



LABOR INTEGRATION PROGRAMS IN DEPRIVED NEIGHBORHOODS

The CEDEL Experience

 **UNIÓN INDUSTRIAL
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FOREWORD

The UIA Department of Education comprises business representatives from small and medium enterprises, sectoral and regional chambers, as well as of representatives from academia focused on education and bringing together science and technology. The Department aims to promote education as the foundation of national industrial development by addressing education issues linked with economic growth, research and development, technological innovation, productive transformation, and competitiveness.

GAN is a global business-driven alliance through which private-sector companies, employer federations, international organizations and thought leaders promote work-based learning as a viable pathway to employment, in particular for youth.

While GAN Global is a strategic platform, GAN Argentina (hosted by UIA) is GAN's on-the-ground country mechanism to promote work-based learning programmes. Its fundamental role is to provide a foundation for the GAN concepts that are adapted to the unique Argentine context.

GAN Argentina promotes work-based learning as a means to accelerate the acquisition of skills and capabilities for youth and build a robust talent pipeline for businesses to thrive.

This report is the result of a collaboration between GAN Argentina, the Argentine Industrial Union (UIA) and Randstad. It analyses the experience, learning and results of the Labor Integration Program (PIL) carried out in Barrio Padre Mugica (Ex Villa 31) by the Center for Entrepreneurship and Labor Development (CeDEL), under the Secretariat of Social and Economic Integration of the Government of the City of Buenos Aires. The study was conducted by CENEP, under the coordination of Georgina Binstock and Marcela Cerrutti.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to generate information to reinforce the training, inclusion and monitoring processes of populations that participated in employment promotion activities in deprived neighborhoods. To this aim, the Center for Entrepreneurship and Labor Development (CEDEL) of the Government of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires has conducted an empirical analysis of their experience with the Labor Integration Program (PIL) in Villa 31, with a view toward identifying those aspects that can be replicated in similar socioeconomically vulnerable neighborhoods. The study sought to understand the benefits for participating companies, based on the experience with CEDEL, along with the perceptions, experiences and reviews of the neighborhood residents who participated in the PIL program. The results of this study also contributed to a practical guide that contains recommendations for replicating and implementing a labor inclusion project that will be applicable to other contexts.

OUTCOMES

The Labor Integration Program (PIL) involved a series of actions to improve employment possibilities for Villa 31 neighborhood residents by connecting them

to formal employment opportunities within local companies. The program provided residents with essential training to facilitate their employment search process (Job Orientation Workshop, TOL), while also approaching formally established companies that operate in areas relatively close to neighborhood residents in order to assess their labor demands and connect jobseekers with available opportunities.

It is worth noting that unlike a classic return on investment study, this study sought to provide a holistic reflection on program performance by integrating organizational aspects, business participation styles and the opinions of beneficiaries. A unique quality of this program was the recognition that the neighborhood is home to a significant amount of untapped work potential and that specific actions can enhance employment. The role of the program consisted of facilitating a connection between the available human resources and the company demand.

Over the last year (July 2018 - June 2019), a total of 1,692 people approached CEDEL with the aim of obtaining formal employment unrelated to the construction sector. Their sociodemographic profiles were heterogeneous; however, the group was dominated by women and young people. Only half of those who approached the project completed the TOL workshop, and significant differences can be observed according to their level of education: the higher the participant's level of education, the higher the TOL completion rate.

Of those who completed the TOL, approximately 16% obtained formal employment within two months. This percentage was higher among men than women (20% vs. 13%), those who have completed secondary education (17% vs. 10%), and among Argentinean nationals (15% for Argentineans vs. 10% for Peruvians, respectively).

An important factor to take into account, due to its influence on CEDEL's program, is that this study was carried out at a time of economic stagnation and low levels of employment in Argentina. In other words, the general economic context did not favor employment promotion programs or policies. Thus, the recruitment that took place was predominantly aimed toward placing participants in temporary positions (substitutions, absences, specific workforce needs).

Both companies and participants alike have rated their experience with CEDEL highly. For companies, the particular aspects that stood out regarding their experience with the program over the last year were the following: a) the fact that the workers lived near their workplaces improved accessibility; b) the training given to the workers improved their soft skills; c) CEDEL's policy of following-up with workers placed in positions improved retention and quality; and d) the contact with CEDEL was direct and smooth, and they were willing to provide support.

An important aspect of the program was that the individuals implementing the program for CEDEL had previous work experience within human resource departments in private companies. This provided them with a clearer understanding of the logic and methods of the recruitment process. Furthermore, it facilitated interactions with companies based on both personal knowledge and professional trust.

Neighborhood participants valued the following aspects of the program: a) the training they received during the TOL improved their skills and understanding of the expectations in a formal work setting; b) the job interview advice was helpful even in their independent job searches; and c) the mentoring and support they received from the work team was beneficial.

Another important positive aspect highlighted by the participants was that their experience with CEDEL provided them with opportunities to interview for positions in formal private companies and government offices (and in some cases, to become employed by these entities). These individuals believed that without CEDEL's support, connections, and implicit endorsement of jobseekers in the program, they would have experienced difficulties in accessing these opportunities, and may not have even been considered due to the discrimination surrounding the employment of Villa 31 inhabitants.

For similar programs in the future, companies expressed that the following issues should be strengthened: a) the need for a more refined calibration between the profiles requested by the companies and those proposed by the program; b) the relevance of providing more advanced training in soft skills; and c) the need to include more local companies in the program in order to increase employment rates.

Program participants have identified the following aspects for improvement in the future: a) further training geared toward specific job roles; b) greater control and/or reliable information regarding the working conditions being offered by the companies (a significant number of participants did not agree with the working conditions and wages); and c) support for dealing with the frustration caused by unsuccessful interviews.

Undoubtedly, some of the issues mentioned by companies and participants largely depend on macroeconomic frameworks and the lack of dynamism in the labor market in Argentina, which goes beyond the work of CEDEL itself.



INTRODUCTION

Barrio 31, commonly known as Villa 31, is one of the most well-known in the country, not only for being one of the oldest but also for its level of organization. In June 2016, the Government of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires launched the Integral Plan of Action 2016-2019 for the transformation of Villa 31. The main objective of the plan was to better integrate Villa 31 into the city itself and to improve the living conditions of its residents. Within this framework, the Center for Entrepreneurship and Leadership (CEDEL) was created in 2016 and currently works within Villa 31. CEDEL's main goal is to improve the economic development of the neighborhood by offering diverse trainings in a range of professions. For small business owners and others interested in exploring entrepreneurship, CEDEL offers personalized assessments and an Entrepreneur Mentoring scheme, which supports individuals in the development of a business plan.

Along with these trainings, CEDEL has also developed a Labor Integration Program (PIL) which implements a series of actions to improve employment possibilities for neighborhood residents by connecting them with formal employment opportunities within local companies. The program provides residents with essential training

to facilitate their employment search process, while also approaching formally established companies that operate in areas relatively close to neighborhood residents in order to assess their labor demands and available opportunities.

A unique aspect this program was the recognition that the neighborhood is home to a significant amount of untapped work potential and that specific actions can enhance employment. The role of the program consisted of facilitating a connection between the available human resources and the company demand. This involved breaking down barriers that are frequently experienced by the actors involved: on one hand, convincing companies that it is in their best interest to employ local workers, and on the other, convincing residents about the possibilities of being formally employed and improving relevant skills. Thus, vulnerable populations are included in the market for goods and services through the companies' agreement to facilitate social integration and reduce poverty while expanding their business and market opportunities.

The purpose of this study was to generate information to reinforce the training, inclusion and monitoring processes for workers that participated in this initiative, and to provide a series of recommendations that can be replicated in other socioeconomically vulnerable neighborhoods. To this end, the study empirically analyzed CEDEL's experience with the PIL to understand the benefits for participating companies, based on the experience with CEDEL, along with the perceptions, experiences and reviews of the neighborhood residents who participated in the PIL program. The results of this study also contributed to a practical guide that contains recommendations for replicating and implementing a labor inclusion project that will be applicable to other contexts.





A BRIEF HISTORY OF VILLA 31

Villa 31 is one of the neighborhoods in Argentina that has historically received the most interventions by governments, political parties, NGOs, universities, churches and even tourists. The formation of Villa 31 began during the 1930s and grew significantly during the subsequent decades, when a series of social events posed difficulties for the city in terms of providing housing solutions for its inhabitants. From the beginning, the settlements were generally concentrated in two areas: Retiro and the South East (Villa Soldati, Lugano and Bajo Flores). Villa 31 was the first to become populated and it began in the areas surrounding the Retiro train station.

Over the years, the neighborhood experienced diverse stages, during which it demonstrated a high degree of political organization. Successive governments tested various alternative policies aimed at improving the neighborhood, from the Emergency Plan of 1956, the improvement plans carried out under Frondizi's government and later that of Illia, to the first Villa Eradication Program under

Onganía's government. It is estimated that by the start of 1970, the population of Villa 31 increased to 16,000.

These removals ceased under Cámpora's government, and later under that of Perón. However, as a result of the last military dictatorship (1976) and the use of bulldozers, Villa 31 was eradicated. Its inhabitants were transferred to Greater Buenos Aires by truck and relocated in neighborhoods that quickly became overpopulated. Forty three families resisted the eviction and put together the Comisión de Demandantes. They succeeded in convincing the judicial power to rule in their favor, letting them staying in the area. The area's re-population began at the start of the 1980s and both the number of inhabitants and its densification experienced constant growth.

