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Balancing Work and Motherhood

Lessons Learned from the Use of
Childcare Subsidies for Mothers in
the Program to Support
Employment II

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Inter-American Development Bank
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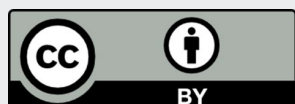
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**Balancing Work and Motherhood:
Lessons Learned from the Use of Childcare Subsidies for Mothers in the
Program to Support Employment II***

Otazú, María Delina; Sardán, Solange; Serrate, Liliana; y Urquidi, Manuel.

Abstract

This document details the experiences of mothers who were beneficiaries of the childcare subsidy for children under 5 years old, provided by the Program to Support Employment II (PAE II), as supplementary aid to facilitate the labor market insertion of women receiving economic support for on-the-job training.

PAE II, implemented by the Public Employment Service of Bolivia under the Ministerio de Trabajo, Empleo y Previsión Social (MTEPS), aimed to enhance the insertion into quality employment of job seekers through job placement support, wage subsidies for up to three months to promote labor insertion associated with on-the-job training. Additionally, PAE II envisaged support for mothers of children under 5 years old, consisting of an additional payment per child disbursed prior to the start of the on-the-job training. This support was designed to mitigate the risk of mothers withdrawing from the program due to childcare responsibilities. It was presumed that this cost could be covered from the second month onwards with the main payment of the economic support received.

The document presents both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of this experience. The first part provides the quantitative analysis using descriptive statistics based on a survey of 71% of the beneficiaries. The second part complements this analysis with qualitative data derived from interviews and direct testimonies from both the beneficiaries and the operational staff of PAE II.

The analysis revealed that the subsidy helped families address the challenges associated with entering the labor market, particularly for those without a partner. The support facilitated access to employment opportunities by providing a minimum level of economic stability, allowing them to focus on work without immediate concerns about childcare and the sustenance of their children. The unintended flexibility in the utilization of the subsidy allowed

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mothers to adapt the support according to their individual needs, whether for childcare, family nourishment, or covering other essential expenses. This necessitates an analysis of whether the payment scheme at the end of the first month affects program participation of economically disadvantaged groups in a context like Bolivia where securing salaried employment, represents an additional challenge.

JEL Classification: J16, J31, J13, J22

Keywords: Gender economy, labor inclusion, labor insertion, childcare.

Introduction

The Program to Support Employment II (PAE II, for its name in Spanish) aimed to improve the labor insertion of job seekers accessing the Public Employment Service of Bolivia, which is under the Ministerio de Trabajo, Empleo y Previsión Social (Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security) (MTEPS) in formal economic units¹. Its specific objectives were: (i) to strengthen the positioning of the Public Employment Service of Bolivia; and (ii) to improve the effectiveness of service delivery to job seekers who access the Public Employment Service of Bolivia².

To achieve this, the program offered financial support for up to six months, equivalent to one to two minimum wages, to job seekers participating in on-the-job training³. This support was provided for up to three months to the general population and up to six months to participants in specific labor insertion pilot programs: people with disabilities, young professionals under twenty-eight years old who graduated from tertiary education, and women in non-traditional occupations. The financial support targeted (i) professional adults without relevant work experience and (ii) non-professional adults with work experience gained in precarious jobs⁴, facing labor insertion issues and having profiles demanded in specific positions. The Public Employment Service of Bolivia also provided a labor induction course, and the companies accepting program beneficiaries were required to submit a training report detailing the on-the-job training process to be carried out during the period in which the beneficiary received financial support.

From the eligibility criteria standpoint, MTEPS, through the Public Employment Service, provides universal services for registering job vacancies and offers, as well as

¹ While the program accepted labor insertion in economic units with government registration and acknowledged that, within the framework of the plural economy proposed by the Political Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, these registrations could be of different nature the majority of the economic units that participated in the program had a Tax Identification Number under the general regime. This was because such registration demonstrated their ability to fulfill fiscal obligations and other legal responsibilities, which were considered as a proxy of the potential to generate quality employment.

² In 2017, Loan Agreement 3822/BL-BO was signed with the aim of contributing to the financing and execution of PAE II. The Program defined two key components to improve job opportunities in Bolivia. In Component 1, focused on enhancing the coverage and positioning of the Public Employment Service of Bolivia (SPEBO). In Component 2, aimed to improve services for job seekers and diversifying the offerings of the Employment Support Program. The impact evaluation of PAE II is available in Campos and Urquidi (2024). A summary of results from phase I (Employment Support Program: BO-L1051; 2358/BL-BO) is available in Urquidi and Durand (2020).

³ On-the-job training refers to the training and education that employees receive directly at their workplace or in the production environment where they typically perform their tasks. This type of training is designed to teach practical skills, procedures, and specific work standards tailored to the operations and needs of the company, allowing employees to learn by doing and immediately apply what they have learned in their real work context.

⁴ Precarious work is characterized by labor insecurity (lack of access to safety equipment or inadequate infrastructure); low wages or income in the case of self-employment; lack of social protection (health insurance and/or access to pensions) and labor rights (such as paid vacation, defined working hours, payment for overtime); and unstable working conditions (for example, temporary employment without a minimum weekly wage).

labor orientation and intermediation. Beneficiaries of on-the-job training will be placed in formal economic units with real vacancies and with which a training plan has been agreed upon. As an additional measure of support to close gender gaps, the program included a childcare subsidy scheme designed to address the significant challenges faced by mothers when trying to enter the formal labor market.

