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pilot project for people with  
disabilities  
Program to Support Employment

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# Inclusive Labor: Lessons from the job placement pilot project for people with disabilities Program to Support Employment\*

Manuel Urquidi, Delina Otazu, and Solange Sardán

This technical note examines the experience of the job placement pilot project for people with disabilities within the Program to Support Employment II (PAE),<sup>1</sup> which was financed by the Inter-American Development Bank and implemented by the Bolivian Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security. We analyze the experience using three methodologies: a systematic review of the experience, a qualitative study, and a quantitative study.

The systematic review section contains a critical and reflective analysis to understand the processes, context, and results of the experience. It identifies lessons that may be useful for future interventions. For this section, we interviewed the Bolivian authorities in charge of the program; operational personnel in the departments of La Paz, Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz; and beneficiaries and employers.

In the qualitative study, we compile and analyze qualitative data, such as interviews, observations, and personal accounts. This method uses a survey to explore the perceptions, experiences, and opinions of those involved in the program.

For the quantitative study, on the other hand, we compile and analyze data such as statistics, indicators, and numerical figures. This method is meant to provide a more objective and quantifiable perspective on the program's results, impact, and scope, for a more accurate and comparative evaluation.

These three complementary approaches paint a complete picture of the pilot project for people with disabilities, encompassing subjective and contextual aspects, as well as objective and quantifiable data.

JEL Classification: I38, J71, J78, J83, J88.

**Key words:** persons with disabilities, job matching, labor market, discrimination, labor inclusion, social inclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> [Project BO-L1121 implemented under loan contract 3822/BL-BO.](#)

# Inclusive Labor: Lessons from the job placement pilot project for people with disabilities Program to Support Employment\*

## *Introduction*

The Latin America and the Caribbean region faces the significant challenge of integrating people with disabilities into the workplace on equal terms. Approximately 85 million people, or 13% of the region's population, has some type or degree of disability (Duryea et al., 2019). Based on this statistic, one out of every three households would have at least one person with a disability (World Bank, 2021). Additionally, Berlinski, Duryea, and Perez-Vincent (2021) estimate that the number of people with disabilities will grow by approximately 60 million from 2020 to 2050.

Unsurprisingly, disability in the region is four to six times more prevalent among people ages 60 to 69 compared to people between the ages of 20 and 30. There also tends to be a greater number of women living with disabilities, as well as a higher prevalence among indigenous peoples. The rate is also higher among lower-income groups (Duryea et al., 2019). According to Pinilla-Roncancio and Gallardo (2023), in Bolivia there is a higher proportion of people with disabilities in rural areas than in urban areas (30% versus 20%).

People with disabilities face significant barriers to inclusion. They are more likely to live in poor households and in informal settlements, and to have fewer years of schooling. They also tend not to be part of the labor market, and when they do participate, they often have lower wages and informal employment arrangements (Duryea et al., 2019). Additionally, many cities in the region have poor urban infrastructure that is not designed with different disabilities in mind (Tascon Valencia, J. et al., 2023).

Another sign of this lack of inclusion is that one out of every five households living in extreme poverty in the region has at least one person with a disability and that seven out of every 10 households with people with disabilities are vulnerable to poverty. The situation in Bolivia is particularly challenging. A household with someone with a disability in Bolivia is 3% more likely to be extremely poor and 6.2% more likely to be cash poor. These numbers rise sharply by 11.1% when at least one member of the household self-identifies as indigenous or of African descent (World Bank, 2021).

Education is a crucial factor in inclusion, especially in the area of employment. Pinilla-Roncancio and Gallardo (2023) find that each additional year of schooling increases the likelihood that people with disabilities will be employed. Despite this, children with disabilities in the region are unschooled (primary school) at an average rate that is four times higher than that of children without disabilities. Children with disabilities are also 24% less likely to receive stimulation in early childhood and 49% less likely to ever attend school (Berlinski, Duryea and Perez-Vicent, 2021). In Bolivia, children ages 6 to 17 with disabilities have a 9% lower probability of attending school, while those 18 to 25 years old are 6.7% less likely (World Bank, 2021). Furthermore, in Bolivia, people with disabilities have an average of 4 years less schooling than people without disabilities (Pinilla-Roncancio and Gallardo, 2023).

In the workplace, people with disabilities face challenges that compound this skills gap, which in

itself is an obstacle to accessing quality jobs. One in every two disabled heads of household is unemployed (World Bank, 2021). In addition, women with disabilities are less likely to be employed than women without disabilities (Pinilla-Roncancio and Gallardo, 2023). Pinilla-Roncancio and Gallardo calculate a Job Opportunity Index that shows that people with disabilities have fewer employment opportunities compared to people without disabilities.<sup>2</sup> This discrepancy is the result of lower employment rates (coverage), and there are also larger dissimilarities within subgroups of people with disabilities, when categorized by gender, type of disability, age, etc. This disparity is also present in wages: people with disabilities earn 6 to 11% less for the same job than other workers in the region (World Bank, 2021). The World Bank (2021) estimates that in Bolivia, someone with a disability earns 8.3% less than someone without a disability. If the person with a disability is a woman, the gap grows to 16.8%, and if they belong to an ethnic or racial minority, this discrepancy is 20.2%.

The laws of many Latin American countries, including Bolivia, uphold the labor rights of people with disabilities. However, the way these laws are enforced and their underlying perspective on disability often do not foster true inclusion. For example, in Bolivia, even though the General Law for Persons with Disabilities takes a social approach, the General Labor Law still frames disability as an obstacle to employment (Pinilla-Roncancio and Rodríguez Caicedo, 2022).

This broader context also explains why on October 15, 2022, the Bolivian Ombudsman's Office called for greater state action, through concrete public policies, to guarantee the rights of people with disabilities. This institution published a release stating that between the year 2020 and September 2022, "the ombudsman system recorded a total of 1654 violations of the rights of people with disabilities." The same release specified that the type of rights violated most frequently was labor rights, at 312 cases (Defensoría, 2022).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognizes disability as an evolving concept resulting from the interaction between people with impairments on the one hand, and attitudinal and environmental barriers that prevent their full and effective participation in society on equal footing with others, on the other. (UN, 2008). This means that disability does not lie in the individual and their functional capacities, but in their surrounding physical and social environment.

Thus, the employment status of people with disabilities in the region in general, and in Bolivia in particular, reflects persistent structural inequalities. Despite legislative advances, barriers of a cultural, educational, physical, and economic nature continue to limit the opportunities of people with disabilities. It is essential to tackle these inequalities to ensure real and equitable inclusion in the labor market. However, in many cases this means taking actions towards solutions without being able to make structural changes. This was the case of the job placement pilot project for people with disabilities within the Program to Support Employment II.

In 2017, the Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) agreed on the content of a job placement pilot project for people with disabilities, to be implemented as part of the Program to Support Employment II. This pilot project drew on lessons from the IDB's work with the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security in the

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<sup>2</sup> Like the Human Opportunity Index, the Job Opportunity Index developed by Pinilla-Roncancio and Gallardo (2023) measures employment opportunities for people with disabilities through two sub-indexes. The first shows coverage, measuring the number of people with disabilities who have a job, while the other captures differences between subgroups such as women, type of disability, age, etc.

first Program to Support Employment (BO-L1051; Loan Contract 2365/BL-BO), which supported on-the-job training for 241 people with disabilities, 47 of which were ultimately placed in jobs (Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security, 2017).

The second stage of the Program to Support Employment (PAE), and especially the pilot project, also had to navigate Bolivia's complex political and social circumstances in 2019, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic starting in March 2020, but its lessons and achievements need to be analyzed in this context so they can be replicated and scaled up in the future. This analysis recognizes that the operational teams came up with ways of working that allowed them to address the wide range of conditions experienced by people with disabilities and the tangible and intangible barriers they may encounter, even against a backdrop as complex as the one described above.