With the return to democracy in 1983, plans that obliged the municipality to eradicate towns were repealed. At the same time, the prevailing paradigm shifted from eviction or eradication as the definitive solution for villas, to the consolidation and establishment of land and urban regularization.

The enactment of the Constitution of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires in 1996 enshrined the right to housing and habitat as a priority for people in areas of extreme poverty and for those with special needs regarding scarce resources. This facilitated the enactment of Law 148 in 1998, which declared the social and housing issues in the villas and Transitional Housing Areas (NHT) a priority, requesting that the Government of the City of Buenos Aires establish and urbanize these settlements (*Defensoría del Pueblo de la Provincia de Buenos Aires S/F, p.84*).

In 2000, Villa 31 was already divided into five neighborhoods: YPF, Comunicaciones, Güemes, Inmigrantes and Autopista. Güemes was the neighborhood closest to the Terminal de Ómnibus (Bus Station) and the area where the highest housing blocks were located (up to 4 floors). YPF and Comunicaciones represented the oldest settlements, and the space between Autopista Illia and the General San Martín Railway, with significantly more precarious conditions, was known as Villa 31 Bis.

The last census that described the characteristics of the neighborhood population was the 2009 *Censo de Hogares y Población* for Villa 31 and 31 Bis, and a year later, the *Censo Nacional de Población y Vivienda* also delivered results regarding its inhabitants and residential characteristics. Although this information is now undoubtedly out of date, this is the most recent data available at this time.

This census obtained information on 7,950 households (47% of which were located in Villa 31) which represented a population of 26,403 people (46% in Villa 31). With an average of 3.32 persons per household, the resident population exhibited an age

structure with a significantly younger profile than that of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires as a whole, which is a particularly aged population. Almost seven out of ten inhabitants were under 30 years of age (68%).

The following year, according to the *Censo Nacional de Población y Vivienda* (2010), and a joint study carried out between the *Observatorio de la Deuda Social Argentina* (UCA) and the *Defensoría del Pueblo* for the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, the resident population reached 27,023 people (11,177 in V31 and 15,836 in V31 Bis). It has been estimated that by 2015, the population had increased to 43,190 people, 8,502 homes and 13,015 families (data obtained from the surveys carried out by SECISYU and GCABA in June and July 2015).

A distinctive feature, although by no means exclusive to Villa 31 and 31 Bis, was the significant presence of foreign-born individuals. According to the 2009 census, one in every two inhabitants was foreign, primarily born in another country within the region. As expected, following the general trend in the country, this population has continued to grow. Immigrant populations were more concentrated in Villa 31 Bis, where 64% were foreigners, while they made up just 35% of Villa 31.

In terms of educational profiles, only a minority population had not received any form of formal education (1.9% in V31 and 3.7% in V31 Bis); however, almost 19% of the population over the age of 24 did not complete primary education, and only 2.7% completed some form of higher education or university.

In any case, it should be highlighted that the young adult population demonstrated higher levels of education than the older population. For example, among 25-29 year-old individuals, the percentage who had completed at least secondary school education was around 40%, while for those who were 30 years of age or older, this percentage dropped to almost 30%. This is a significant point because, as seen below, the participating companies generally requested that qualified candidates had obtained intermediate certificates.

In 2009, the level of employment among men in Villa 31 was not significantly different than those observed in the City of Buenos Aires as a whole; in fact, it was marginally higher (5.4% in V31, 4.5% in V31 Bis and 3.3% in CABA). Among women, however, the differences were more significant, as women residents in Villa 31 demonstrated a lower employment rate (66.9% in V31, 66.5% in V31 Bis and 78.4% in CABA) and higher unemployment rate than those in the City of Buenos Aires (9.5%, 9.7% and 5%, respectively), which is likely due to their lower educational profiles and more dominant domestic responsibilities.

It must be highlighted again that these data were collected a decade ago and therefore may only partially reflect the current socioeconomic and demographic reality. Since that time, the employment situation has declined and it is probable that the previously identified gaps have now widened. Traditionally, precarious employability has been one of the most significant difficulties encountered by this population, with lower levels of education than that of the city's population as a whole. The impact of informal work has been significant and the prevalence of precarious jobs (either through self-employment or informal wage earners) both inside and outside the villa has been extensive, as demonstrated by the work experience of those interviewed for this study. The initiatives developed by CEDEL through its Labor Integration Program were fundamentally aimed at this population.





OUTLINE AND METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to evaluate and document the experience of companies and vulnerable workers, based on their participation in CEDEL's Labor Integration Program in Villa 31. This analysis was intended to generate a guide containing practical recommendations for those seeking to implement similar projects within contexts of urban vulnerability.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in this study. Contextual and bibliographic information on the history of Villa 31 and on some basic sociodemographic characteristics were analyzed using available official information (as demonstrated in the previous section). Likewise, CEDEL's PIL program records allowed for a description of the project beneficiaries and an analysis of the program's stages over time (registration, attendance, module completion, employment, etc.).

Qualitative information was collected from program officials, beneficiaries and participating companies. In each case, an attempt was made to find out what aspects were considered key when it came to strengthening the beneficiaries' capacity to be interviewed and hired by the participating companies. The study also sought to

understand the assumptions under which CEDEL operated, the expectations of those attending the program - both in terms of training and work - and the companies' demands for hiring personnel.

The perspectives of the beneficiaries were examined on the basis of 30 semi-structured flexible interviews with both men and women, which were recorded. An attempt was made to ensure that the intentional sample was heterogeneous in relation not only to the national origin and educational profiles of the participants, but also in terms of the results of their participation in the program (people who are employed, people who were previously employed but are currently unemployed, and people who were not called for a job interview).

The interview structure was modular, in which the sociodemographic characteristics of those interviewed were investigated in addition to their previous work experience, contact with CEDEL (approach, training received, experience valuation), recruitment (outline of the recruitment processes), working conditions, job duration, information received, relationship with colleagues/supervisors, and commuting times, as well as their most highly valued aspects and those which led to dissatisfaction. Also, following the interview, opinions regarding the difficulties faced by the neighborhood residents when looking for work were investigated along with their recommendations.

The perspective of the companies was obtained by way of individual or group interviews with managers from human resources, corporate social responsibility or diversity departments, depending on the area that maintained contact with CEDEL. Ten companies were selected to represent diverse sectors and levels of participation with the CEDEL experience: maintenance services and skilled work, culinary services, food services and support, pharmacy chains, human resources services and fuel sales.

The interviews investigated specific work experiences, traits that made workers stand out, and participants' relationship with the work environment, such as those elements of the training program that could be improved. More specifically, the interview guide included questions regarding the initial contact with CEDEL and what generated interest in the program, the characteristics of companies most receptive to participating in the experience, and the characteristics of the job interviews (methods, how many interviews were conducted, what was valued in general). Respondents were also asked to elaborate on their experience with CEDEL, both in terms of the program operation and the characteristics of the candidates with whom they had contact (aspects that stood out), in addition to the performance of the individuals they decided to hire. With regards to this last aspect, it was requested that an assessment be established regarding their performance and the processes

that companies undertook to train and integrate these workers into the workforce. Finally, questions were also included regarding the aspects of the program that could be strengthened.

It is worth noting that unlike a classic return on investment study, this study sought to provide a holistic reflection on program performance by integrating organizational aspects, business participation styles and the perspectives of beneficiaries.

The analysis was organized as follows: a description of the Labor Integration Program was given, indicating its characteristics, dynamics and means of follow-up. A quantitative analysis was then carried out based on the program records, outlining the number of participants, their characteristics, whether or not they completed the workshop, and whether or not they are now employed. The interviews with representatives from the companies' human resource or corporate social responsibility (CSR) departments were then analyzed, addressing their general recruitment processes, means of contact with CEDEL, and their views on the experience. In this sense, it described their opinions regarding participation in this type of government initiative, both in terms of the highlights and the aspects which could be improved. The subsequent section described the perspectives of the neighborhood residents who participated in CEDEL's activities. These mostly included individuals who have obtained employment (or went as far as the job interview stage), asking them to tell their stories, specific experiences and their opinions about the program. The most interesting aspects were those regarding their objections or suggestions for improvement. Finally, after discussing the perspectives of those who implemented the program, participating enterprises, employers and workers, the main conclusions and recommendations of the study were summarized.

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THE LABOR INTEGRATION PROGRAM: CHARACTERISTICS

The Labor Integration Program will celebrate its third anniversary in December, and during these three years it has been adapted and improved. Today, the program operates primarily as follows: the neighborhood residents in need of employment (whether because they are unemployed or they wish to improve the quality of their current job) first approach the CEDEL offices. When they arrive, a receptionist asks for their basic personal information (gender, age, DNI [National Identity Document number], education and previous work experience), which is then added to a database. At this point, they establish whether the person is interested in pursuing work in the construction sector (in order to search for a job related to the construction projects taking place in the neighborhood) or in another type of job search. Those who are interested in construction (predominantly men) are offered the opportunity to get involved in sector-specific courses.

This study was conducted with individuals who were looking for paid work that was not in the local construction sector (see the quantitative description below). The Labor Integration Program enables these workers to take part in diverse training courses, mock interviews to prepare them for job interviews and, eventually, connects them with actual job interviews with local companies.

Specifically, following registration, participants must attend a job orientation workshop (step 2). This workshop consists of two classes where they learn how to prepare a CV, how to behave in a job interview, and other general soft skills. The third class consists of a mock interview with representatives from the human resource or corporate social responsibility departments in companies that have agreed to participate in the PIL.