This tailored economic support scheme offers, from the first month of participation in the program, a fraction of the economic support per child in advance to cover the cost of childcare. This amount, which would be defined annually based on market prices for childcare facilities, was delivered before the start of the on-the-job training process to ensure that the mother could attend it without facing an additional problem of not having an alternative childcare option for their children. This initiative recognizes not only the existing gender inequities in terms of labor force participation and income but also seeks to provide complementary support to mothers with children under five years old, identified as a group facing additional challenges.

Research consistently shows that caregiving activities can have a negative impact on women's employment. Heath, R et al (2024) analyze the most important factors in women's labor force participation, identifying childcare as one of the main ones. Globally, women tend to perform most of the unpaid caregiving work, which potentially hinders their participation in paid employment. Addati et al. (2018) show that women are substantially more likely than men to report childcare and household responsibilities as reasons for not participating in paid work. Similarly, in countries where women perform relatively more unpaid caregiving work (compared to their male counterparts), women's labor force participation is lower. Ehrlich (2020) found that women providing extensive family caregiving are less likely to increase their hours of work, while Arber and Ginn (1995) pointed out that women providing informal care within their homes are more likely to experience a decrease in paid employment. Maume (1991) further highlighted the significant impact of childcare expenses on women's employment turnover, particularly for mothers of preschool-aged children. Wakabayashi and Donato (2005) add that initiating caregiving provision can lead to a reduction in women's weekly hours worked and annual income. These findings underscore the need for policies and support systems that address the challenges faced by women in balancing caregiving responsibilities with employment.

The first part of this document presents a quantitative analysis of the results obtained through this scheme, using descriptive statistics to assess the outcomes and lessons learned about the use of childcare subsidies. In the second part, a qualitative analysis based on interviews and direct testimonies not only from the beneficiaries but also from the operational staff of the PAE provides a richer and more detailed perspective on personal experiences, individual challenges, successes, and the influence of external factors on program outcomes.

This dual approach allows for a holistic understanding of the program's influence on gender equity and socio-economic development, ensuring that the voices and perspectives of all involved are considered in the future.

I. How much does motherhood impact women's career trajectories?

Motherhood represents a significant milestone in women's lives, not only from a personal and family perspective but also in the workplace. The arrival of a child entails a series of adjustments in mothers' lives, particularly affecting their insertion and permanence in the labor market. This section of the document focuses on justifying the relevance of a subsidy for childcare payments by analyzing how motherhood impacts women's career trajectories.

Motherhood often leads to a temporary or prolonged interruption in women's career paths. This phenomenon, known as the "motherhood penalty," refers to the economic and professional disadvantages women face when having children. Studies have shown that mothers, compared to their childless counterparts and fathers, experience reductions in their income and professional advancement opportunities (Budig & England, 2001). This interruption not only affects the accumulation of work experience and skills but can also lead to devaluation in the labor market. The influence of motherhood on women's labor outcomes and career trajectories manifests diversely depending on age, parity⁵, the level of skills and the timing of childbirth. Kahn and García-Manglano (2014) found that the career penalties faced by mothers, such as reduced labor force participation, are more pronounced in younger years but diminish as women age. McIntosh et al. (2012) highlight the detrimental effect of motherhood on career progression, particularly in feminized occupations such as nursing. Wilde et al. (2010) point out divergent salary trajectories for highly qualified women after having children, suggesting that the costs of motherhood are particularly high for them. Miller (2011) corroborated this, demonstrating that postponing motherhood can lead to higher incomes, salaries, and working hours, especially for women with university education and those in professional and managerial occupations. Motherhood frequently introduces a "double burden" for women, who often assume the majority of unpaid caregiving responsibilities in the household, in addition to their work obligations. This overload of work limits their availability and flexibility to participate in the labor market on equal terms with men. The need to balance these responsibilities may lead women to opt for lower-quality jobs with flexible schedules but lower salaries and benefits, exacerbating the gender gap in employment and income.

Re-entering the labor market after a period of absence due to childcare represents a significant challenge for many women. Barriers to re-entry include skills obsolescence, employer discrimination, and a shortage of job opportunities offering the necessary flexibility to balance work and family responsibilities. Kleven et al. (2023), in a study covering nearly 95% of the global workforce, reveal that having children negatively affects the career trajectory of both fathers and mothers in most countries. However, while the negative impact is present for both, after parenthood, women's career paths

⁵ Paridad, en este contexto, se refiere al número de hijos que una mujer ha tenido. Es un factor importante al analizar cómo la maternidad afecta las trayectorias laborales y los resultados en el empleo de las mujeres.

experience a considerable decline that men's trajectories do not. Although this pattern is repeated globally, the intensity of these penalties varies widely from one region to another. For example, Latin America faces the greatest labor difficulties associated with motherhood, while in Africa and Asia, these penalties are less pronounced. These obstacles not only affect women's and their families' economic security but also contribute to perpetuating gender inequalities in the workforce.

In this context, childcare subsidies emerge as a crucial tool to mitigate the impacts of motherhood on women's career trajectories. By providing economic support for childcare, this subsidy would enable mothers to seek and maintain employment, reducing the burden of unpaid caregiving and facilitating their participation in the labor market on more equitable terms. Furthermore, by improving access to quality childcare, it contributes to the well-being and development of children, ensuring that mothers can work knowing that their children are in a safe and stimulating environment. Research consistently shows that childcare subsidies have positive outcomes on women's labor participation. Studies in Japan (Yamaguchi et al., 2017), Latin America and the Caribbean (Mateo Díaz & Rodríguez Chamussy, 2013), France (Givord & Marbot, 2015), and low-income neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro (Barros et al., 2013) found that these subsidies increase the likelihood of mothers seeking employment or being employed. However, the impact on hours worked is less clear, with some studies not finding a significant effect (Barros et al., 2013). Despite this, the consensus is that childcare subsidies play a crucial role in facilitating women's labor force participation.