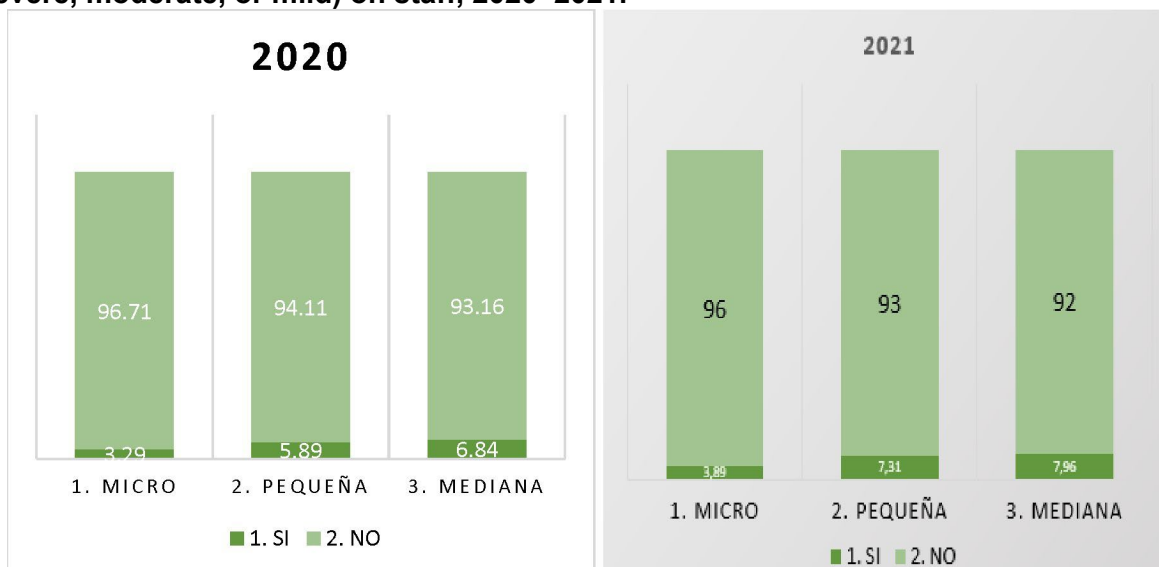
### **Employment situation of people with disabilities in Bolivia**

The pilot project was implemented from 2018 to 2022. During this time, the Bolivian Ombudsman's Office published several reports on the context of people with disabilities in the country. According to data from the Program for a Single National Registry of People with Disabilities of the Ministry of Health and the Bolivian Institute for the Blind, in 2019, there were 95,884 people with disabilities, of whom 45% were women and 55% were men. The distribution of their degree of disability was: 51% severe, 28% moderate, 15% very severe, and 6% mild. In terms of type, 38% had a physical or motor disability, 29% an intellectual one, and 15% multiple kinds of disabilities.

In 2022, the Ombudsman's Office insisted that the state must take greater action through concrete public policies to ensure the rights of people with disabilities, including their labor rights. From 2020 to September 2022, the ombudsman's System for Serving the People recorded 1,654 violations of the rights of people with disabilities. The main complaints were labor rights violations.

The country's regulations show that the state has made progress on recognizing this population's rights. However, the call for decent sources of employment is ongoing. A survey conducted by the IDB and UNDP in 2020 and 2021 to determine the impact of COVID-19 found that less than 10% of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in Bolivia have someone with a disability on staff.

**Figure 1: Proportion of businesses that report having at least one person with a disability (severe, moderate, or mild) on staff, 2020–2021.**



Source: 2020 UNDP Business SEIA Survey & 2021 Business Impacts of COVID Survey-IDB.

This low presence at businesses points to the challenges of inclusion and equal opportunities that people with disabilities face in the workplace.

### Program to Support Employment in Bolivia

The first stage of the Program to Support Employment (PAE) was approved by the IDB in 2011.<sup>3</sup> Its aim was to assist the Bolivian Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security in implementing active labor market policies in a context of low access to salaried employment, low participation in the pension system (labor informality), and job searches that rely on family networks, a method not conducive to equal opportunities in the labor market.

"From 2012 to 2017, almost eighty thousand job seekers and more than thirty-five thousand job opportunities (vacancies) were registered with the Bolivian Public Employment Service (SPEBO). In addition to expanding its coverage, the service also hired career counselors, transforming it from a jobs board into a service with both a greater number of job seekers and a greater variety of occupational profiles, where 35% of all job searchers have vocational training or professional profiles. The program also promoted job placement for young people and women, who made up about 85% of its beneficiaries. Twenty-one percent of the beneficiaries had children, and half of them were single parents." (Urquidi, 2020)

Given the results of the first phase, the Plurinational State of Bolivia requested that the IDB finance a second phase of the program.<sup>4</sup> They therefore signed Loan Agreement 3822/BL-BO in 2017 to fund and implement the second phase of the Program to Support Employment.

The program defined two key components to improve employment opportunities in Bolivia.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.iadb.org/en/whats-our-impact/BO-L1051>  
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.iadb.org/en/whats-our-impact/BO-L1121>



Component 1 aimed to improve the coverage and positioning of the Bolivian Public Employment Service (SPEBO). This involved working to place young people, people with disabilities, and women in jobs, as well as strategies to reduce discrimination. Under this component, the program also coordinated with other key players in the labor market.

Component 2 focused on improving services for job seekers and diversifying the solutions offered by the Program to Support Employment. It included optimizing SPEBO's internal processes, implementing job matching system, and the strengthening the range of services. The final prong of this component involved vocational orientation, on-the-job training at companies, short courses, and economic support. Also under this component, the program implemented specific pilot projects to boost employment for women, people with disabilities, and young people through various forms of training and economic support, according to the needs of each group.

### **The job placement pilot project for people with disabilities**

According to project documents, this pilot targets people with disabilities and offers financial support for up to six months of on-the-job training, off-site instruction associated with this training and with the requirements of the vacancy when needed and available, and, if necessary, adaptations to the workstation. Based on experiences with placing people with disabilities in jobs during the first phase of the PAE, the stage offered longer on-the-job training. This first phase also provided the information needed to set out the objectives and components of this new pilot project.

The overall objective was to "jump-start the process of matching people with disabilities to quality jobs in the private sector," since the MTEPS was simultaneously coordinating job placement for people with disabilities in government agencies, but there was no plan to use training subsidies for public-sector matching, since these placements were completely financed with public funds. The pilot project also had two specific objectives for improving the skills, knowledge, and relevant qualifications of people with disabilities: improving government services for job matching for this population (in coordination with civil society organizations that had been working with the sector); and raising awareness among companies about their social responsibility (Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security, 2017).

The project was divided into three components: 1. Expand job placement opportunities for people with disabilities. 2. Implement job matching and placement processes. 3. Raise awareness and reach out to companies and organizations about people with disabilities.

The first component focused on expanding employment opportunities for people with disabilities. This involved extending financial support for on-the-job training, covering up to six months instead of the three months of support that job seekers in general would receive. It also entailed off site training tailored to the needs of vacancies and people with disabilities in collaboration with NGOs and other associations, ensuring specific and relevant training.<sup>5</sup> Despite administrative and

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<sup>5</sup> At the same time, the program implemented a similar set of actions for guardians of people with disabilities. The beneficiaries of these actions also received support for up to six months. They were not included in the pilot project's goal, but were financed and accounted for separately. The terms legal guardian or tutor are based on the definition in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), adopted by the United Nations in 2006, according to which a legal guardian or tutor is a person appointed to make decisions on behalf of a person with a disability, in the event that the person is unable to exercise their own legal capacity. This definition was used as a frame of reference to ensure proper support for people with disabilities who were unable to work (for various reasons such as age) while the program was being implemented, thus ensuring comprehensive assistance and respect for their rights.

regulatory constraints, the program also proposed adapting the work environment as needed to ensure an inclusive and accessible workplace.

The second component focused on establishing sound and effective job matching processes. This involved optimizing the internal procedures of the public employment service to coordinate services and move to performance-based management. The project set out to develop a profiling system to tailor services to job seekers and companies according to their needs and level of vulnerability. It also included a scheme to integrate its services and interventions with those of other relevant actors in the labor market, with the help of a job matching software. This component was not able to complete specific actions due in part to social turmoil in 2019 and the pandemic's effects on the program's operations from March 2020 onward.

Finally, the third component focused on raising awareness and fostering collaboration between companies, organizations, and people with disabilities. This included activities to educate and reach out to companies and business associations to reduce discrimination and promote an inclusive work environment. The project effectively connected people with disabilities to businesses through strategies for first contact and for sustaining relationships. The project also offered career counseling to help sustainably place people with disabilities in the labor market. Under this component, the IDB coordinated—with the support of civil society institutions—training and awareness-raising sessions for the personnel of the General Directorate of Employment, including Public Employment Service personnel.