Ideally, the three classes that make up the course take place during the same week. However, this does not generally occur, as it takes a certain amount of time to be able to assist all participants in creating their CV, which should be printed in time for the interview. Similarly, the coordination of the mock interviews with companies may also be delayed. Typically, this simulation takes place over a period of two weeks.

It should also be highlighted that CEDEL engages in follow-up for each participant. Those who attend the labor orientation workshop are monitored for two months, unless they are subsequently pre-selected for a job search. Eventually, if they are hired, the follow-up continues after 3 and 6 months, as will be seen in more detail below. The PIL program is available Tuesday through Friday from 9am to 1pm in one of its office locations, and on Mondays from 9am to 5pm in the other.

CEDEL uses a database to record all information related to participants and their follow-up. Relevant information regarding potential candidates is shared with the participating companies. Through training and job interview sessions, various private companies are actively taking part in the labor integration of socioeconomically vulnerable individuals from this neighborhood. Unfortunately, however, few are successful in obtaining employment. To a large extent, the lack of employment offers stems from the overall economic context, which has not been favorable. It is without a doubt that the country's economic situation works against the program's efforts to increase the number of individuals who are recruited.

The contact mechanisms between CEDEL, the companies and the participants are varied. WhatsApp is used on a daily basis in order to ensure quick, frequent communication with participants. It is used both individually and by way of structured WhatsApp groups to send group messages. If a candidate is selected for a job, the communication between the organization and CEDEL is constant. During the first six months of work, social mentoring and performance evaluation are carried out for the local employee.

WHO APPROACHED CEDEL ABOUT THE LABOR INTEGRATION PROGRAM?

Since the program began at the end of 2017, a total of 5,475 people approached CEDEL in search of paid work unrelated to the construction sector. During the last year (July 2018 to June 2019), the requirement to complete the labor orientation workshop was established, and during this period 1,692 people approached CEDEL.

Taking into account the characteristics of those who have approached CEDEL since it began the PIL program, there has been a predominance of women (two in every three) and young people. Almost 40% were under the age of 25, and half of them were under the age of 20. Around 30% were between 25 and 34 years of age, and only a minority (10%) was over 45 years of age. These data are consistent with other statistics regarding the greater difficulties faced by women and the young adult population in terms of accessing the formal labor market. The situation for women is complex; however, it is without a doubt that their greater domestic and care responsibilities play a key role. For young people, the difficulties accessing the labor market are likely due to the requirements for previous work experience that are requested in the majority of jobs (which many young people do not have).

In terms of nationality, just under half (47%) of the job-seekers were Argentinean and the rest were foreign-born from very varied backgrounds (both Latin American and African countries). However, natives of Paraguay (19%) stood out, followed by those born in Bolivia and Peru (between 11% and 13%). Taking into account the facilities provided by the Argentinean legislation for the entitlement of migrants (in particular those from South America), the fact that a large proportion of this population has a residency permit in Argentina (whether temporary or permanent) enables them to work formally.

Regarding education, 14% had completed primary education or less, 37% started but did not complete secondary education, and 33% completed their secondary education. Almost 16% of those who registered with CEDEL had at least begun higher education (tertiary or university level). A minority (12%) indicated that they were working when they approached CEDEL, in search of a job alternative with better working conditions (working or salary conditions), while the rest were either not working (75%) or did not provide any information (12%). Upon analysis of the candidates' previous work experience, skilled jobs were frequently highlighted (especially among women), along with general services, culinary, commerce, customer services and security (especially among men).

WHO COMPLETED THE TOL?

Obligatory attendance was implemented at the labor orientation workshop and it is interesting to know how many of those who approached CEDEL (either because of a poster or upon recommendation by a neighbor) effectively completed the TOL and were incorporated into the database to be included in the job search. The analysis will also look at whether those who completed the course differed in their demographic profiles compared to those who did not.

Of the total number of people who approached CEDEL during the last year, a significant number (41%) did not contact CEDEL again. Some of them registered to participate in the workshops but did not ultimately attend. This may be indicative of disinterest in obtaining employment through this program.

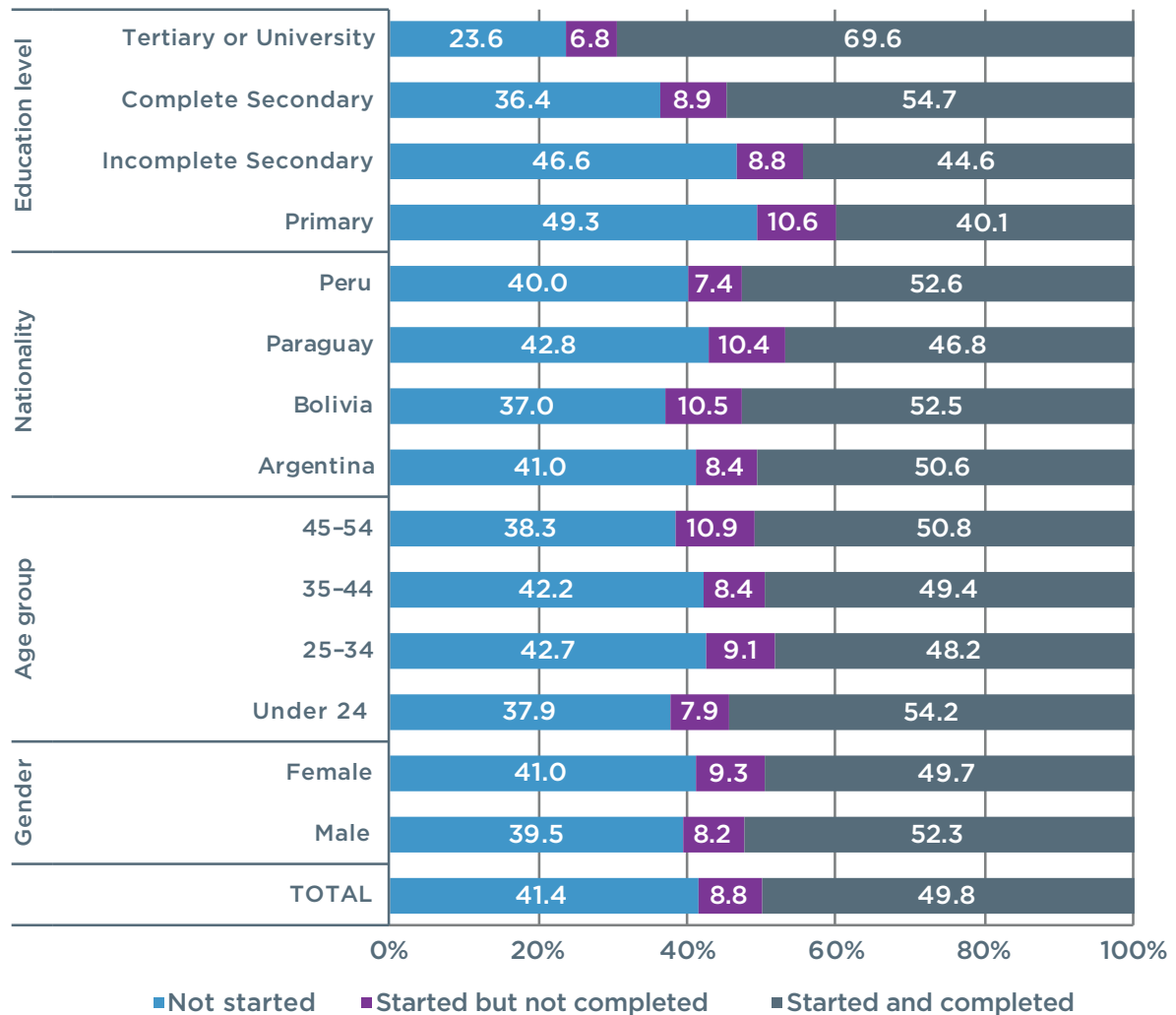
The remaining 59% registered and attended the first workshop; however, not everyone completed the program. As shown below in Figure 1, only half of those who approached CEDEL complied with the requirements in order to be considered in CEDEL's job searches.

In terms of demographics, there was no significant gender difference related to the tendency to complete the workshops; that is, half of the men and half of the women that approached CEDEL went on to complete the TOL. This was also the case in relation to age and country of birth, even though there was, on the one hand, a slight advantage for those who were younger in relation to the other age groups and, on the other hand, a disadvantage for those of Paraguayan origin, among whom a smaller proportion completed the TOL (47%) in comparison to Argentineans, Peruvians and Bolivians (between 51% and 53%).

However, the participants' level of education did make an important and systematic difference. As shown by Figure 1, the proportion of those who completed the TOL increased as their level of education increased, with levels ranging from 54% to 70%.

Overall, the data indicate that although the profiles of those who approached CEDEL with an initial inquiry into employment were varied (dominated by women and young people), there was no difference in terms of gender, age and nationality (although there was a slight disadvantage for Paraguayans) regarding who started and who dropped out of the workshops. There were, however, significant differences according to their level of education: those with a lower level of education were less likely to begin the workshops and, if they did, they dropped out more frequently. Without a doubt, additional focus and effort must be given to this population in order to encourage them to complete the TOL.

Figure 1. Percentage of CEDEL enrollments (July 2018-June 2019) according to the start and completion of the Labor Orientation Program (TOL) and the demographic characteristics selected.



Note: This table pertains to those who were registered as being interested in formal paid work unrelated to the construction sector.

