Economía Popular y Solidaria*²¹ [National Institute for a People’s Solidarity-Based Economy] runs projects designed to generate opportunities and build capacities to ensure the economic and social inclusion of individuals, groups and social organizations.

More recently, the “*Hilando el Desarrollo*” programme was launched in 2012 with the aim of including small and medium scale artisans in producing school uniforms for state schools in Chimborazo province. The programme was designed, organized and monitored by the above-mentioned national institute, which also facilitates access to credit for such enterprises.

¹⁵ www.aruc-es.uqam.ca

¹⁷ www.chantier.qc.ca

¹⁸ www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca

¹⁹ Interview accessed on 15/01/2012, at: www.ecuadormediato.com

²⁰ www.mies.gov.ec

²¹ www.ieps.gov.ec

3. Conclusions

The previously mentioned work by Lal et al (2010:34) shows that:

“there has been a growing call for the state to take on a role of Employer of Last Resort to serve as a ‘buffer’ by providing a range of useful jobs that individuals could fill during periods of high unemployment and vacate when labour market opportunities improved.

What PWEPs have to offer is highly relevant and can help to strengthen SSE activity while seeking to integrate disadvantaged groups and to ensure that the public sector creates work, employment and income.

Despite the positive effects observed in some countries researched, however, it is still premature to make authoritative judgements (*Brasil sem Miséria*, for example).

Thus as recognized in the ILO study referred to above (2012:46), *“there were many experiences but very few impact assessments and evaluations in this area”*. These programmes must therefore be subject to further scrutiny and impact assessments and their continuity must be discussed at greater length in the light of political cycles and changes in power.

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