Together, these pilot actions were meant to be comprehensive, in order to both facilitate training and job matching and create a cultural and business awareness of the importance of equal opportunities for people with disabilities in the workplace.

The pilot project entailed a set of commitments from the MTEPS. At its launch, Minister of Labor Héctor Hinojosa said that the goal of the pilot project was to "... Train people with disabilities by developing their skills so they can find jobs, but at the same time forge agreements with businesses to ensure employment for people with disabilities, in accordance with Law 233,<sup>6</sup> which requires that 2% of companies' staff be people with disabilities. We aim to benefit 5,000 people over the course of the pilot project. Now the job placement program has a much more ambitious goal of approximately 30,000 people countrywide," (RTP Bolivia Facebook, 2018).

The start of the pilot project also created expectations among organizations for people with disabilities. For example, Roberto Nacho, president of the Confederation Boliviana de la Persona con Discapacidad, said to the media: "There are over 100,000 of us with mild, moderate, severe, or very severe disabilities. We would like to see at least 30,000 of us have jobs by 2020." (RTP Bolivia Facebook, 2018).

In practice, implementing the pilot project was a complex process of trying out solutions and learning from them within the program. In part as a result of the experience of working with people with disabilities in the first stage of the PAE, some officials believed "that they had an obligation" to the people with disabilities, which understandably made the officials anxious about a challenging situation that had created high expectations among beneficiaries and would

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<sup>6</sup> Law 233, General Law for Persons with Disabilities of March 2, 2012. Additionally, Law 977, Law on Employment and Economic Assistance for Persons with Disabilities was passed on September 26, 2017.

undoubtedly mean more work for the officials.

As the program and, especially, the pilot project unfolded, officials understood that their work needed to go beyond just the direct beneficiaries. They recognized that people with disabilities do not live in a vacuum; rather, they are part of complex social and family networks. It therefore became clear that to have a significant impact, they had to not only meet beneficiaries' immediate needs, but also offer information and support to their social environment, including their families and the organizations they belong to.

The next sections summarize the information collected as part of the qualitative and quantitative analysis of this experience. Appendix I contain stories about beneficiaries and additional data on qualitative interviews.

## *Qualitative study*

This chapter presents the main findings of the qualitative study conducted in urban and peri-urban areas in four cities: La Paz, El Alto, Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz. We interviewed program beneficiaries (people with disabilities), employers (those in charge of hiring processes and others), and civil society organizations that work with people with disabilities.

### **Interviews with program staff**

Program staff were the first group of people we interviewed. We aimed to learn how they publicized the program, how they matched labor supply with demand, and what barriers to recruitment and job placement they encountered.

We found that efforts to publicize the Program to Support Employment (PAE) targeted two main groups: employers and beneficiaries. The program used different dissemination strategies for each group.

For employers, it originally reached out through meetings with federations or organizations of private-sector employers. These meetings had two focuses: first, to communicate the scope of Law 977, and second, to present the specific characteristics of people with disabilities as productive workers and the importance of diversity in companies. Program staff also shared information about the program and regulations with public-sector institutions, with a significant awareness-raising component throughout the process. In order to reach employers more directly, program officials made personalized visits to highlight the financial benefits for companies of having a subsidized worker for 6 months, compared to the 3 months that the program subsidizes for people without disabilities.

For beneficiaries, the program mainly shared information through civil society organizations that bring together and represent people with disabilities. These organizations played a key role in spreading the word about the program among beneficiaries, informing them of the employment opportunities and benefits offered by the PAE.

Regarding barriers to recruitment, the interviews revealed that successfully placing people with disabilities in jobs in Bolivia is a complex challenge due to the wide range of types and degrees of disability. According to the interviews, people with hearing and motor disabilities were employed through the PAE at higher rates, but they also revealed that program staff was not equipped to work with all disabilities and in many cases did not have the necessary knowledge to explain them to employers or truly understand the accommodations that might be needed for them to be placed in a job.

Interviewees mentioned challenges even for the two disabilities with which the program worked the most. For instance, operational staff needed to know sign language to form a relationship with people who are hearing impaired, but this did not happen in most cases. To address this type of situation, there is a need for constant and ongoing training courses that allowed new staff to gain these skills when they are hired at employment services and existing staff to upgrade their knowledge when necessary. For motor disabilities, the infrastructure of the employment service and of the program offices itself were not correctly adapted to receive people with motor

disabilities (based on visits to offices in Cochabamba and Santa Cruz).

Another aspect to take into account is misinformation or misunderstandings about the scope of the PAE and/or Law 977, which led to unrealistic expectations among organizations of people with disabilities: some expected to be placed directly in a job rather than undergoing a period of on-the-job training. Direct job placement creates a situation in which the program cannot guarantee job stability, since the job seeker is in a trial period before potentially being definitively hired three months after on-the-job training ends.<sup>7</sup> This led to some resentment of the PAE among certain organizations, which criticized the limited duration of the “contracts” (which they confused with the on-the-job training period), and the program’s inability to guarantee direct placement in permanent jobs. These problems could have been avoided with a specific communication campaign with materials delivered directly to people with disabilities and that explained the program better and to a broader audience (using sign language translators). The misunderstandings probably came about because the information reached potential beneficiaries through comments from family members or friends that may have given incomplete or inaccurate information.

In addition, the interviews detected two main types of barriers to placing people with disabilities in jobs in Bolivia: those related to labor demand and those related to labor supply. On the demand side, many employers doubt the capabilities of people with disabilities and are afraid of the protections against dismissing them in Law 977. Other employers were afraid that once workers gained the right to such protections, they might decide to stop doing a good job since there was no real possibility that they would be dismissed.

On the supply side, the main barrier was the low level of skills and academic or job certifications of most of the people with disabilities. This situation was later confirmed by the beneficiary survey (see the quantitative study). This problem arises from the low level of education mentioned above, which made it difficult to find candidates who meet employers’ requirements. According to program staff, some employers were willing to hire people with disabilities, but it was difficult to find people with disabilities with the required training.

### **Conversations with beneficiaries**

The second group covered by the qualitative study were beneficiaries. In our interviews, we found that most PAE beneficiaries were people with hearing and motor disabilities. Only two of the interviewees had a mental disability. These interviews confirmed the barriers described by program staff. In general, interviewees had fewer years of formal schooling. We found that some interviewees with motor disabilities had managed to graduate from college. Importantly, most were young people under age 30.

Out of all interviewees, 70% said that they heard about the program through family or friends, confirming the risk that they received incomplete or inaccurate information.

The main motivation for participating in the PAE, according to their general responses, was getting

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<sup>7</sup> The program provided on-the-job training for up to six months, after which the company could choose to hire the beneficiary, but according to current legislation, the beneficiary would still be in a trial phase for three months until the company offered them a permanent contract, if so agreed between the beneficiary and the company. When people with disabilities have a permanent contract, they effectively cannot be dismissed.

a job and receiving a salary. In many cases, beneficiaries had been looking for work for a long time without success, so the program became an opportunity to secure formal employment, especially for those who had no previous work experience. Some even pinned all their hopes on the program as their only option for getting a job.

Regarding the job training process, we found that interviewees with hearing disabilities mostly performed gardening and janitorial tasks at service provider companies, while those with motor disabilities received additional training in areas like customer service and over-the-phone assistance at call centers. We also found two cases of participants with mental disabilities who were trained at a specialized school, one as a mechanic's assistant and another in inventorying tasks at a pharmaceutical warehouse.

In general, beneficiaries had a positive perception of the training process. However, most mentioned delays in stipend payments.<sup>8</sup>

In the interviews, close to 80% of beneficiaries said their work environments had been appropriate, in terms of relationships with coworkers and superiors. They also valued the knowledge and work experience they gained during the program. However, they did note some employer shortcomings, such as failure to provide work clothes. The beneficiaries also stated that in some cases, the organizations where they worked were not prepared to receive the number of people assigned to them, which meant they had to do tasks that were not appropriate for their profile.