II. Quantitative Analysis

Information Gathering on Mothers Benefiting from the Childcare Subsidy of the PAE II

With the support of the *Centro de Generación de Información y Estadística* (CEGIE-UPB), primary information was collected on mothers who received the stipend for the care of their children while participating in the on-the-job training and labor insertion program of PAE II. Using a list of beneficiaries provided by the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security (MTEPS), 311 surveys were completed, representing 71% of the original list of beneficiaries⁶. The information gathering was conducted in June 2023 by telephone, as the interviewees were dispersed across the national territory. Despite being brief, the questionnaire collected information about the household and the respondent's characteristics, their experience during their participation in PAE II, and the allocation of the childcare subsidy they received⁷. The following sections reflect the descriptive statistics obtained from each section, presenting valuable information about the beneficiaries of this subsidy and its utilization.

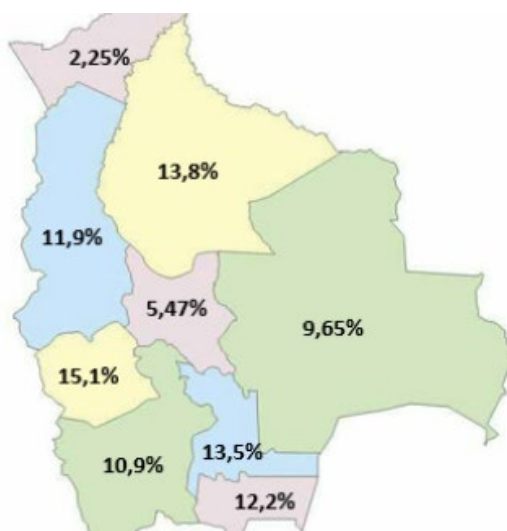
Household and Beneficiary Mothers' Characteristics

According to the MTEPS list, the number of mothers who received a subsidy of Bs 1,000 per child in PAE II was 436, of which information from 311 was successfully contacted and completed. These 311 mothers were primarily concentrated in Oruro (15%), Trinidad (14%), Sucre (13%), and Tarija (12%), with the remaining dispersed across the rest of the cities as illustrated in Figure 1.

⁶ Out of the 436 individuals on the list intended for interviewing, 2 resulted in incomplete surveys, 55 declined to respond to the questionnaire, 44 could not be contacted even after ten attempts, and 24 had contact numbers that telecommunications indicated as non-existent. Thus, 311 complete surveys were obtained and used for the present study. The survey was conducted in 2023, at the program's closure, so some of the beneficiaries had gone through the program up to 5 years prior to the contact attempt.

⁷ For further information about the survey, please refer to the Annex..

Figure1: City of residence of mothers beneficiaries of the PAE II childcare subsidy



Source: Own elaboration based on the Survey of Mother Beneficiaries of PAE II, 2023.

The average age of beneficiary mothers was 30 years, with 19 being the minimum age and 48 the maximum age in the analyzed sample. Analyzing the average age by city, it was found that the youngest mothers, aged, were in El Alto, while the highest average age, 32, was in Potosí. Regarding the marital status of the interviewees, the majority were single (37%), followed by those in a common-law relationship or free union (29%), married (26%), separated or divorced (8%), and widowed (0.3%). Therefore, 54% of the mothers were in some form of relationship at the time of the survey. Regarding the highest level of education achieved by the beneficiaries, 44% had a university degree, 35% completed high school (primary and secondary education), 17% completed a technical education program, 3% had a postgraduate degree, 1% had completed teacher training college, and 0.3% attended a military and police institute. Essentially, we can say that the majority of mothers who received the childcare subsidy from PAE II, specifically 6 out of 10, had some form of tertiary education. In terms of years of education, the beneficiaries had an average of 14 years of education, with the minimum being 3 years and the maximum 18 years⁸.

Regarding household information, these women had an average household size of 4.8 people, with households ranging from only 2 members those with up to 20 people. The average household size of beneficiaries of the childcare subsidy from PAE II is higher than the average household size in Bolivia in 2021, which, according to INE, was 3.3. Additionally, understanding whether the beneficiaries are the main income generators (MIG) of their households is crucial for understanding the context of these

⁸ In calculating years of education, observations that had the highest level of education attained as Adult Middle Education Center (CEMA) and Alternative Youth Education (EJA) were omitted due to lack of information about their duration. The number of observations between these two categories is 3, representing 0.01% of the sample.

women, and their households. Of the respondents, 46% identified themselves as the MIG of the household, and of those who were not MIG, 87% identified the MIG as male. Comparing these data with those from the 2021 Household Survey, the proportion of women who are MIG was 29%, a proportion lower than that found in the survey of beneficiary mothers⁹. According to the survey, 37% of households have only one source of income, while the majority of households (45%) have two income earners. The rest of the households have three income earners (12%), and only 6% have more than three income earners. Considering that there are households of different sizes, it is important to analyze this detail regarding the number of people in the household, as families with a single source of income but a larger number of members are in a more vulnerable situation. The incidence of households with a single source of income among those with only two people is 17%, in households composed of three to five people it is 68%, and in households composed of four to nine people the number is 15%. It is worth noting that in larger families, there were no cases of households with a single income.