WHO OBTAINED FORMAL EMPLOYMENT?

Registering and completing the TOL are necessary requirements; however this is not sufficient in order to access an employment opportunity and even less so to be successful. As can be expected, setting up a job interview does not guarantee that the job will be obtained. In fact, various potential candidates are contacted to interview for each job opportunity. Success depends to a great extent on the searches CEDEL receives in order to cover positions. As has already been pointed out, in a recessive economic context with little generation of employment, the number of searches is relatively insignificant.

It is worth noting that the job orientation workshop also emphasized and encouraged independent job search (i.e. on the participants' own initiative), based on the training on the preparation of a CV, how to approach a job interview, and connection to the various job search channels available.

16% of all individuals who completed the TOL obtained formal employment¹, which includes both those who obtained work through contacts made via CEDEL and those who did so independently². Although not distinguished in the tables, approximately half of those who obtained employment did so via CEDEL, while the other half obtained employment independently. It is estimated that these individuals obtained employment over a period of two months following the completion of the TOL.

Figure 2 demonstrates the percentage of those employed according to their demographic profiles. Unlike what was observed with respect to the completion rate of the TOL, the percentage of individuals who obtained employment varied significantly depending on gender, with men in a much more advantageous position than women (20% vs. 13%). This is likely due to two factors: on the one hand, the jobs offered to men tend to be more attractive and, on the other, women have greater difficulty juggling working hours with domestic and family care responsibilities.

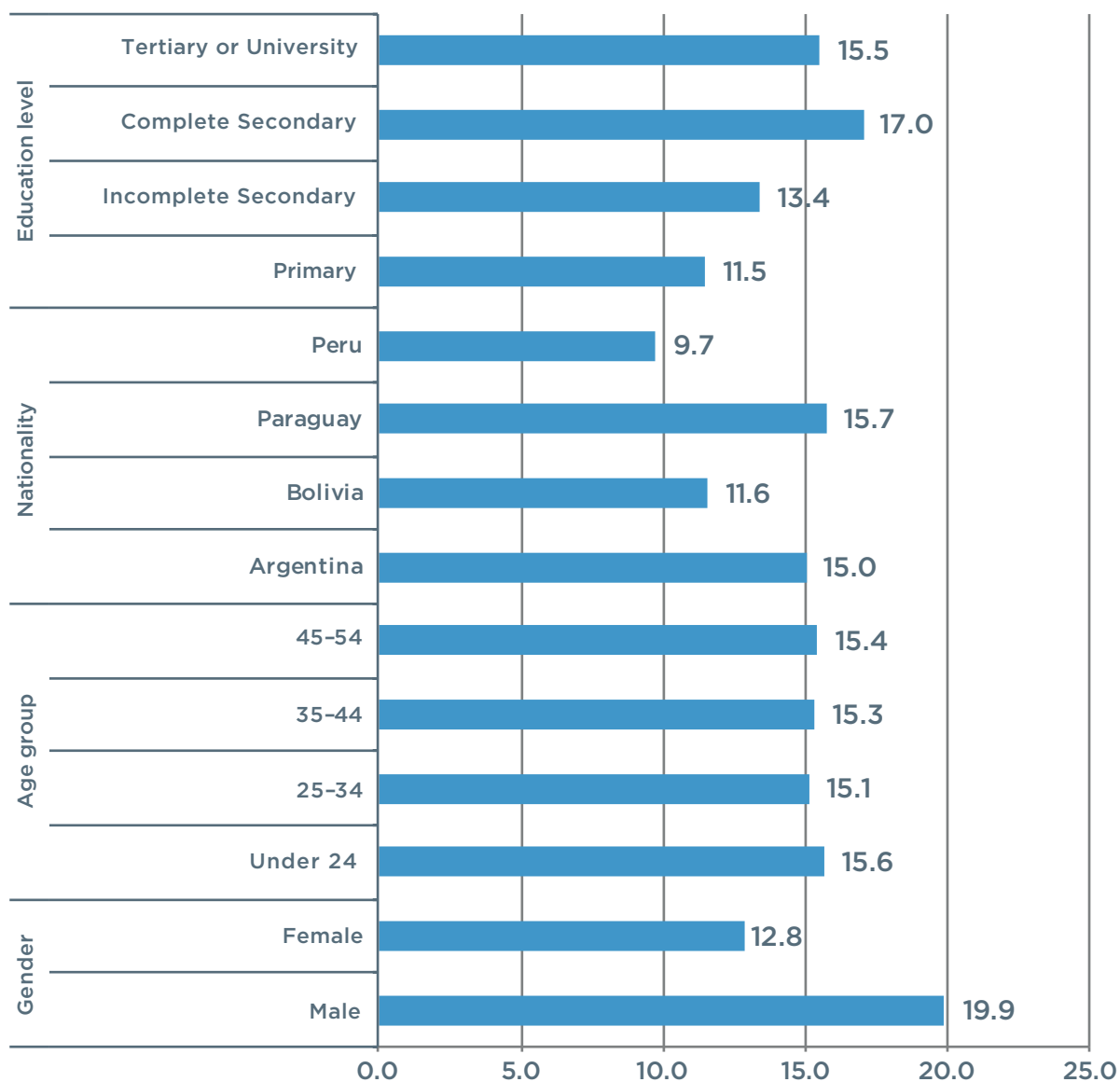
Those with higher levels of education (completion of secondary or above) also most frequently obtained employment. This is unsurprising for two reasons: first, the growing requirement for secondary education for most job opportunities and, second, unskilled jobs do not always offer attractive working conditions.

In terms of age, significant differences were not observed. With regard to country of origin, a greater proportion of Paraguayan and Argentinean candidates obtained employment compared to their Peruvian and Bolivian counterparts.

¹ Again, this includes those who attended between July 2018 and June 2019. This overall figure includes individuals for whom not all sociodemographic information is available and consequently, this average is barely higher than the values classified by certain attributes.

² This information is a result of the follow-up carried out by CEDEL for those who completed the TOL.

Figure 2. People who completed the TOL: percentage hired, per characteristics selected.



Source: CEDEL data, based on those who completed the TOL between July 2018 and June 2019.

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THE BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE ON THE LABOR INTEGRATION PROGRAM

COMPANY CONTACT WITH CEDEL

In the majority of cases, CEDEL approached the companies in order to inform them of the program and invite them to participate. However, in certain isolated cases, the company stated that they had sought this connection, or that it was established at events related to employment issues in vulnerable sectors. Contacts were generally initiated by the departments of corporate social responsibility (CSR) or diversity, and sometimes directly by the human resource (HR) department. One company also mentioned that they made contact with CEDEL after receiving an invitation from GCABA regarding proposals to encourage companies to settle in the neighborhood, in order to accompany the development and growth that Villa 31 has been experiencing.

The invitation to explore CEDEL's work within the neighborhood was highly valued. Entering the neighborhood for the first time, and exploring CEDEL's facilities, activities and goals were considered very positive aspects. This experience generated enthusiasm and broke down certain stereotypes related to life in general and the characteristics of the neighborhood.

These perceptions coincided with those described by interviewees from CEDEL, who indicated that they initiated contact with the companies. This meant that contact mechanisms depended heavily on CEDEL, which undoubtedly created a significant human resource demand to run the program. This was perhaps one of the most significant challenges that the program has faced and may continue to experience, since it will be necessary to increase the number of companies in the program in order to generate enthusiasm among the participants and become a regular contracting mechanism.

CEDEL determined which companies to contact by taking into account the profiles of those individuals in the neighborhood who approach CEDEL and the area in which the companies operate. With the understanding that geographic proximity constitutes a clear advantage both for companies and workers, CEDEL aimed to contact companies that operate relatively close to Villa 31 (or within the City of Buenos Aires). Once the companies were identified, CEDEL contacted the human resources department via email, inviting them to participate and sending a link to the secretary.

If companies responded to this initial contact, CEDEL made arrangements to meet with them personally in order to outline the project. Respondents maintained that if they managed to reach the stage of a face-to-face meeting, it was because the companies showed genuine interest. They also explained that if a meeting was not easily reached, the companies did not generally respond at all. A more proactive corporate recruitment process would, without a doubt, require a greater number of people dedicated exclusively to this task.

When asked which department they have had better program reception through - human resources or corporate social responsibility - respondents maintained that the latter generally leaned more towards this type of action; however, human resources typically employs more workers.

Companies with longer participation highlighted that their relationship with CEDEL had improved significantly since the program started. Today, contact with the companies is smoother and CEDEL carries out ongoing follow-up of its participants for up to six months following their recruitment. In this sense, CEDEL has undertaken institutional self-evaluation processes that have improved its functioning.

An important aspect of the program, as highlighted by several interviewees, was that the individuals who worked for CEDEL had previous work experience within human resource departments in private companies. This provided them with a clearer understanding of the logic and methods of the recruitment process. Furthermore, it facilitated interactions based on both personal knowledge and professional trust.

PERSONNEL RECRUITMENT PROCESSES

A particularly relevant factor, due to its influence on the functioning of CEDEL's program, is that this study was carried out at a time of economic stagnation and low levels of employment in Argentina. The majority of interviewees agreed that the general economic context did not favor employment promotion programs or policies, and that the companies were going through a difficult time in terms of recruitment and expanding their workforce. While in some specific cases the workers were later successful in securing longer term employment, the recruitment that took place was predominantly aimed toward placing participants in temporary positions (substitutions, absences, specific workforce needs).