### **Interviews with employers**

In the third group—employers—most companies we interviewed had over 50 workers. Under Bolivian Law 977 for the employment of people with disabilities, these companies must have a small percentage of people with disabilities on staff. In several cases, these companies requested multiple beneficiaries from the program, thus bringing on people with disabilities.<sup>9</sup> We also found, however, that some companies not directly required to do so by law decided to participate in job placement for people with disabilities because of their internal policies of inclusion and support for vulnerable people or because of a staff member's personal commitment. The owner of one of the companies interviewed, for example, said that his manager had hired a person with a disability without his initial consent, but that after seeing the quality of their work, he had agreed to hire more people because they were more loyal to the company and more motivated. He admitted that his original bias that people with disabilities were unproductive was unfounded and said he was grateful to the program and his manager for helping him shift perspectives and achieve a more inclusive business.

In the interviews, employers shared how they became involved in the PAE. Many learned about

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<sup>8</sup> The program finances economic support (stipends) for job training. To authorize the stipend payment: (i) the beneficiary had to complete the first month, (ii) the company had to request payment, attaching the attendance form, (iii) the form had to be reviewed by the program's operational officer, (iv) the form had to be approved at the local office by a supervisor, and (v) the same form had to be sent to the central office in La Paz for processing, which involved another review. This already lengthy process was even more difficult for people with disabilities because they had to submit additional documents to confirm eligibility. Among the lessons learned from the pilot project is that given the costs of mobility and the economic situation of people with disabilities, it is important to analyze whether to include initial economic support prior to the first month of on-the-job training.

<sup>9</sup> Some officials said that it was large companies that were told that if they wanted to work with the program, they should try to hire people with disabilities, thus promoting the pilot project.

the program through introductory meetings at business associations, but many others said they learned about it through door-to-door visits by program officials. Some of the companies interviewed also said they had been involved with programs implemented by the Ministry of Planning (MPD) prior to the PAE.

Employers have shown interest in participating in the PAE, primarily to find personnel suited to their needs and because of the economic subsidy they receive when training personnel matched to their company. However, the lack of conditions to accommodate people with disabilities and the associated uncertainty were barriers that led some employers to refuse to work with people with disabilities.

For the adaptation process, employers took different actions, such as providing communication tools, adjusting work processes, and searching for positions where the disability has less impact. Some employers said they formed internal support groups for people with disabilities.

They also commended the program for its financial support and for opening up access to groups from which they were previously unable to hire. Additionally, employers noted the program's role in reducing their workloads after the pandemic and in helping keep some companies from going out of business. Some employers have made hiring people with disabilities as an internal policy, whether as part of their corporate social responsibility or because they have deep empathy for that group of people. Others also said that they found these workers to be more committed and devoted to their work.<sup>10</sup> One businessman in Santa Cruz said that the person who ran the company when he was on business trips was actually a person with a disability who had been hired through the program. He said she cared just as much about the company growing and flourishing as he did. This beneficiary, after she had already been hired and given a supervisory role, said that she felt empowered and that she wanted the company to flourish precisely because he had given her an opportunity that no one else had given her before.

The companies we interviewed have a variety of motivations and actions for participating in the process of placing people with disabilities and jobs, ranging from legal compliance to implementing internal inclusion policies and supporting vulnerable people. The program was highly valued for its economic support, and for providing access to personnel suited to companies' specific needs.

### **Quantitative study**

This chapter presents the results of the surveys of beneficiaries and employers from the pilot project for people with disabilities within the Program to Support Employment II (PAE).

### **Beneficiary survey**

The survey involved 203 people with some degree of disability of the total of 547 beneficiaries from 2018 to June 2023 in the cities of Santa Cruz, Cochabamba, La Paz, and El Alto. Given the characteristics of the survey's target audience, it was offered in two formats: oral and written. Out of all the survey participants, 84% decided to respond orally, while 16% did so in writing. The

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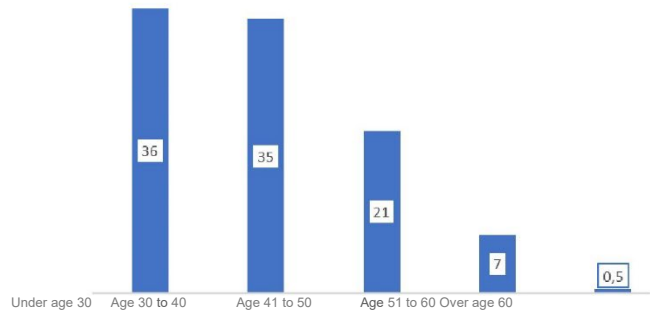
<sup>10</sup> Employers also talked about hearing-impaired people concentrating more and wasting less time chatting, which employers perceived as good for productivity. However, this could be a sign of poor inclusion, since they cannot communicate with their colleagues, an issue that requires further analysis.

survey responses could be provided either by the PAE beneficiaries themselves (86%) or their guardians (14%). Of the guardians who responded to the survey, 65% were mothers and fathers of the beneficiaries, 17% were siblings, 3% were grandparents, and 14% were other relatives or guardians (spouses, mothers-in-law, translators, etc.). Of these guardians, 17% said they too had some type of disability.

In terms of the gender distribution of PAE beneficiaries with disabilities, 58% identified as men and 42% as women. The average age of these beneficiaries was 35, with a minimum of 19 and a maximum of 67. We also found that 71% of beneficiaries were under age 40, and 36% were under age 30 (see Figure 2). Hearing impairment was the most common disability among respondents, followed by physical or motor disability, intellectual disability, and visual and hearing disability (see Figure 3).

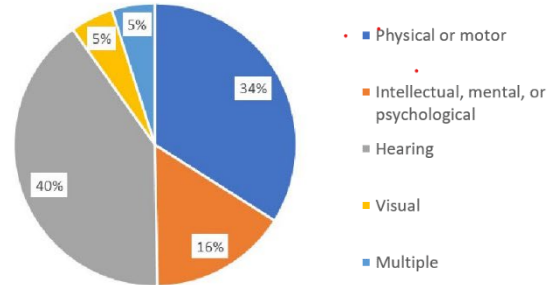


Figure 2: Age of beneficiaries of the PAE II pilot project for people with disabilities (%)



Source: Prepared by the authors based on the follow-up survey of PAE beneficiaries with disabilities

Figure 3: Type of disability of beneficiaries of the PAE II pilot project for people with disabilities

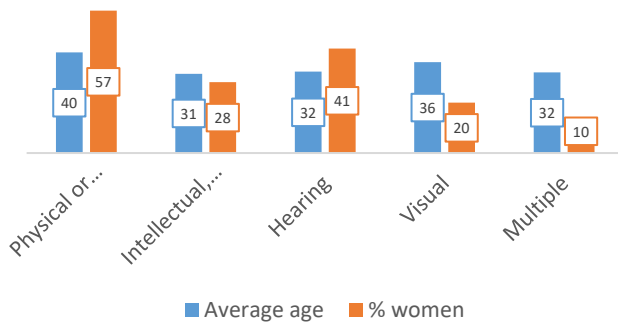


Ninety-six percent of respondents said their disability is permanent. In terms of degree of severity, 54% considered their disability to be severe, 37%

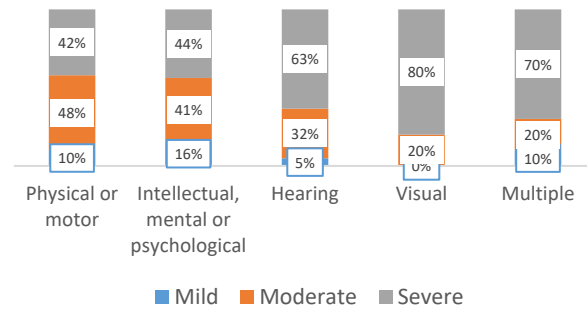
moderate, and 8% mild. By type of disability, less than half of beneficiaries with physical and intellectual disabilities considered their degree of disability to be severe, while over half of beneficiaries with visual, hearing, or multiple disabilities classified their disability as severe (see Figure 5). Importantly, 80% of respondents with a visual disability considered it to be severe.