Regarding the income level of the households of the respondents, the average income over the last six months at the time of the survey was Bs 2,856, ranging from a minimum reported of zero to a maximum of Bs 10,000. Considering the household size, the average monthly per capita income of households was Bs 673. Using the reference of the minimum wage in force in 2023 (Bs 2,362), 47% of the households considered in the sample had monthly incomes below this benchmark. On the other hand, differentiating by the gender of the MIG of the household, it was found that of those households whose MIG was a woman, 58% had monthly incomes below the minimum wage, a figure that reached 39% among households whose MIG was a man. Regarding the importance of studying the income contributed by women to the households, they were asked about the level of contribution they made to the overall household income, and 57% stated that they contributed approximately 50%, 14% considered that their contribution exceeded 50%, 18% indicated that they contributed the entirety of the household income, and 11% did not contribute.

Regarding employment status, 48.7% indicated that they were employed at the time of the survey, compared to 44.81% unemployed and 6.4% inactive (not working or seeking work at that time). On the other hand, 54% worked in family-owned or small private companies, 27.33% in medium or large private companies, 12% in public institutions, 6% in public companies, and less than 1% in Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). When asked if they had changed economic activity in the last six months, only 28% answered affirmatively. Regarding their economic activity, it was identified that they dedicate around 40 hours per week to it.

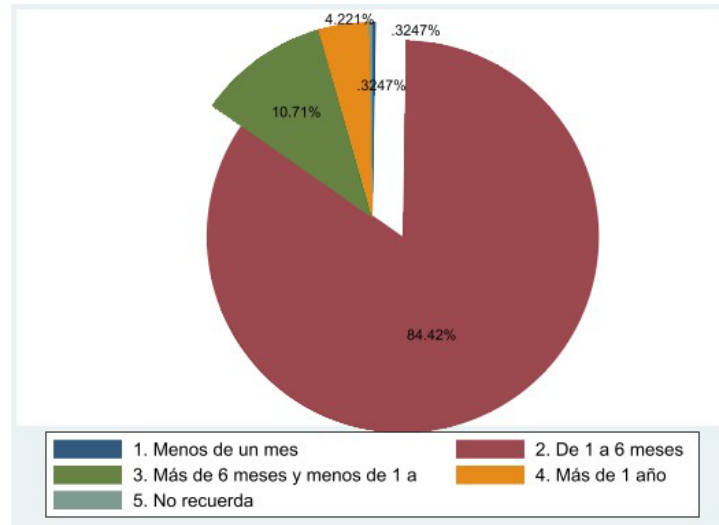
Experience in the PAE II

As previously mentioned, the subsidy was provided to mother beneficiaries of PAE II. It was identified that the mothers at the time of receiving the subsidy had between 1

⁹ In terms of income generation, a household has a PGI who generates the most income, but that doesn't mean they are the only ones generating income in the household.

to 3 children. However, some mothers reported having 4, 5, and 6 children. When asked about the primary caregiver of their children, the majority responded that they themselves took care of their children, followed by the grandparents of the children.

Figure 2: Time spent working in the PAE



Source. Own elaboration based on the Survey of Mothers Beneficiaries of the PAE II, 2023.

Note: Question asked: "How long did you work or have you been working in the job you obtained through the PAE II?"

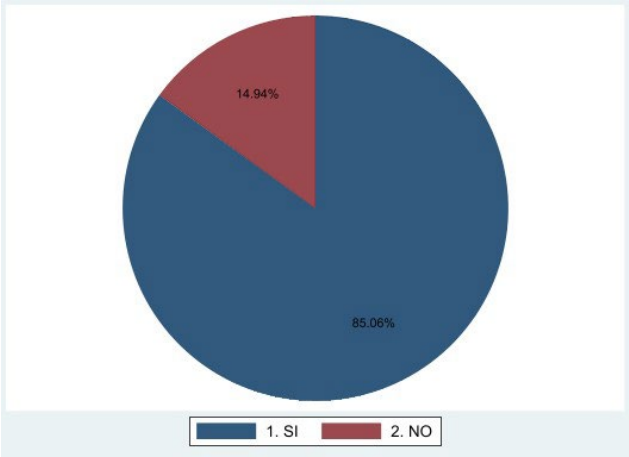
Regarding their participation in PAE II, 84.42% reported having worked in the job they obtained through PAE II for 1 to 6 months, indicating that from the moment of the interview until they started working it took them between 2 weeks and less than 6 months. Before joining PAE, 73% of the surveyed mothers said they dedicated 24 hours a day to caring for their children, while those who paid for a childcare service spent between Bs 500 and Bs 1000 for the service.

a. Use of the subsidy

Regarding the subsidy money, the beneficiaries were asked how they used it during their time in PAE II, identifying different categories from which they could choose. 85% used part of the subsidy to pay for food, 65% effectively used the money for childcare services, 33% used part of the money for school supplies, 19% for household services, and only 7% used a portion for housing or loans. Considering that 85% of women declared having used the subsidy for food, this support was utilized 50% for this purpose, and in some cases, up to 100% of the subsidy provided was allocated to purchasing food. There was no specific induction process regarding subsidy use, leaving this as a learned lesson that should be standardized in subsequent programs to support the focus of its usage, or at least to determine if providing any instructions or guidance on subsidy use has effects on its allocation. Although the Program established in its rules that the expenditure should be aimed at supporting childcare, the mothers reported other expenses such as family food or transportation to work, raising the question of whether, based on this analysis, it is necessary to adjust the

mode of subsidy delivery, given that these expenses, while not in line with the regulations, are vital for achieving the program's objectives.