In this context, three other key aspects should also be highlighted in the analysis of this type of initiative. The first relates to the generic worker profile that most companies seek (which is defined, to a large extent, by the type of tasks they carry out and the skills or abilities the job requires). The second relates to the variety of personnel recruitment techniques that the companies utilize (referrals, via the website itself, spontaneous presentations, etc.). Finally, the third is the focus from which they operate when promoting the employment of vulnerable people (whether they do so through the corporate responsibility or diversity offices, or directly through human resources).

The requested worker profiles are linked to the specific sector or service provided by the company. There was a clear difference in the recruitment processes for companies that were looking for unskilled jobs that do not require specific qualifications and need very little training, and those from other sectors with greater demands. The unskilled work sector has two distinct, interrelated characteristics: an extremely high turnover and an abundance of available candidates. They highlighted that the majority of the vacancies were short term and are non-renewable. This oversupply of workforce in a context of limited demand was highlighted by human resource managers:

I barely need to even look. If I publish an advert, the amount of people who apply is incredible. There are always applications and people who send us their CV via the web page.

Human resource departments also received contact from potential workers through diverse methods and sources:

I have absolutely no preference as to where the workers come from. We receive their applications constantly.

They therefore highlighted that CEDEL was included as one of the sources, but only when requested:

Where they come from isn't that important. It's an unskilled job and there's a huge workforce available.

Respondents also stated that if they hired an individual for a specific period of time and did not have another department within the company in which to place them upon completion, they are required to terminate the contract. In the majority of cases, this happens prior to the completion of the probationary period. Despite the qualities that these individuals may possess, they would be unable to be hired by the same company again, due to the fact that they did not complete the probationary period during their previous time in the company.

The fact is that workers never know how long their contracts will last. It has also been highlighted that in terms of unskilled work, there is a preference for individuals who have not had previous experience doing similar work, in order to avoid any dispute regarding the task to be performed. In other words, both as a result of the complex economic situation related to a general low demand for employment, and because of the more structural factors linked to an abundance of available workforce, the demand for employment in this sector is marked by a significant degree of instability.

The high turnover is due to various reasons: resignations by the workers themselves (because they disagreed with the working conditions or found something better); termination of the contract; or due to decisions made by the client (sometimes companies do not indicate how long they will hire the candidate for). Once the human resource department completes the recruitment process and sends the legal papers to the candidate, everything is handed over to the supervisor and the human resource department no longer maintains contact.

It should be highlighted that unskilled labor also includes other services such as maintenance or security, and the turnover in these other areas is significantly lower. The type of task defines the level of job satisfaction. Still, due to the abundant workforce and competition involved in obtaining employment, the salary conditions are not attractive. As highlighted by a HR manager:

If a member of the cleaning staff receives a better offer, they will leave immediately.

In any case, all companies participating in the program were formal companies and must therefore comply with the Employment Contract Law. This means that depending on the activity they carry out, the companies conform to the specific collective agreements applicable to each sector.

Each company had their own method to organize the recruitment process. The most frequent process included group interviews with candidates who, in principle, comply with the overall requirements. However, these interviews did not necessarily imply that the idea is to fill a particular vacancy. When this was the case, the companies explained:

Three things can happen in the interview: you're not the right person, your profile is just what I was looking for, or I understand you comply with the requirements, but I haven't got the right vacancy for you.

Faced with this situation, some companies chose not to keep old records (even for good candidates), as they estimated an unnecessary cost involved in trying to find them when those candidates could already be employed by that time. Obviously, this sector did not outsource workforce recruitment: *If we were to outsource a service in some way, it wouldn't make much sense.*

One of the companies estimated that given the country's recession as a whole, recruitment, which used to be around 100 individuals per month, has been reduced in recent months: *It's finished; there are much fewer vacancies, we lost many clients and workers hold onto their work much more now.*

In sectors with high turnover and unskilled personnel, the connotation regarding contact with CEDEL, foundations and other state offices that promote employment in vulnerable sectors is different than it would be for other companies. The majority of unskilled workers generally come from the same socioeconomic and vulnerable backgrounds, so contact must not be framed as social promotion action, as occurs in other sectors that demand somewhat more qualified profiles.

For other lines of business, including those geared toward workers who have completed secondary school, the recruitment of people from vulnerable backgrounds is often framed within company diversity policies. In these cases, income can be earned through the corporate social responsibility (CSR) department. In these cases, the companies maintain strong links with foundations (usually Fundación Forge and

Fundación Pescar) and public programs to promote the employment of socially vulnerable people (such as, for example, the Ministry of Production and Labor, the Government of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires and the Municipality of Vicente López), in addition to CEDEL.

Although CEDEL's proposal for the Labor Integration Program stipulated that participants should be able to access companies through the same means as any other candidate, the reality is that in the majority of companies interviewed, the activities are carried out through CSR departments (either through sustainability or diversity programs). It is worth noting that when this is the route of entry, the number of individuals recruited is relatively small (e.g. around 7-8 people per year). In fact, a human resources company indicated that the percentage of workers recruited from associations, foundations and employment promotion initiatives totaled between 5% and 15% of their hires.

Some companies that approached CEDEL's activities through the corporate social responsibility departments developed training activities that were not directly linked to a need for specific employment. For example, an integrated oil company has started to provide training (together with the Fundación PESCAR), and the list of course participants (which is relatively extensive and intense) is shared with the company's human resources department.

Yet, there were some exceptions. For example, one of the companies in the culinary sector developed a distinctive brand by offering first employment opportunities for candidates that had no previous work experience. Recruitment that prioritized both first employment and diversity as an institutional hallmark was a positive aspect of the connection with CEDEL. In fact, they highlighted:

We do it as a matter of conviction as we don't have a CSR department or budget, so it's more like a company philosophy.

Their goal was to train young people aged 19-20 years old without previous work experience in different social sectors. Search and employment processes were carried out via the web page, the referee program, CVs received at their offices and youth employment fairs (in La Rural). They also worked with the city's Secretary of Employment, the province's Secretary of Employment, Fundación Forge, and Residuca. Not only did they request their required profiles from these institutions, they also participated in training and simulations (see below). The CVs they received from CEDEL or other programs, such as Fundación Forge, were included in the regular selection process along with others from the profiles defined by the company, without special considerations. This process consisted of group interviews that took place on a weekly basis. Currently, they recruit 30 individuals per month.

The strategy of regularly maintaining lists of potential workers as a way of coping with rushed personnel demands was also developed by other companies. Another company that develops diversity programs for human resource departments (culinary and others) indicated that they continuously required a list of potential workers and that in order to obtain this, they conducted interviews on a regular basis. This company works closely with Fundación Forge (they have employed about 70 people in 10 months) and with the Fundación Doncel (which promotes employment for teenagers from foster homes when they turn 18 years old). However, the mechanisms depended on the required qualification profile. In general, chefs will be recruited from culinary institutes. They also made use of recruitment portals and the referee program (from which they recruit 40% of their workers).

In short, the actual demand for workers for which companies approach CEDEL contributed to a relatively small number in relation to the global demands (even in a recessive context, such as the present), but this situation does not depend on CEDEL's actions. CEDEL has relatively limited influence to increase this demand, which will be discussed in further detail below. For now, it seems that the mechanism with the greatest potential to increase CEDEL's demand for workers would be to increase the number of participating companies. On the other hand, although access to companies via CSR or diversity departments is normal for a project of this nature, it does not impose limits on the number of individuals recruited.

SKILLS REQUIRED

The required positions, depending on the profile offered by CEDEL, were low-skilled, operational or semi-qualified. In most cases, having previous experience was valued, particularly if this experience came from a formal job, which differs from what several of the interviewees from companies have stated. In this respect, formal jobs are considered to help facilitate the acquisition of so-called **soft skills**. These skills are a result of the combination of social and communication skills, including the ability to relate to and communicate effectively with others.

Additionally, **a worker's ability to comply with established work days and hours, to not be absent, to be governed by occupational safety regulations, and to have a sense of personal responsibility were all highly valued**. These aspects were valued by all interviewees, who spontaneously alluded to the relevance of these skills for any of the occupational roles. Most were very appreciative of those who had received longer training courses in soft skills (such as the Fundación Forge):

Those who end up entering through Foundations arrive with better soft skills preparation. The others learn as they go.

However, it is worth mentioning that when these concerns emerged in the interviews, when asked again about whether the lack of soft skills was a limitation exclusive to workers in vulnerable areas, or whether it was experienced by low-skilled workers in general, the responses were emphatic, stating that these are general shortcomings among today's workforce. In fact, on several occasions, they established that the workers who came from CEDEL demonstrated skills that were above average, as they had received specific training in this area. Although there was no specific record, those who conducted performance evaluations for managers or supervisors identified advantages in terms of compliance with hours and dealing with their superiors.

The general complaints regarding workers' conduct related to a lack of knowledge regarding basic norms in labor relations:

People around the age of 40 and who have never been formally employed, don't know the basic employment rules, that they must notify of absences, that if they are unwell, they need to present a medical certificate. This isn't exclusive to residents of Villa 31, but it is exclusive to people who come from similar backgrounds. They don't find it easy to understand work protocols. There are lots of young women who came from working in private homes, but if they come and work in health centers and you explain that the different cloths have different uses, it becomes an issue and the next day, they don't want to come back. Or, you point something out to them and they are offended. It's demanding to work under pressure... if three rooms become available, you have to clean and prepare them NOW, and you can't choose the order in which you do the tasks as you would in a private home, you have to follow the order you're told. There's no room for error, since you're disinfecting and it's the healthcare sector. I mean, there were people who performed very well, but it's hard to know a priori who is going to work and who isn't.