When analyzing average age by type of disability, the highest average age (40) was among those with physical or motor disabilities, while respondents with intellectual, mental, or psychological disabilities (31) had the lowest average age, as shown in Figure 4. Figure 4 also shows how the largest groups by disability (people with physical or motor disabilities or hearing impairment) also had the largest share of women in them.<sup>11</sup>

*Figure 4: Average ages and proportion of female beneficiaries of the PAE pilot project for people with disabilities, by type of disability*



*Figure 5: Severity of the disability of beneficiaries of the PAE pilot project for people with disabilities, by type of disability*



Source: Prepared by the authors based on the follow-up survey of PAE beneficiaries with disabilities

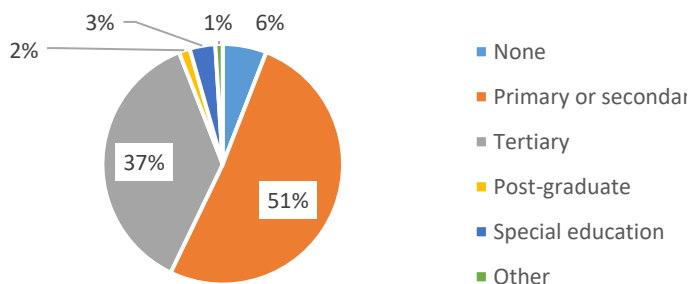
Regarding beneficiaries' levels of education, 37% reported having graduated college or vocational school, while 27% had finished secondary school (see Figure 6). However, there was a large gender gap in this aspect: the percentage of male beneficiaries with a college- or vocational-level education was greater than the percentage of women who had achieved the same academic credentials (see Figure 7). This means that female program beneficiaries with disabilities had a lower average level of education than male participants. We also found that 49% of beneficiaries with a physical disability had a

<sup>11</sup> No conclusions can be drawn about gender or age differences in the visual and multiple disabilities groups due to the small number of observations.

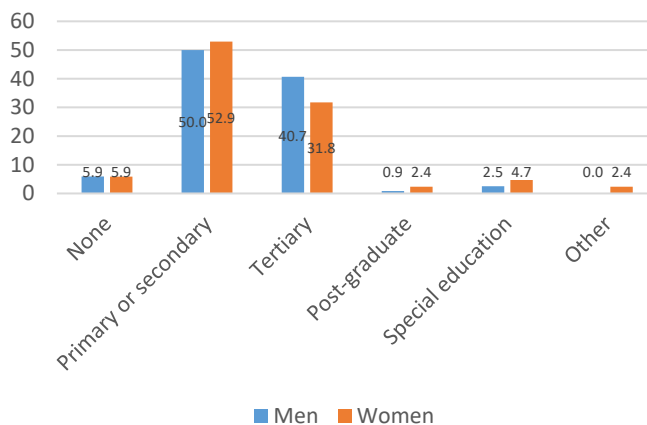
college- or vocational-level education, while only 24% of the hearing-impaired did (see Figure 8).

Among those with a visual disability, 90% had graduated from college or another tertiary-level program, although the sample was very small (10 people). In terms of how beneficiaries heard about the PAE, 50% said that it was through associations for people with disabilities. The second most common source of information about the program was family members, friends or neighbors. The rest heard about it through traditional media (radio, television, or print media) or social media.

**Figure 6: Highest level of education achieved by beneficiaries of the PAE II pilot project for people with disabilities**

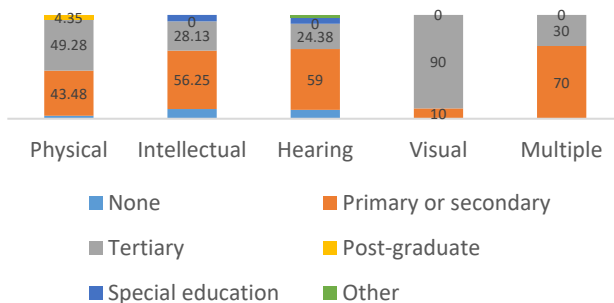


**Figure 7: Highest level of education achieved by beneficiaries of the PAE II pilot project for people with disabilities, by gender (%)**



Source: Prepared by the authors based on the follow-up survey of PAE beneficiaries with disabilities

**Figure 8: Highest level of education achieved by the PAE II pilot project for people with disabilities, by type of disability (%)**

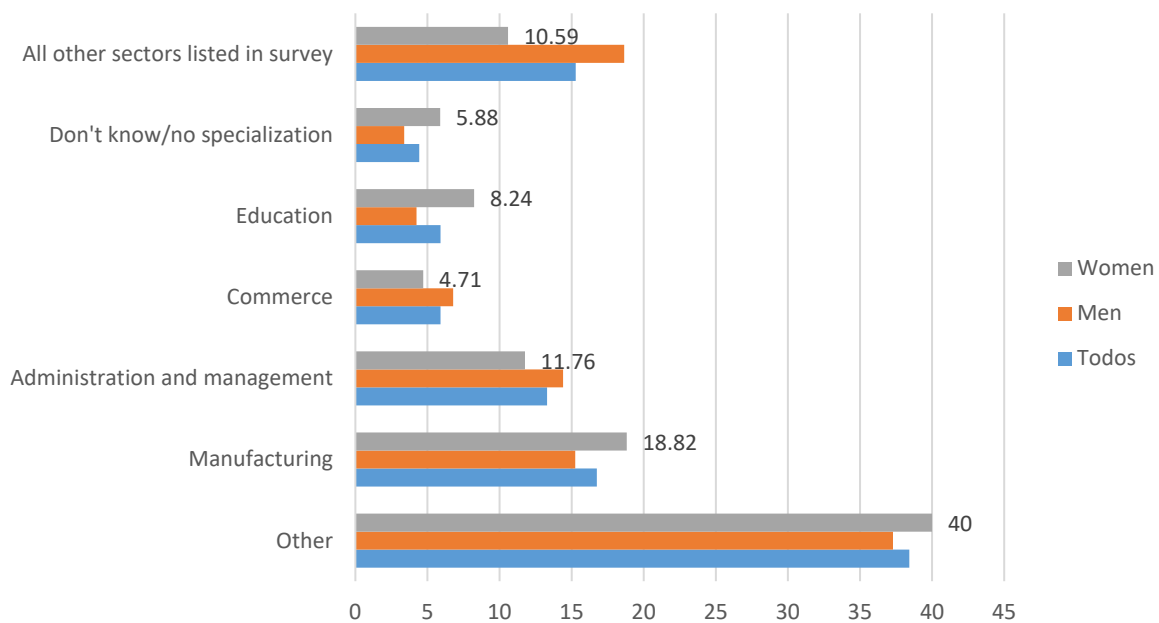


Source: Prepared by the authors based on the follow-up survey of PAE beneficiaries with disabilities

To better understand the perspectives of PAE beneficiaries with disabilities, it was crucial to hear their opinion about their field of specialization and compare it to their experience in the program, as well as to find out whether they continue to work in this field after finishing their months of on-the-job training. According to the survey results, manufacturing was beneficiaries' most common specialization, at 17%, followed by administration and management at 13%. The most common category was "other," at 38% of respondents (see Figure 9). This category includes jobs in agriculture and transportation, as well as various types of employment in the service sector.

It is worth analyzing specialization by gender, since there are trends towards gender segregation in the broader labor market, with some fields considered "masculinized" or "feminized." Among the survey respondents with disabilities, we found no significant gender differences in field of specialization (see Figure 9). The largest difference was in the "all other sectors listed in survey" category, which covers a wider range of activities and which was predominantly male.

*Figure 9: Area of specialization of beneficiaries of the PAE II pilot project for people with disabilities, by gender (%)*



Source: Prepared by the authors based on the follow-up survey of PAE beneficiaries with disabilities

The survey does not allow us to evaluate whether the disability card requirement limited access to the pilot project, since all beneficiaries had to meet and did meet this requirement. However, 58% said that fulfilling the requirements to get the card was complicated, and in interviews, program officials said that they had to provide support in some cases so people could get it and benefit from the PAE. 38% of respondents said they knew someone who was unable to participate in the PAE because they did not have a disability card, which suggests that this could be a major barrier for people with disabilities when trying to access

support programs.