Figure 3: Use of the Subsidy by Beneficiaries: Food Category



Source: Own elaboration based on the Survey of Mothers Beneficiaries of PAE II, 2023.

Note: Question asked: "To which of the following categories did you allocate the money received from the PAE?" The chart on the right shows the distribution of the percentage allocated to this category from the subsidy.

II. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

In the initial stage, the four cities of the central axis were selected: Santa Cruz, Cochabamba, La Paz, and El Alto, considering their representativeness and geographical diversity. Subsequently, the decision was made to include Potosí in the process, given the significant number of beneficiaries in that department, proportionally higher than in the other cities.

The interview format included both individual and group sessions, adjusting to the specific conditions and preferences of the participants. Priority was given to establishing a conducive environment that fostered effective, synergistic, and objective communication during the interviews. This strategy facilitated the collection of data on the experiences and opinions of the beneficiaries.

Selection and criteria for participant selection.

The participant selection process and inclusion criteria were adapted during the study due to various factors. Initially, a random selection was proposed but had to be modified due to changes in initial contacts and the reality of the beneficiaries, who for different reasons declined to participate in the interviews.

The only consistent inclusion criterion was that the beneficiaries had received the Bs 1000 bonus for each child under five years old. This criterion was maintained to ensure that participants had direct experience with the program and could provide insights into its outcomes and lessons learned.

In total, 22 women beneficiaries of the program were interviewed. In the first phase, telephone and video call interviews were conducted with eight mothers in Cochabamba, La Paz, and Santa Cruz. Subsequently, face-to-face interviews were conducted with three individuals in Santa Cruz, three in El Alto, two in Cochabamba, and six in Potosí. This mixed approach, combining virtual and face-to-face interviews, was implemented to accommodate participants' conditions and preferences.

Additionally, operational officers from Santa Cruz, Cochabamba, Potosí, and El Alto were interviewed.

In the case of Cochabamba, Potosí, and El Alto, the support of operational staff from the Employment Support Program (PAE) was requested to find the participants. This approach was crucial in overcoming challenges of changing contacts and refusals, allowing for more effective identification and connection with potential participants.

To ensure that the collaboration of operational staff did not introduce additional biases, the interviews were conducted in private settings, and the confidentiality of shared information was ensured.

Perceptions of the Participants

This benefit had significant effects on the lives of the interviewed mothers, providing not only financial support but also job opportunities and unintentional flexibility to address the specific needs of each family.

Participation and Access to the Program:

Most interviewed women who participated in the PAE are single mothers, responsible for the care and support of their children. Information about the PAE reached some women through trade groups or acquaintances who highlighted the benefits for mothers.

The individuals who agreed to participate in the interview are mostly single women; thus, even if they do not live alone or live with other family members, they are responsible for the care and support of their children.

"They came to the university to promote the PAE, and the brochure they handed out mentioned the benefits for mothers, so I was encouraged to come, and it went well for me. But now, once again, I'm unemployed. I'm a single mother."

She has a 3-year-old daughter. She is a student.

"My aunt and my cousins take turns to help me. My husband left me in Santa Cruz, and everything is expensive there, so I came here with my family, and I have to work because I don't have any help from her dad. The youngest one finishes kindergarten and stays with the janitor until someone can pick her up."

She has twin 5-year-old boys and a 6-year-old. She works as a kitchen assistant.

Labor Experience and Challenges:

At the time of the interviews, several of the beneficiaries were unemployed, despite having worked for at least 6 months in activities related to the Employment Support Program (PAE). This six-month period included three months established by the program for the subsidy and an additional three months allowed by Bolivian labor law as a 'probationary period' before a worker is hired. During this time, some women faced labor challenges, such as unfulfilled promises of employment after the PAE period and difficulties in finding work with fair wage conditions.

"They promised me a job, but after the PAE, when I was supposed to complete 3 months, they told me that the partners had a falling out and that the company had to disappear. I know it's still operating even now, so I think they just wanted to get rid of me."

She has a 4-year-old son. She 's a certified public accountant.

"The problem here in Potosí is that you earned better with the PAE, and afterward, they don't want to pay you even the minimum wage. They say, 'We'll hire you only part-time,' but then they make you work for 6 hours. I didn't accept it, and I haven't been able to find work for months."

She has a 2-year-old son. She's a commercial engineer.

"I worked for six months in a construction company of all women. I was there for six months, but then not anymore because they prefer women without children, so they don't have to provide insurance for everyone or give permits."

She has two children aged 3 and 5.

Income Strategies for Entering the Program:

Some women entered the PAE motivated by the existence of an additional bonus for mothers and made efforts to spread the word, especially among fellow single mothers.

"We learned about the PAE through Fedemype¹⁰. They themselves told us that there would be an additional benefit if you had young children, so we started spreading the word, especially among coworkers who were single mothers, so they would go to the PAE."

She has 2 children and worked as a seamstress.

"When I found out about the bonus, it was a relief for me. Her dad is a driver, and we didn't have anyone to leave her with. Part of the money I used for a daycare and part for her food. It's a daycare run by the municipality here in Cochabamba, which charges 650 bolivianos. Now she no longer goes to daycare because I have a business, and she can stay with me."

She is 27 years old and has a 3-year-old daughter. Intentional Meeting and Job Bank:

The program facilitated a "manual encounter," where individuals found potential jobs through advertisements, and companies familiar with the PAE requested candidates to register in the job bank. This strategy enabled a direct connection between employers and beneficiaries, as the employer would then request a person with the desired profile, and if they met the requirements, they were admitted as PAE beneficiaries.