Likewise, in relation to unskilled workers with little background in formal employment, the following was highlighted:

They're lacking in so many areas... lack of custom, too demanding, they've never worked weekends, controlling supervisors.... There's a sort of line when it becomes mistreatment and the pursuit begins... When someone fails in a task and it's brought to their attention numerous times, it's unavoidable that they begin to feel singled out and that the supervisor is becoming hostile towards them. The turnover is huge...

It is likely that the supposed lack of these skills (which are more general in nature and not necessarily linked to the performance of a specific task) was what led to the minimum requirement of having completed secondary education for many occupations, even when the complexity of the tasks do not require it. In a labor market with an abundant supply of workers with little experience and labor qualifications, the candidate's level of formal education becomes a modest indicator of certain skills during personnel assessment processes.

For the positions that required, the specific training seemed to be less relevant or at least easier to fill. They were generally short and were dictated in-situ, for example dishwashers, waiters, cleaners, gas station attendant, fillers, cashiers, food delivery drivers, telesales, and messengers, among others. After brief training, they progressed to *on-the-job training* provided by more experienced colleagues or supervisors. Of course, some longer-term training was still needed for activities that can put the health of other people at risk, such as training related to cleanliness standards in health-related fields (health centers and clinics).

TRAINING PROVIDED

An element that stood out from the research was that the participation of companies had been requested by CEDEL as part of their labor integration activities. After initial contact between CEDEL and the companies was made, several agreed to collaborate with the project, developing two training activities: a) general training courses on specific topics, b) mock interviews.

The fact that the companies themselves provided these courses had a number of benefits. On the one hand, it brought participants closer to the typical norms and behaviors of the business world. First-hand information was provided in order to establish what the world of work expects of them. Practices, language and means of presentation became accessible to those individuals who have had very little previous exposure to formal employment.

Although not all companies that maintained contact with CEDEL in their job search processes participated in these activities, those that did valued them highly. Moreover, in many cases, direct access to participant profiles and direct contact with neighborhood groups allowed them to be included on the lists of candidates for future interviews (in fact, some were interviewed by companies for specific positions).

Mock interviews were the most frequent form of company participation, although they also participated in the first PIL classes where participants were taught skills

such as how to create a CV, how to behave in a job interview, etc. Some companies participated in short general training sessions on sector-specific topics, such as customer services courses. CEDEL also offered somewhat longer courses on cleaning in the healthcare sector. Companies that had not developed training activities or mock job interviews reported that they were not able to do so due to a lack of sufficient resources (time and/or personnel).

An experience that began last year and will take place again this year, which is worth noting, were the courses given in partnership between companies and the Pescar Foundation. These courses had two objectives: to develop their soft skills profile (soft skills for job searching) and to share knowledge in sales techniques, customer service and marketing. The key aspects of these types of courses were: longer duration and commitment demanded from participants (4 months), UCES certification, and careful selection of participant profiles. The courses took place within CEDEL and in the company's offices. They had very high completion rates (20 out of 23 participants completed it and the 3 dropouts were not due to the course itself).

In relation to this course, an interviewee highlighted something to consider for future trainings. The selection process considered individuals who:

can work in a private company, a bank, a hotel, a restaurant or a public institution... In any environment that requires customer services. The requirements imposed were generally to have completed secondary education, to be at least 18 years of age (the interviewee maintained that they even had someone studying at university level). Very capable individuals with great initiative to develop, but with a need to improve their soft skills. We don't close the doors to anyone, but nor do we want to generate a significant number of profiles for them to later not obtain employment.... When it was first discussed, employment in a gas station was considered, but we proposed a more comprehensive area (as opposed to a group of 200 or 300 candidates, from which only 5 may obtain employment).

STEREOTYPES: DISCRIMINATION DUE TO RESIDENCY IN A VILLA

One aspect that was investigated regarding the recruitment of workers through CEDEL was the extent to which living in Villa 31 was a hindrance. They focused on this aspect in particular: whether or not candidates residing in a villa were devalued during the recruitment process. It is obviously impossible to know for sure, but interviewees

emphasized that not only was geographical residence not a relevant criterion, but that on numerous occasions it was a variable that was actually seen as a positive during the job interview. In many cases, it was taken for granted that candidates residing in the villa were individuals that had been presented by institutions, which in some way operated as an implicit endorsement for them (either from CEDEL or other foundations that work with extremely vulnerable sectors).

Some interviewees emphasized that:

Coming from where they're from... This is a person who integrates little by little, and their personality enables them to integrate relatively quickly. Everyone is welcome. Management sometimes do not know where they live. Perhaps it's a community (that doesn't come from the villa) that if they don't bring this prejudice from home, they don't care. They come straight from home.... They have no other experience, it's all from home.

When we began to talk with CEDEL last year, the project was launched by conducting interviews. We'd go to the neighborhood to carry out job interviews and the idea was to hire them. At the beginning I was very narrow-minded; I thought, what are we going to do? But I was pleasantly surprised to be faced with a range of different profiles... And why not? What's the difference between someone from Villa 31 and someone from another neighborhood? If the profile is right, where someone is from shouldn't be important. Competency or incompetency doesn't depend on the neighborhood.

Another interviewee stated that giving their actual address could give candidates a comparative advantage:

Last year, when HR went [to CEDEL], one of the girls asked what address she should put and she was told that it didn't matter, because they focus on an individual's competencies and not on the neighborhood they come from. We take into account that it should be someone who lives close, not far away, and she told them about the experience of 5 people from the area who started working at filling stations owned by the company.

In contrast, another person highlighted the existence of discrimination during the recruitment processes:

A supervisor was prejudiced towards people who came from the state employment service, as if they were lazy. For me, that's discrimination...

It's the same wherever they come from... With those who come from the villa, they have no idea, they don't know anything about CEDEL, although I wouldn't be surprised if they were slightly prejudiced.

Another interviewee, although acknowledging the existence of prejudice, maintained that this aspect was of no importance in the recruitment process at her company:

For me, where they live doesn't even come into it. Apart from the fact that it's logical that they live nearby, and that's priority. There are actually companies that check whether or not they live in a villa.... They might not like that. In this respect, we haven't experienced open discrimination.

VALUED ASPECTS OF THE CEDEL EXPERIENCE

The experience with CEDEL has received highly positive reviews from interviewees, especially over the last year. The aspects that stood out were the following: a) the fact that the workers lived near the workplaces improved accessibility; b) the training given to the workers improved their soft skills; c) CEDEL's follow-up policy improved retention and quality; d) the contact with CEDEL was direct and smooth, and they were willing to provide support.

Living close to the workplace not only contributed to a reduction in absences or late arrivals, but also improved the worker's quality of life. The previous section closed with a testimony in which the issue of proximity to the workplace was valued as an important criterion in the recruitment process. Another testimony also highlighted the relevance of residing close to the workplace, and in an interview with the HR department at one of the companies dedicated to culinary services, it was also highlighted that during the recruitment processes, they took into account where candidates live in order to ensure proximity (several of their premises are relatively close to the neighborhood).

In any case, it should be stressed that the positive aspects that were highlighted with regard to workplace proximity were primarily relevant to individuals recommended by an institution that supports the worker. Relative proximity to the workplace is a factor that should, in principle, be very attractive to both the employer and the employee. It is for this reason that CEDEL's activities are significant and should be enhanced.

Both the program's actions in terms of approaching the neighborhood, and the way in which CEDEL presents the participants to the companies, functioned as a means of control or guarantee. In other words, it improved the conditions so that these people are employed.

The interviewees also highlighted that the training received by participants during the Labor Orientation Workshops was observable in practice both during the job interviews and in their work performance, once hired. Company representatives that were in a position to evaluate the performance of the workers who came from CEDEL (supervisors in particular) pointed out that it was above average:

The differences of those who live in Villa 31... the managers highlight that they do very well in terms of punctuality, activity and group work.

Another interviewee highlighted:

In positions of unskilled work with higher turnover, those who enter through diversity perform better.

It should be noted that in general, there were no adequate records available with which to carry out systematic comparisons in relation to performance dimensions (punctuality, absence, general performance), and those who made the assessments did so qualitatively. Only a few provided data regarding the rates of effectiveness during the workers' probationary period. One of the companies explained that with CEDEL, *"we have an effectiveness rate of just over 70, which is somewhat higher than without."*

In terms of follow-up, CEDEL's work did not end when the workshop participant was offered a job interview. As noted above, once the person was contacted, a continuous registration process was initiated. If the person was hired, CEDEL continued to record their situation on a regular basis, after 3 and 6 months. This brought certain guarantees both for the worker and for the companies in question. This follow-up was highly valued by some companies, who highlighted it as a positive aspect compared to other similar experiences.

Finally, the type of relationship maintained between the companies and the CEDEL program managers was highly valued:

The recruitment and selection management are good, the mentoring they receive after joining the company is good, in addition to the fact that if someone completes their task, they look for further opportunities in another area. They care for people and companies.
(Manager, maintenance sector)

Everything went very smoothly. It wasn't bureaucratic and that's a very good thing. XXXX understands exactly what we're looking for. I didn't

experience bureaucracy with CEDEL... In general, they understood the profiles we require very well. They might have sent me someone a bit older, but with the profile we required. Recommendation: don't make it bureaucratic. (Manager, culinary sector)

Another interviewee had a similar view:

Without CEDEL, we wouldn't have had access to the neighborhood. They schedule all the meetings with candidates, so we've got everything sorted. They accompany us, they schedule the interviews and we train and provide people in the hope of hiring. We made improvements by informing them of all the open positions we have available. 'Look XXX, I need to fill all these positions....' CEDEL then compiles a list of candidates. I tell them that I need a telemarketer with sales experience for company YYY. XXX organizes interviews with all individuals that may fit this profile (or close enough) and I have a candidate database. She organizes interviews that fit the profile and I coach them (they may or may not have received training by CEDEL). She does it every other Friday, alternating with roles such as fillers and telesales.