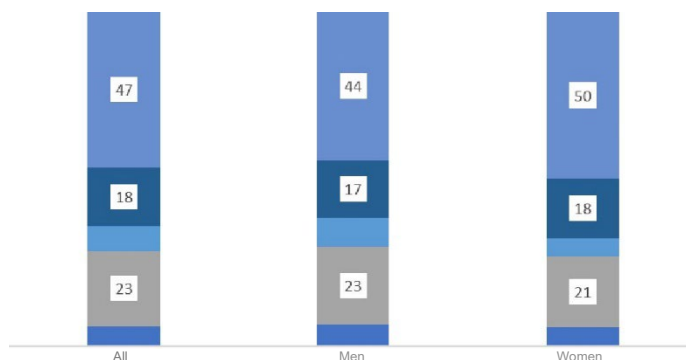
Among the biggest problems that interviewees identified were assistance from officials (53%) and the unavailability of information (46%). The quantitative study did not reveal problems associated with assistance from officials, but the interviews suggested that officials had mixed levels of sensitivity regarding this population and that in some cases, because it is more complex to place people with disabilities in job and the procedures are lengthy, officials avoided working with people disabilities so they could reach their overall job placement goals.

With respect to the beneficiaries' work history, the survey shows that 67% had work experience prior to participating in the PAE. The average length of this work experience was 4.5 years (53.8 months). The proportion of men and women with previous work experience is the same, but there is a difference in the time worked: Women had an average of 4.7 years of work experience, while men had 4.3 years. In terms of the different types of disabilities, the group with the highest proportion of people with previous work experience was the blind, at 90%, followed by people with physical disabilities, at 72%, and people with hearing disabilities, at 70%. The group with the lowest share of people with previous work experience was those with multiple disabilities, at 50%. People with physical disabilities had the highest average length of work experience, at an average of 6.4 years, while those with mental disabilities had the shortest prior work experience, at an average of 3.1 years.

Of those with previous work experience, an oral contract was the most common type of employment agreement (27.7% of respondents), followed by contracts with a fixed end date or term (22.6%). A contract as a salaried staff was the least common of all, at only 5.8%. If we combine the categories of "no contract" and "oral contract" under the umbrella of "no formal contract," then 47% of people with disabilities who worked before the PAE had no formal contract (see Figure 10).

Since the type of contract can be considered an indicator of the type of employment that people have, and since most people with disabilities did not have formal contracts prior to the PAE, and those that did had fixed end dates, it can be inferred that they had informal jobs with substandard labor conditions.

*Figure 10: Type of contract that beneficiaries of the PAE II pilot program for people with disabilities had prior to the program, by gender (%)*



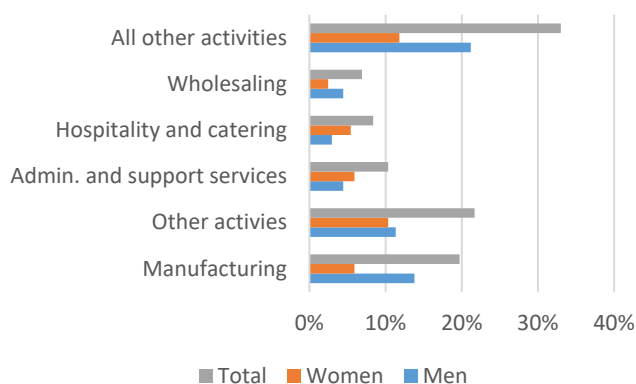
Source: Prepared by the authors based on the follow-up survey of PAE beneficiaries with disabilities. This question only takes into account those who reported having worked prior to benefiting from the PAE.

To analyze the quality of the jobs that PAE beneficiaries with disabilities had before participating in the program, we asked them how much they earned. According to the survey, the average monthly earnings of those with work experience was Bs. 1,962, which is below the national minimum wage. Although we did not see a significant difference in income between men and women, the data is heterogeneous between types of disabilities. For example, those with a physical disability reported higher income, while people with intellectual, mental, or psychological disabilities reported the lowest income. These wage differences may be due to factors such as differences in industry, economic activity, tasks performed, educational level, and other variables that are not considered in the analysis. However, the data does show that, in general, respondents' income was lower than the legal minimum amount.

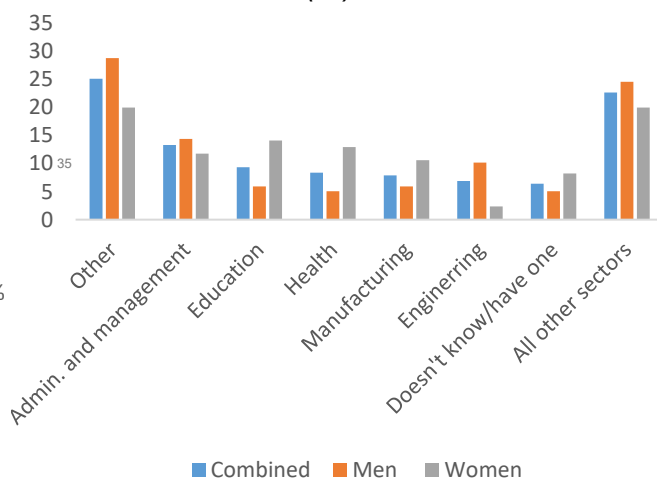
The types of work and activities that PAE pilot project beneficiaries did followed certain patterns. More than a third of beneficiaries did training at companies in the “all other activities” category (see Figure 11). The next most common category was “other service activities” (22%), followed by manufacturing (20%), and administrative and support service activities (10%). Women were a majority in the administrative and support service, hospitality, and catering sectors, while men were more prevalent in manufacturing, other activities, and wholesaling.

If we compare this data to the pilot project participants' aspirations, we find that most people with disabilities reported being interested in specializing in other types of activities, primarily janitorial tasks (see Figure 12). Furthermore, Figure 12 shows how women self-selected for service-related industries (education and health), while more men preferred engineering-related areas. The data on the aspirations of interviewees with disabilities seems to follow the same trends of segregation within activities and sectors as the Bolivian labor market as a whole.<sup>12</sup>

*Figure 11: Industries of the companies where beneficiaries of the PAE II pilot project for people with disabilities did their training*



*Figure 12: Area in which beneficiaries of the PAE II pilot project for people with disabilities aspired to specialize, by gender (%)*



Source: Prepared by the authors based on the follow-up survey of PAE beneficiaries with disabilities

The survey also shows that beneficiaries with disabilities were most often placed in small companies with less than 25 workers (see Figure 13). Most people with disabilities completed the six months of training, and their most common job position was loader. After training, 37.2% of beneficiaries were hired.

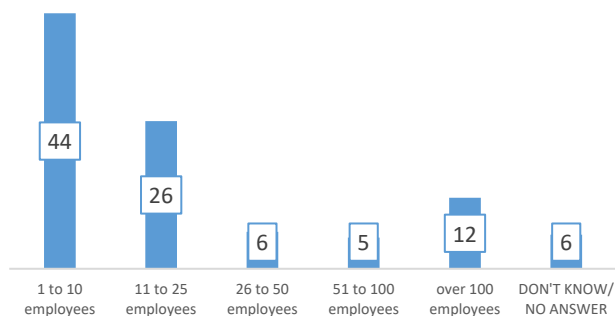
The survey of people with disabilities found that 60.1% of respondents were not working when the survey was conducted, and most who were working were not at the same company where they did training through the PAE (see Figure 14). However, most women did continue to work at the same company where they had received on-the-job training. By type of disability, people with visual disabilities and multiple disabilities were the highest share of people employed during the survey (50%), followed by people with physical disabilities (42%). People with hearing disabilities had the lowest proportion of employed people during the survey (39%).

<sup>12</sup> According to data from the 2021 Household Survey of the National Statistics Institute (INE), in urban areas over 55% of employed men had jobs in commerce (21%), transportation (19%), and manufacturing (15%). For employed women, 48% worked in commerce, 25% in other services, and 11% in manufacturing. These three sectors accounted for 84% of all employed women.

The average monthly income for those who are working is Bs. 2221.6, and most believe that the training taught them new things and gave them a network of contacts that could help them find employment.

Problems highlighted in survey responses include delays in financial support payments (stipends), an issue that also came up in the qualitative study, as well as beneficiaries who quit because of discrimination at the company or because of failure to pay the stipend.