"In 2020, I took my graduation exam. In 2021, from that date, I started looking for a job. In my search, I found a sign at Pizza Elis looking for employees. I left my resume, and during the interview, they asked if I knew about the PAE program and said they could

¹⁰ Federation of Micro and Small Enterprises.

hire me through that program. I thought, well, let's see what happens. That's how I met the PAE officer. I told her about what the Elis manager had mentioned, and that's how I learned about the program. They hired me as a logistics supervisor."

She has a 4-year-old daughter.

Hiding Children and Documentation Issues:

Some beneficiaries admitted to hiding the existence of their children to improve their chances of finding work, which resulted in not having access to the mothers' subsidy. At the same time, the lack of documentation for the children was an initial difficulty for enrollment in the Program. Both challenges required time and support from the operational officers to find solutions.

"Another beneficiary told me she had received a bonus of 1000 bolivianos, so I went to the office. The officer told me it was too late because it was already the second month... At first, when they asked me, I said I didn't have children because otherwise, they wouldn't hire you."

She has two 4 years old daughters,. She worked as a kitchen assistant.

"I only had the paper they gave me at the hospital, so I couldn't register the youngest one, but the officer helped me. I couldn't go get the certificate myself because there were long lines, and it closed at five, and I got off work at six. She called and made me wait; a young man helped me until I managed to register her."

She has two children, aged 3 and 5.

"I found out about the bonus when I was already working. They really helped me with the owner of the company so that he would let me do the paperwork because it has to be done in the first month. Everyone helped me with it."

She has a 2-year-old daughter. She worked at a mate production company.

Reported Expenses and Flexibility in the Use of the Bonus:

Although the program stipulated that the funds should be spent on childcare, some mothers reported expenses on family meals and transportation to work. The bonus provided flexibility in its use, allowing mothers to adapt it to the specific needs of their families.

"It was a difficult time because I had to go to work but still didn't have a salary and already owed money, so I set aside money for transportation for the whole month, and the rest I spent on food, rice, sugar, and those things that don't expire."

She is 28 years old and a mother to a 4-year-old girl.

"I decided not to send my son to daycare because I wasn't sure about having a job for the whole year, and in my area, they asked for enrollment fees. So, I allocated the money to my child's food, and my parents took care of him."

She has a 3-year-old son.

"I am a single mother, so when I started working, my daughter would get sick all the time, I think because she missed me. So, I believe all the bonus went to doctors and medicines. I also bought food for a while and gave it to my mom because she was taking care of my daughter."

She has a 4-year-old daughter.

"I used the bonus for family expenses, it went into my wallet for everything we needed. It's just my sister and me; we take turns taking care of the kids. When I work, she takes care of them, and she works on weekends or at night when she can."

She has a 5-year-old daughter. She worked as an assistant in a construction company.

Relief and Opportunities Created by the Bonus:

This benefit provided relief and opportunities for the beneficiaries, allowing them to find ways to work and care for their children. For some, receiving more than one bonus, due to having more than one child, and multiple benefits proved particularly beneficial, especially the mother's subsidy and the disability bonus.

"I worked as a seamstress, making girls' clothing, and there were several PAE beneficiaries. The owner allowed those who lived far away to bring their children to work, because you can put them in daycare, but if you don't have anyone to drop them off and pick them up, it's the same. So, it would be better if the owner supported daycare for everyone; there were several of us, I think 15. "

She has two daughters, only one under 5 years old.

"I left her at home with my mom, and part-time she went to daycare. The bonus allowed me to cover two months, and I paid 400 bolivianos. I couldn't take her to the municipal daycares, which are cheaper, because they are far from my house, and I needed another budget for transportation. "

She is 29 years old and has a 2-year-old son.

"I paid someone only if my family couldn't stay with her. I don't know the exact amount I paid. My mom can't help me much because she already takes care of my nieces. The rest I spent on diapers and milk. "

She is 25 years old and has a 2-year-old daughter.

"My little one was breastfeeding; just the formula to replace my milk and the diapers, consumed the entire bonus. It wasn't enough, and I couldn't keep working. "

She is 24 years old and has a 3-year-old son.

"It went very well for me. I worked in a production unit where there was a very nice environment. I could bring my daughter, and the owners treated her like their own. They gave us full snacks, played with her, and were very kind. I stayed there for a while and had to leave for personal reasons. "

She is 30 years old and has a 4-year-old daughter. She is a secretary.

Impact on Women with Special Circumstances:

The program had a positive impact on women with special circumstances, such as physical disabilities or additional responsibilities, providing them with financial support and facilitating their labor insertion.

"I am 25 years old; my little girl is 5, and I have a motor disability in my arm. I received the stipend for six months, I received the bonus, and have a good job. I used the bonus for the things they asked for at daycare and to pay the tuition. It was great not to have to worry about my daughter's care."

She has a 4-year-old daughter and works as an administrator in a construction company.

"I was in a training center and there I met someone who worked at the PAE, and she told me why don't you come?, I have a leg disability and I three children, two are under five years old, so they helped me, and now I have a job. First the PAE paid me for 6 months, but now the company does."

She has three children, two are twins. She works as a kitchen assistant.

Changes in Family and Work Dynamics:

The bonus also influenced family dynamics, such as hiring additional help for childcare or the ability to support a family while working.

"It's possible, it's difficult, but I had the support of the PAE officer, my coworkers, and the company owner. It's hard when you're a single woman. I would like to study, but it's no longer possible. However, I do want my children to study. "

She has two children, aged 2 and 4. She works as a construction worker.