The experience was definitely a positive:

The truth is, they're good workers. We work well with XXX... Sometimes due to urgency they aren't called, but it's positively valued. I'm not going to call them if I only need one person, maybe if I need five... In that case it's not a bad idea to call just for one... They've got a constant offering. I've got so many....

ASPECTS TO BE IMPROVED

Although respondents mentioned more positive aspects than negatives, some indicated that there is still room for improvement for the CEDEL program. When asked about aspects that could be improved, interviewees agreed on the following: a) the need for a more refined calibration between the profiles requested by the companies and those proposed by the program; b) the relevance of providing more advanced training in soft skills; and c) the need to increase the number of companies operating in the area.

With regards to the fact that some profiles were not relevant to the open positions, it should be mentioned that this aspect can also manifest during interviews, albeit differently. This is not an easy situation to resolve due to the multiple pressures

and demands faced by CEDEL. CEDEL maintains a strong commitment to the neighborhood participants and must demonstrate to them that it seeks to improve their possibilities to access jobs. It is probable that according to their exchanges with neighbors, they saw potentialities that did not necessarily comply with the strict requirements stated by the companies. Some of these dissonances definitely resulted from the tension between meeting company needs and expanding possibilities for neighborhood residents.

I think they can improve the profile survey. I felt they didn't do that survey. The people they send through to me should fulfill all the requirements we request. I wouldn't have to turn anyone away if they complied with this.

The disadvantage of CEDEL is that they offer us profiles that do not fit what we asked for at the beginning (they expressly outline the profile they require). I'm not sure if they do that because they have to encourage movement in the neighborhood. In our case, of the 20 they sent us, only 7 were relevant because their availability was not adequate, nor was their flexibility, willingness, enthusiasm or availability to cover teammates in their absence.

Some filters weren't respected (ages, etc.). But other than that, it went well.

In terms of the need for further training in soft skills, it is likely that this demand came from comparing CEDEL's actions with those of the foundations. In fact, some of the interviewees made this association:

It would be good if they offered basic training... Even if they do it... maybe they should reinforce soft skills. For example, Fundación Forge provides a training space with rules, requirements and expectations. That's positive. It's a long process, sometimes two years. The young people sign up, there's a selection process and only a few are chosen (they don't receive scholarships, only subsidies from the foundation to take part in this project). They go to the trouble of doing it with those who are willing to make the effort (200-300 young people a year). They're required to choose guidance and to do so with companies. Logistics, digital marketing, administration, culinary... etc. At the end of the first year, they can start to be integrated into companies.

In fact, part of the rationale for the claim was linked to lowering the unforeseen costs when hiring personnel, as highlighted by the manager of a company services business:

The problem is that we don't have a means of knowing how the person will get on, as the demand is so urgent that you can't carry out other forms of more general testing. At best, you have to be satisfied with a very, very basic psychometric; and lastly, it will not give you results, knowing whether they will be able to maintain it without being absent. What's most important here is ATTENDANCE. Don't be conflictive, and speak well.

In this regard, it is important to clearly establish the limits and possibilities of public initiatives such as those carried out by CEDEL, which is a public body that must respond not only to huge demands, but also to heterogeneous profiles (in sociodemographic terms), within limited time frames and with limited resources. However, it can include links to the companies and other associations within the framework of its activities in order to respond to this complaint. In fact, the activities developed between a company in the energy sector and the Fundación Pescar within the CEDEL framework may be an example of good practice.

Finally, although it was not an extensive idea among the interviewees, it was mentioned that one aspect to consider in order to improve CEDEL's reach is to encourage companies that are close to the neighborhood (surrounding the downtown area) to get involved in the project. Taking into account the fact that in reality, the number of people hired per company continues to be reduced, broadening the base of company participation would result in the addition of a greater demand for workers from the neighborhood. The proximity was again the main point of attraction.

We're discussing whether we can bring companies together at some point - many of them can be those who work with us through commercial links, such as banks or mass consumption - invite them to share the program, tell them that we were training these profiles and that they should take them into account during the selection processes, and encourage them to form part of the proposals. This can be done via CEDEL, by advancing this program. They could convene local hotels, supermarkets, restaurants and companies, and share with them what we were developing and tell them that we have 50 profiles of individuals trained in customer service and that when they are looking for workers in these areas, they should take them into account. These individuals would then have to go through a selection process, as always, but following a particular pathway in terms of their training. I want to try and reinforce personal aspects this year. That's what I'd like to improve. We'd then have to see the results from last year (of the 20 that completed the program).





PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES

CEDEL participants included men and women with diverse sociodemographic profiles and dissimilar experiences - life, training and work experience. Although all interviewees approached CEDEL and completed the labor orientation workshop, not all of them obtained employment through CEDEL and, if this was the case, they were not necessarily still employed at the time of the interview. This wide range of experiences with CEDEL and with the companies that hired them was essential in order to obtain a more comprehensive view and identify the aspects that they prioritize and value when looking for and maintaining a job.

INTERVIEWEE CHARACTERISTICS

Twenty one women and 9 men between the ages of 19 and 53 years old, with an average age of 30, were interviewed for this study. Half (15) were Argentinean and the other half included people born in Bolivia (5), Paraguay (4), Peru (4) and other countries (2). In terms of education, 5 did not complete secondary education (even though some later attended an education establishment in order to complete it), 9 completed secondary education and 16 indicated that they received some form of

higher education - several completed this in their country of origin. The majority was born in the villa or had lived there for at least 10 years. Three of the interviewees had lived in the neighborhood for 5 years or less, and two did not currently live there, but had lived there in the past.

For 2 of the interviewees, CEDEL was the place where they searched for their first job. These two were teenagers who had graduated recently (or will be graduating soon) from secondary education and had never been employed. As such, they were young, and in general, those who have not received much training or experience are more difficult to integrate into the world of work, especially formal work in particular. It is for this reason that many companies offer specific programs linked to the offer of a first job.

The rest, however, have had very diverse work experiences: from casual and informal work in cleaning jobs or domestic jobs, to formal employment for extended periods. This group was comprised of women and men who have had experience complying with working hours and following rules. In several cases, the working conditions and salary led them to search for another job. Others were looking for work due to dismissals, mainly due to redundancies that resulted from staff reductions, or problems with supervisors or managers.

CEDEL APPROACH AND TRAINING

The main routes by which interviewees learned about CEDEL were publicity (flyers and posters) and recommendations from friends. Their main expectation was linked to the search for employment, in some cases due to being unemployed and in others, in order to find a better work opportunity due to dissatisfaction related to their tasks, working conditions, and/or salary. Three interviewees indicated that their main reason for approaching CEDEL was to receive training.

Regarding the training received, 17 of the 30 interviewees only attended the labor orientation workshop (TOL), while the remaining 13 carried out additional training courses, on topics such as English language skills, computing, cleaning in hospitality establishments, coaching, domestic and industrial electricity, cell phone repairs, customer services, or call center sales. These are just a few examples of the courses mentioned. The duration of the trainings was variable, ranging from just a few hours (a meeting) up to three months.

The majority of respondents gave positive feedback about their experience with CEDEL. In terms of the labor orientation workshop, apprenticeships and advice on creating a CV were valued, as was the training and advice related to the interview

stage. For some, especially those who had previous formal work experience, some of the information may not have been new or useful, but the practical advice from workshop facilitators on how to better present their background and feel more prepared for interviews compensated for this. One of the interviewees indicated that the workshops were useful in terms of understanding aspects linked to workers' rights. Mentoring and support by the work team and the incentive and information for their independent job search were also considered positive aspects.

On the other hand, only a minority indicated that the work orientation workshops did not provide them with anything new beyond the specific employment possibilities and references - an aspect clearly valued by everyone.

Some interviewees could also identify areas for improvement. In terms of training, a suggestion was made to expand the options, in addition to going into more detail regarding worker rights during the TOL, particularly those related to applicability and access to unemployment insurance. Another topic mentioned was the need for assistance regarding the standardization of certificates obtained in other countries. As noted above, many of the residents have studied abroad - whether in high school, tertiary studies or university studies. They also made some suggestions regarding the explanation of the criteria for selecting individuals for interview. In this respect, a supposed "lack of transparency" was mentioned and/or the need to "insist" a candidate be considered if they meet the qualifications.