**Figure 13: Beneficiaries of the PAE II pilot project for people with disabilities, by size of the company where they received training (%)**



**Figure 14: Employment status as of the survey of beneficiaries of the PAE II pilot project for people with disabilities, by gender (%)**



Source: Prepared by the authors based on the follow-up survey of PAE beneficiaries with disabilities



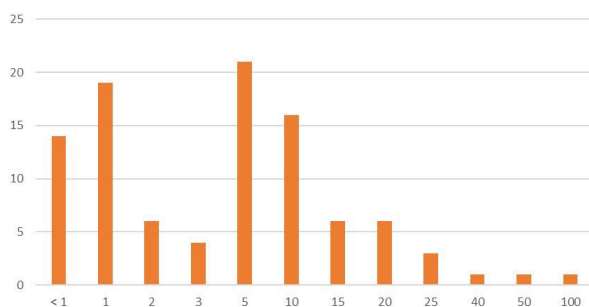
## Employer survey

This survey was given to 104 representatives of companies that participated in the PAE II pilot project for people with disabilities by training at least one person, in the cities of Santa Cruz, Cochabamba, La Paz, and El Alto. Respondents were company owners (32.7%), managers or human resource personnel (31.7%), directors (20.2%), or had another role at the company (15.4%).

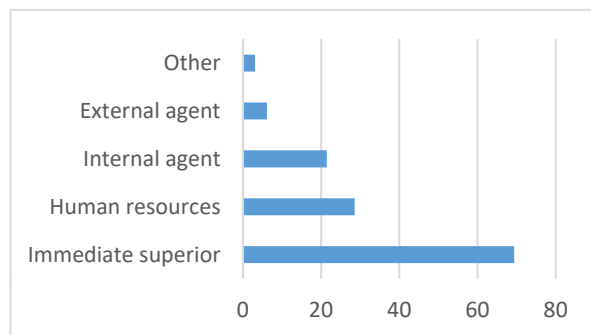
One of the objectives of the employer survey was to understand how companies responded to including people with disabilities among their employees, and the supervision and support that are important aspects of achieving workplace inclusion. Of these interviewees, 94.2% said they provided some type of follow-up (support, supervision, evaluation, etc.) to their employees with disabilities. Observation and support were among the most frequent forms of follow-up.

In terms of frequency, 56.1% reported daily follow-up, and 28.6% said they provided weekly follow-up. Based on employer responses, we calculated that they followed up with people with disabilities an average of 11 times per week (see Figure 15). The survey shows that 65.3% of companies followed up with their employees with disabilities seven times per week. In most cases, the immediate superiors of workers with disabilities were responsible for supervising them (see Figure 16).

*Figure 15: Average number of times per week that companies supervise their employees with disabilities*



*Figure 16: Person responsible for supervising employees with disabilities at companies (%)*

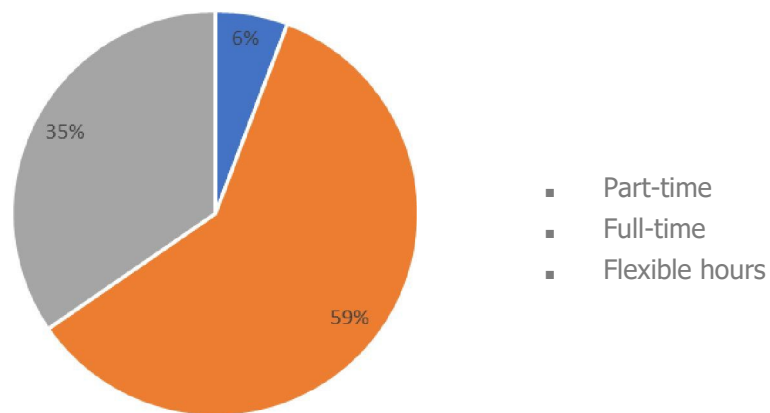


Source: Prepared by the authors based on the follow-up survey of PAE beneficiaries with disabilities

Regarding the type of work and workload, 57.7% of employers reported treating people with disabilities on equal footing with people without disabilities. Those who said they did something differently primarily said they did so because of the person's disability, in order to adjust their responsibilities to the severity and type of disability. The qualitative study shows that in some cases these adjustments created resentment among other employees, who saw them as unfair. For example, one company that rotated personnel between workplaces kept people with disabilities at a single site without rotating them, which led to friction with some of their colleagues.

The most common work arrangement for people with disabilities, according to the companies, was full-time (59.6%), followed by flexible hours (34.6%). Regarding whether people with disabilities had a suitable workstation for their tasks, most companies said the furniture met the needs of the employee (63.5%), the lighting was suitable (75.9%), the workspace had been adapted appropriately (67.6%), and their medical leave policy was appropriate to these employees' needs (86.5%). Overall, 40.4% of employers reported having all four of these elements in place. Additionally, 76.9% of employers said they provided specialized supplies or tools when workers with disabilities needed them for their job. The qualitative study revealed that employers did not use the financing the program offered for making adaptations.

*Figure 17: Type of workday of employees with disabilities*



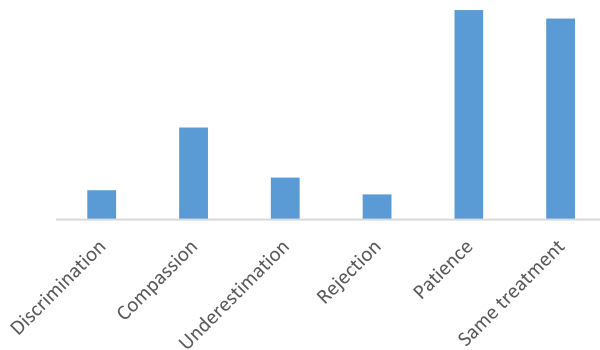
Source: Prepared by the authors based on the follow-up survey of PAE beneficiaries with disabilities

The survey also asked about the attitude of other employees towards their colleagues with disabilities. Very few responses indicated discrimination (6.7%), while a small number said that these colleagues are underestimated (9.6%), and an even smaller number said they were rejected by their coworkers (5.7%). On the contrary, compassionate attitudes seemed to be the norm (see Figure 18).

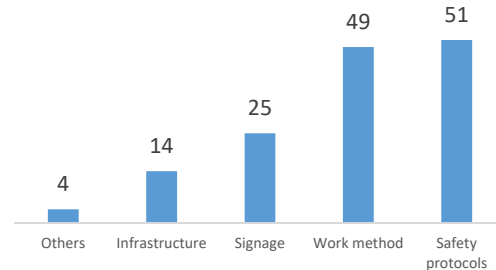
On another note, hiring people with disabilities often involves adapting the workplace infrastructure to make it accessible to the needs of new employees. Therefore the survey asked about

the modifications that companies had to make to hire workers with disabilities as part of their staff, and the most common were changes in work methods (49%) and changes to safety protocols (50.9%). However, 21% of the companies did not make any type of modification, and 5.8% carried out the four modifications mentioned in the survey. Once again, the survey showed that the funds available in the pilot project were not used.

*Figure 18: Attitude of other workers towards their colleagues with disabilities, according to the company representative (%)*



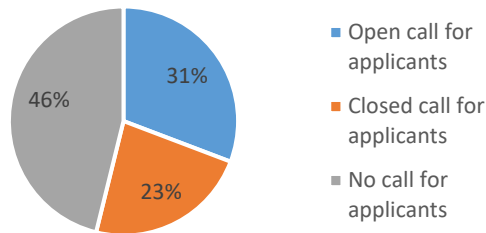
*Figure 19: Modifications companies made upon hiring someone with a disability (%)*



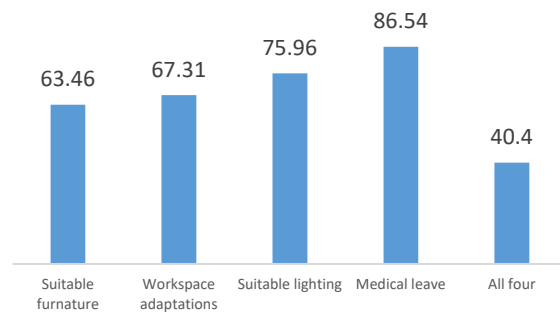
Source: Prepared by the authors based on the follow-up survey of PAE beneficiaries with disabilities

As for whether the company hires applicants with disabilities in their normal recruitment processes, 46.15% said that they had not published any calls for applicants, while 30.8% have an open call for applicants. When there is an applicant with a disability, 64.4% of the companies surveyed said that this candidate goes through the same selection process as any other applicant, 22.1% said they go through a different selection process, and 13.5% said that it depends on the position. For applicants with disabilities, the most common requirement is for candidates to state their type and degree of disability (70.2%), and the second most common requirement is that they submit their resume (58.6%).