"When they told me about the bonus, I hired a girl to help me. I paid her 500 bolivianos. The bonus covered two months of her salary. Now I no longer work in the same company, but the girl continues to work, taking care of my child until the evening because I go to university. "

She has a 3-year-old son.

Interaction between benefits for different groups facing additional challenges:

In some cases, the beneficiaries were also part of the pilot program for labor insertion for people with disabilities or their caregivers¹¹ which provided the caregiver with up to six months of financial support for on-the-job training, instead of up to three months for the general population. The same occurred with mothers who were part of the pilot program for inserting women into non-traditional sectors.

"I have 4 children; the twins are the youngest. My husband left me when he found out I was pregnant. I received the 4 bonuses and used it all to pay someone to take care of the children. Unfortunately, the twins are on the autism spectrum, as they told me. I don't think I can work anymore; maybe I should have invested in something of my own. They cannot be around strangers."

She has 4 children. She worked as a kitchen assistant.

Perceptions of PAE II Operational Officers

Data collection was conducted through interviews in different regions of Bolivia with officials from the Employment Support Program (PAE). It is important to note that these interviews are summarized in a format that does not reproduce direct quotes but rather provides a summary of the perceptions and experiences shared during the conversations.

¹¹ For information about the pilot and its results, see: Urquidi, Otazu, and Sardán (2023).

Cochabamba

Javier Quiroga

During the implementation of the program, a screening of beneficiaries was carried out on the platform, where women were asked about the existence of children under five years old, explaining in detail the benefits offered. Additionally, there was a socialization of the program with small and medium-sized entrepreneurs and other organizations. In his view, this made the program attractive to this population group.

There is no precise information on whether there was an increase in the number of beneficiaries after the announcement since, although there are always many women, there was no visibility before on whether they were mothers. A case was highlighted of a young mother with four young children who, upon receiving the bonus, considered investing in a business to be closer to her children and quickly resigned.

The officer expressed the opinion that the bonus arrived late, limiting the help to hundreds of women. He considers it crucial to provide support to these women to facilitate the upbringing of their children and allow them to work. Throughout his experience in the PAE, he has observed numerous women who could benefit from the subsidy but are prevented from participating due to the responsibility of caring for their children.

El Alto

Elba Calderón

In the context of the program's implementation, requests from employers seeking specific profiles for roles such as cooks, workers, or seamstresses were managed. This process included selecting candidates through the job bank, participating in interviews, and, if selected, their subsequent incorporation into the workforce. The explanation provided by the PAE operational officer regarding the standard procedure is complemented by her experience, which reveals significant efforts to ensure that mothers benefited from the program and did not feel doubts when asked about the existence of children.

Unfortunately, some women lost the bonus by providing incorrect information about their family situation and discovered the consequences late. Despite the absence of formal instructions to track the use of the bonus, close contact was maintained with many beneficiaries due to issues with the monthly stipend. It could have been considered to provide smaller amounts monthly instead of a lump sum of 1000 bolivianos, which would have provided continuous support and possibly reduced dropout rates.

Those with more than one child received a substantial amount and often considered starting something new. The lack of formal follow-up makes it difficult to locate these

women today, as both mothers and employers fear some form of supervision, perceiving the program as part of the Ministry of Labor. In interactions with the mothers, it was common to express that the money was used for buying food and ensuring the care of their children.

Potosí

Zelma Quisberth

In the general context, for the operational officer in Potosí, the PAE stood out as an attractive option for many people, especially for professionals whose incomes were in the ranges of the national minimum wage, with the program's stipend being more substantial.

After the introduction of the benefit for mothers, a notable increase in the participation of single mothers was observed, who found in the program an attractive opportunity. Significant efforts were made to facilitate their training, providing them with the opportunity to acquire skills that would allow them to balance work and single motherhood.

In the particular context of Potosí, where wages are a significant challenge, often falling below the national minimum wage, the PAE became a crucial option. The program's offer of on-the-job training combined with the bonus made it a magnet for single mothers, and considerable efforts were made to facilitate their entry into training opportunities, providing them with the necessary tools to address the complexity of working and raising children.

Santa Cruz

Roxana Bonilla

In the specific case of Santa Cruz, the coordinator who led the process considers that single mothers are always looking for job opportunities to support their children, so they were particularly interested and persistent upon learning about the PAE and the bonus.

However, many of these women chose to hide the existence of their children to increase their chances of finding a job, which resulted in losing of the opportunity to receive the program's associated bonus, as no exceptions could be made.

In her view, these single mothers do not live in isolation; their support network includes relatives such as parents, siblings, and even partners in some cases. Therefore, the impact of the bonus extends beyond the children, benefiting the entire family.

From her personal perspective, the experience has revealed that these single mothers are extremely responsible at work, as they understand they are the sole support for their children.

Although many single mothers came, the specific reason behind this phenomenon cannot be fully explained; however, it is highlighted that the program provided additional support to these women.

Lessons Learned and Significant Experiences

The subsidy has addressed a pressing need by providing financial support to mothers, particularly those without partners. This allows them to access employment opportunities and, consequently improve their quality of life and that of their children. The one-time bonus has proven to be a significant factor in ensuring the economic stability of the beneficiaries. It allows them to take the first step, relieve financial pressures and focus on work without immediate concerns about some aspects of their children's maintenance. The unintentional flexibility in the use of the bonus has enabled mothers to adapt the support according to their individual needs, whether for childcare, family meals, or covering other essential expenses.