Generally, without a doubt the experience and connection with CEDEL was rated positively, even by those individuals who did not obtain employment through the program. As will be addressed later on, their association with CEDEL provided an implicit endorsement which enabled them to be considered by companies for which, in the eyes and experience of the interviewees, they would find it very difficult to access if they were to approach them directly. This difficulty is a result of the prejudice that they are *"not hard workers, irresponsible, unqualified and even worse, criminals, solely because they live in the villa."*

DUAL ADDRESSES: DISCRIMINATION DUE TO RESIDENCY IN VILLA 31

Contrary to the opinions of the company human resource managers, the interviewees indicated that there is prejudice related to the fact that they live in Villa 31, or the "villa" as it is continued to be called, and that this threatens their chances to be considered for jobs for various reasons. The first is due to the almost immediate link that is made between living in the villa and crime, as highlighted by some of the

interviewees: *"...sometimes just saying you're from the villa makes them look us up and down," "they think we're all worthless," "it's associated with bad habits... with drugs and crime."*

Another form of discrimination associated with living in the villa is the notion that people do not want to work, do not like working, or are not responsible enough to perform adequately in a formal job: *"There is a generalized idea that people from the villa don't work hard;" "...or they're not willing to make any effort (they live off schemes and subsidies)."*

Consequently, according to the testimonies of many of the interviewees, indicating their address in the neighborhood on their CV guarantees that they will not even be considered. There seems to be consensus on this aspect and the most common strategy was to use an external address - which in some cases was that of a relative or an old address. A significant number of interviewees shared this opinion. Some did so as a result of their experience looking for work, handing out CVs but never receiving a call back, or following advice given by friends. Others did this straight away, using the information available in the neighborhood.

This technique was never missed by the interviewees, whether they had a low level of education, little or significant work experience. A university student at UBA also stated she has two CVs to hand out: one with her real address and another with an address located outside the neighborhood, in an attempt to avoid the prejudices surrounding those who live in the villa.

In this regard, because it is an available option, some did not indicate their real address on their documentation. This is considered an advantage, as highlighted by one of the interviewees:

"I felt as though I benefited from having my mum's address on my DNI... and the majority of people from the neighborhood try to use another address, because they won't hire us otherwise." (Female, 19 years old)

INTERVIEWS AND RECRUITMENT

When asked about the job interviews, the majority of respondents described positive experiences, even when they were not hired. They indicated that they felt comfortable and were treated well, kindly, politely and with respect. Only one participant said that she felt undervalued during the interview, which she linked to the fact that she lives in the villa (regardless of the fact that she applied for a role in a first-rate institution with no previous experience).

In general, they felt confident and prepared (although some have said that they felt nervous), but the truth is that in most cases, these participants were men and women with vast work experience, in addition to having done similar job interviews in the past. They also valued the training received during the Labor Integration Workshop, which was without a doubt more of a determining factor among those with little or no formal work experience.

The interview formats were varied, some of which were group interviews, or groups followed by individual interviews, depending on the position for which they applied. In some cases they took place within the companies themselves, but they were often held at CEDEL. The participants were definitely most comfortable at CEDEL.

As expected, the interview characteristics varied significantly depending on the role. Some more qualified roles even included a form of testing or practical exercise, in addition to a more detailed individual interview which explored previous work experience. On these occasions, the potential lack of an interviewee's preparation for the position in question was made clear, as highlighted by the companies.

For example, this was applicable to the case of Estela (age 22). She was interviewed for an administrative role in a national public agency, and believed she was not hired because she did not have experience working with computers. She was currently working in a shop (and studying baking) and had previously attended a sales course, although she aspired to achieve an administrative role. In this case, Estela understood her situation and in fact, it encouraged her to register and attend a computing course.

Another case, although in another sector, was that of Alicia. She was a qualified nurse but never worked in nursing. She interviewed at two first-rate clinics but was not hired. One clinic did not hire her because she did not give the correct answers on a test, and the other did not even consider her application due to lack of experience. Alicia was the only interviewee who stated she felt discriminated against and devalued during the interview. The other interviewees agreed that they were treated well and with respect by the potential employers.

The mention of respectful and friendly treatment contrasted with the reported prejudices from employers during the recruitment process. Without a doubt, CEDEL functioned (in the eyes of the applicants) as an intermediary, almost like a letter of recommendation, which provided them with the necessary support. Likewise, attending an interview through CEDEL, with the implication that the employer was aware that they live in the villa, relieved them from thinking they were required to hide that information.

In most cases, however, the job interview resulted in a job offer. In general, hiring was for a probationary period prior to being employed on a permanent basis. Many of the interviewees were also offered temporary contracts or Monotax contracts, both of which are unattractive to applicants. In these cases, their personal situation (and that of their family environment) determined whether or not they accepted a job with which they were not completely satisfied, both in terms of working conditions and, in some cases, also in terms of the tasks to be carried out.

The most qualified candidates experienced the greatest opportunities and were able to obtain better jobs. In this sense, it was not only formal education or work experience, but also the way they developed, how they expressed themselves, and the connection they established with the interviewers that made them the most competent candidates.

JOB PERFORMANCE

Regarding job performance, the participants and employers both agreed that there were no differences between villa residents and any other employee or colleague. The working conditions, hours, shifts or tasks were not assigned differently.

A third of those interviewed were not currently satisfied with their work, particularly in terms of working conditions and wages. It was noted in some cases that the recruitment methods and requirements imposed on the work itself are difficult to meet. For example, some mechanical tasks such as washing dishes or food preparation can become very demanding if carried out without rest for long periods of time. This is also true of demands to cover shifts for other workers who are absent (this expectation should be clearly outlined at the time of recruitment). For the other successful candidates, the work experiences were good, in general, and many continue to work well.

Undoubtedly, and in particular for young people taking their first steps into the labor market, the pre-job training (which functions as an extensive job interview) in addition to continuous training by supervisors or employers, was very relevant for establishing work experience, complying with working hours and developing soft skills, etc. This strategy should also be encouraged among young adults, particularly those without work experience or those with little training or few qualifications.

The work experiences of the interviewees were therefore no different from those of people living in other neighborhoods. The majority of the sample for this study consisted of people with previous work experience, almost all in formal jobs. The

reasons why they left (or wanted to change their job) were varied: dissatisfied with the salary, working hours, workload, with the tasks performed, distance, or bad relationships with colleagues, managers or supervisors. Those who were currently dissatisfied generally agreed with these same reasons. Nobody, once at work, felt discriminated against or mistreated by colleagues or supervisors. It is also true that this program was implemented recently, so all those who were employed had started recently.

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SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study demonstrated the value of public initiatives, such as that carried out by CEDEL in Villa 31, to bring a variety of workers to fulfill the demand for local, formal work in private companies and government offices. Those who participated in this experience (both those in search of employment and those who offered it) rated it positively. Although it is in the early stages, the key aspects in this high ranking were the variety of sociodemographic profiles identified, the closeness of the job offer, the follow-up carried out by CEDEL throughout the process, the training they provide in both soft skills and specific expertise, and the role of breaking down stereotypes regarding the working population living in deprived areas.

The recessive economic context and lack of dynamism in the labor market made it very difficult to use the successful obtainment of employment among the participants as an indicator to evaluate the impact of the CEDEL experience (out 100 people who completed the Labor Orientation Workshop, 13 were employed). An impact assessment would require a longer period of time and operation at different times during the economic cycle.

In this context, key aspects for improving the performance of this program are, without a doubt, increasing of the number of companies linked to the program and working on the mechanisms that make the participants more attractive during the recruitment process. Both actions imply sustained support to the program, as they require strong commitment and investment to maintain the necessary activities to generate an impact in terms of employability.

The specific difference in this initiative is that it formed part of a wider social integration process in the neighborhood and, due to its location, it presented comparative advantages. In addition, the population that approached CEDEL had varied profiles and work experience that made them attractive for the labor market. These aspects should be highlighted in order to gain greater interest from companies.

The participants valued CEDEL for giving them the opportunity to be interviewed (and in some cases, hired) by private formal companies and government offices. These participants believed that without CEDEL's program functioning as an endorsement, they would have had difficulties accessing these jobs, and would not have been considered due to the discrimination surrounding employing villa inhabitants. This is a crucial point for residents in vulnerable areas and **these institutional mediations are of particular relevance to obtaining formal employment in this context.**

In general, program participants were satisfied with the jobs they obtained, although a significant number stated that they did not agree with the working conditions and salary. This situation was compounded by the fact that many offers were short term jobs, with rotating schedules, high workplace intensity, and low income.

Based on the results presented in this study, the following recommendations are made for future initiatives operating with similar goals:

- A.** A diagnostic study on the business fabric (determining the profiles of potential workers) and **local employment opportunities**: This type of report is fundamental in establishing the potential and characteristics of local labor demand.
- B.** Personal contact with companies in order to **present the program** and arrange on-site visits: This initial contact, in addition to periodic links with companies, is key to maintaining interest in the program, calibrating the profiles requested, and expanding the offer of job applicants.
- C.** Participation of individuals with previous work experience in human resources in private companies in the **program technical teams**: As

demonstrated by CEDEL's experience, this is a key and highly valued aspect that facilitates mutual understanding and strengthens bonds between public and private entities.

D. The development of a **dynamic register** of program participants that facilitates continuous monitoring of the program progress: Although this register would use the worker as the test unit, it should also contain information that facilitates the analysis of the participating companies in terms of number of interviews carried out, number of contracts, durations, etc.

E. Obligatory completion of a **Labor Orientation Workshop** in order to be considered in any business contact: It is suggested that this workshop take into account the **participant profiles**, i.e. the proposition of adapting some criteria linked to the requirements. In some cases, these needs may imply a more extensive training period in order to strengthen soft skills.

F. The promotion of agreements between local companies and professional training centers for the **provision of specific certified training courses** in the neighborhood.

G. With regards to participating companies, it is important that during the personnel selection process, they provide a clear **explanation of the working conditions**, including the impossibility of re-hiring people who did not pass the probationary period (having been dismissed for reasons beyond the workers' control), or the possibility of quick contract terminations beyond the workers' control.

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