Despite the positive outcomes, challenges in accessing employment persist, including discrimination based on the existence of children. Many beneficiaries feel the need to hide their motherhood to avoid losing job opportunities. The intervention of operational officers has been crucial in overcoming administrative obstacles, such as the lack of documentation for children. This highlights the importance of continuous support in the implementation of similar programs. The lack of structured follow-up underscores the need to establish effective continuous evaluation mechanisms to better understand the medium-term impact on the beneficiaries' lives and make improvements as necessary.

Some of the learned lessons are:

Difficulties in accessing employment:

- Many women, despite their training and skills, face difficulties in accessing jobs that allow them to support their families, especially when they are single mothers.

- Labor discrimination based on marital status, where some hide the existence of children to avoid losing opportunities, highlights the need to address stigmas and prejudices in the workplace.

Positive Contribution of the Childcare Subsidy for the Insertion of Mother Women:

- The bonus has been an important source of support for single mothers, providing them with a monthly stipend that alleviates financial pressures and allows them to dedicate themselves to work without immediate financial concerns.
- Access to employment opportunities through the PAE has been especially beneficial for those women who have received more than one bonus and have leveraged the benefits to ensure income.

Flexibility and Adaptability:

- Unintentional flexibility has allowed beneficiaries to use the funds according to their specific needs, whether for childcare, family meals, or transportation to work.

Administrative Challenges:

- The lack of documentation for children initially presented a challenge in enrolling in the program.
- However, the intervention and support of the operational officers were essential in overcoming these obstacles and ensuring the participation of the beneficiaries.
- The absence of clear direction in the use of the subsidy may have led to, unexpected uses, but considering that in several cases it was necessary to use it for food or transportation to work, it is worth analysing whether the delivery of the main financial support at the end of the first month affects families or individuals with higher vulnerability levels in their participation in such programs. It is noteworthy that in a context like Bolivia, where many beneficiaries transition from self-employment in commerce, representing an economy with variable daily income, to a monthly salary, there are additional challenges during the first month as families do not necessarily have the resources to sustain themselves until the first regular monthly payment.

Empowerment Through Employment:

- For some beneficiaries, access to employment through the PAE not only provided financial stability but also gave them a sense of empowerment and autonomy.
- This is reflected in stories of mothers who managed to work and care for their children simultaneously.

Need for Continuous Follow-Up:

- The lack of structured follow-up on the use of the bonuses highlights the importance of establishing a mechanism to continuously evaluate the long-term impact of the program on the beneficiaries' lives.

From the perspective of program operators, there are also learned lessons that should be considered:

Visibility and Attraction:

- The detection of beneficiaries through platforms and the effective socialization of the program among business groups or small entrepreneurs contributed to the increase in women interested in participating.

Timely Delivery:

- The timely delivery of the bonus was crucial, highlighting the importance of timely support for women responsible for the care of their children at the beginning of the training period.

Follow-up:

- The need for formal follow-up became evident to avoid misinformation, loss of the bonus, or dropout during the training period.

Annex I: Methodological Note on Data Collection for Beneficiary Mothers of the Childcare Subsidy from the Employment Support Program II.

This document details the methodology used in the data collection of mothers benefiting from the childcare subsidy under PAE II. This collection was carried out following a structured, technology-supported approach, ensuring the quality and reliability of the information obtained. The fieldwork concluded with the completion of 311 surveys out of a total of 436 beneficiaries, representing 71% of the beneficiary list provided by the project implementing unit.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire, developed in collaboration between the *Generación de Información y Estadística* (CEGIE) of the Bolivian Private University (UPB) and the IDB, received the approval of the latter before its implementation. Structured in three main sections, it addressed the characteristics of the household and the interviewee the experience of participating in PAE II, and the use of the subsidy.

Data Collection Strategy

Telephone surveys were chosen due to the geographical dispersion and heterogeneity of the target population, facilitating access to the interviewees without the need for physical travel. This modality perfectly adapted to the brevity of the questionnaire and the desire to make the response time flexible for the participants. Participation was encouraged by offering cell phone credit stop-ups to those who completed the survey.

Survey Procedure

The process began with calls to the beneficiaries, informing them about the offered incentive. The survey was conducted if the interviewee was available; otherwise, an appointment was scheduled. The interviewers kept a follow-up log to manage appointments and ensure the calls were made. Up to 10 attempts were made to contact initially unavailable numbers, discarding those identified as nonexistent by the operators.

Information Capture Application

To optimize data collection and quality, an application designed for tablets was used, allowing field digitalization and synchronization with a private server. This facilitated daily supervision and verification of the collected information. The application, developed in CSPro for Android, included validations to ensure data quality, integrating consistency and completeness checks.

Fieldwork Development and Supervision

The fieldwork was conducted from June 16 to 30, 2023, incorporating structured supervision to evaluate and improve data collection effectiveness. This approach allowed for real-time corrective adjustments based on the recorded information.

Results

A total of 291 surveys were completed, plus 20 from a pilot test, reaching a total of 311 finalized surveys. Incidents included numbers not contacted after 10 attempts and nonexistent numbers. The difficulty in finding alternative numbers for the beneficiaries was a highlighted challenge by the interviewers.

Incidence	Nro.	%
Finalized	311	71.33
Incomplete	2	0.46
Rejection	55	12.61
No contact	44	10.09
Unrecoverable contact	24	5.50
Total	436	100

Source: Fieldwork Report, CEGIE.

Data Validation and Verification

A validation program parallel to the data collection was implemented to ensure the integrity, accuracy, and consistency of the information collected. This process complemented field supervision and facilitated the correction of potential errors, culminating in a final review of the databases for consolidation.

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