**Figure 20: Companies' methods of hiring people with disabilities**



**Figure 21: Elements considered by companies when hiring people with disabilities (%)**

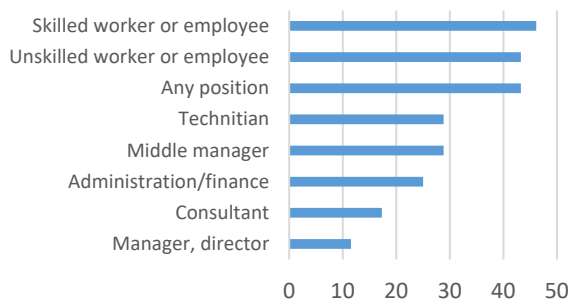


Source: Prepared by the authors based on the follow-up survey of PAE beneficiaries with disabilities

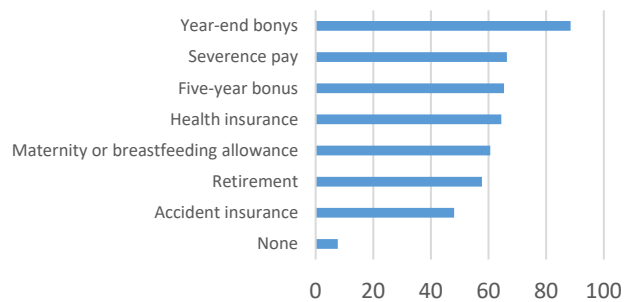
Regarding companies' willingness to hire people with disabilities, 43.3% said they would hire them for any position, although this affirmation did not seem to hold true when considering each type of position individually. After breaking the data down by type of position, we see that companies are most willing to hire people with disabilities as skilled workers or employees, like factory workers (46.1%), or as unskilled workers or employees, such as couriers (43.3%). Employers are least willing to hire people with disabilities for the position of manager or director (11.5%). Meanwhile, 91.3% of companies say that the salary they offer applicants with a disability is the same as the one for people without disabilities.

The survey also asked companies about other types of benefits that they offer their employees in general, beyond salary, and whether these are different from the ones that they provide for their employees with disabilities. A total of 7.7% of the companies do not offer any type of benefits to any of their workers. The most common benefit granted by companies to their employees in general is the year-end bonus (88.5%), and the least common is accident insurance (48.1%). In fact, 28.8% of the companies offer all seven benefits listed in the survey (accident insurance, health insurance, severance pay, five-year bonus, year-end bonus, maternity or breastfeeding allowance, and retirement). According to the results, 95.8% of the companies offer the same benefits to their employees, whether or not they have a disability.

**Figure 22: Positions for which companies are willing to hire someone with a disability (%)**



**Figure 23: Benefits companies offer to their employees (%)**

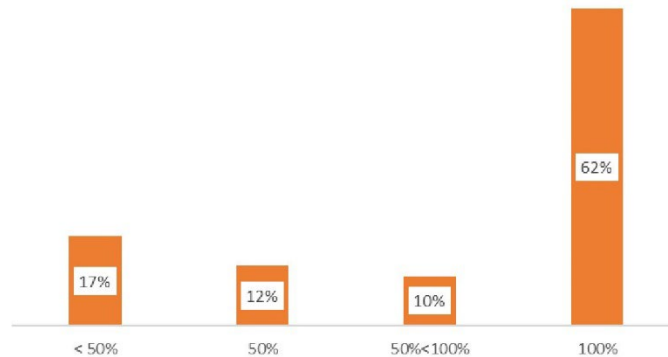


Source: Prepared by the authors based on the follow-up survey of PAE beneficiaries with disabilities

Companies say that the job offers they make to people with disabilities consist mainly of arrangements with flexible hours (52.9%), followed by full-time contracts (49.04%), and part-time contracts (11.5%). The most common reason for not selecting an applicant with a disability is their type and/or degree of disability (76.9%). Of the companies interviewed, 15.4% said they have human resources staff that specializes in assisting people with disabilities while 35.6% stated that they do not, and 41.3% stated that they do not currently have such personnel but are willing to train them to be more prepared.

The companies hired 3.6 people with disabilities on average, although 41.3% of them only hired one person with a disability. Of all participating companies, 61.5% hired 100% of the people with disabilities on their staff through the PAE, and 11.5% found 50% of their employees with disabilities through the PAE. It should be noted that 74% of the companies said they hired people with disabilities through the PAE because they were required to by the Ministry of Labor, in compliance with the Law on Employment and Economic Assistance for Persons with Disabilities

*Figure 24: Share of people with disabilities hired by companies through the PAE II*



Source: Prepared by the authors based on the follow-up survey of PAE beneficiaries with disabilities

Lastly, 45.2% of the companies said that their managers and human resource directors had not carried out any disability-related activities in conjunction with the PAE. 92.3% of the companies rate the experience with and support from the PAE as positive: from somewhat satisfactory to very satisfactory. Exclusively with regards to hiring people with disabilities through the PAE, 94.2% of the companies said their experience was satisfactory, ranging from somewhat satisfactory to very satisfactory. Similarly, 82.7% of interviewees said they were willing to hire more people with disabilities without the PAE's involvement.

Only 28.8% of the companies reported having internal policies for hiring and including people with disabilities.

### **Survey of PAE officials**

The results of the survey of PAE officials who assisted people with disabilities as part of the program showed that they have a positive opinion of the program, viewing it as having an inclusive approach. However, 62.5% of respondents mentioned that the program did not hire specialized personnel to assist this population, and only half of respondents said that they had received specific training on interacting with people with disabilities.

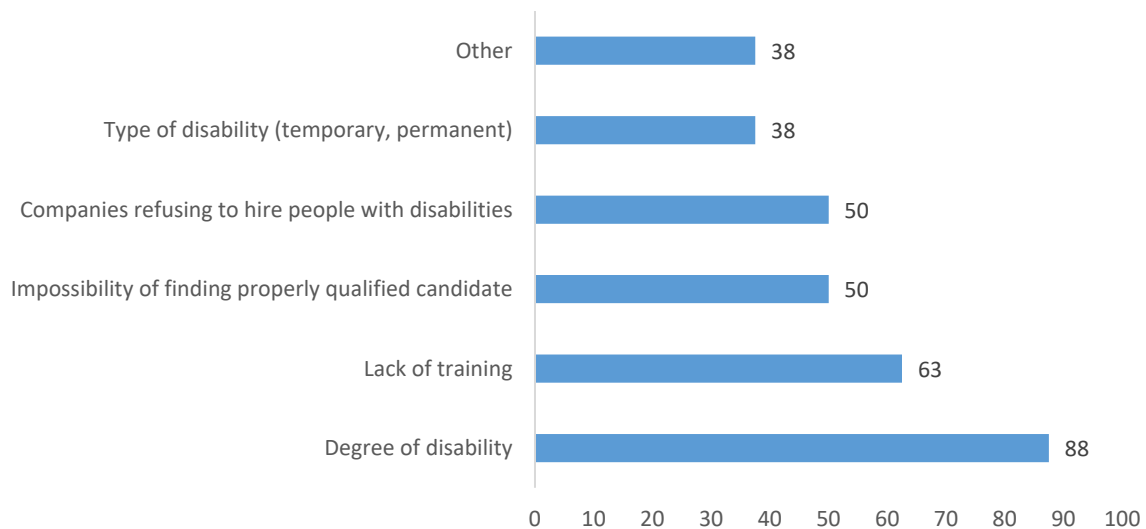
Importantly, 50% of respondents said that serving the needs of someone with a disability who seeks out the PAE requires more time and/or resources from the staff member and the team, which suggests that the program needs to make a greater effort to ensure that all staff members are properly trained to assist this population. Meanwhile, 62.5% of the officials think that the companies discriminated against jobseekers with disabilities during the selection process.

It is essential to address this problem to make sure that people with disabilities have equal access to employment opportunities.

Although 37.5% thought that people with disabilities completed their PAE training at the same rate as people without disabilities, all officials mentioned having developed special criteria and procedures to identify vacancies for people with disabilities.

Degree of disability was the most frequently cited obstacle to people with disabilities being chosen for job openings (87.5% of respondents), well above the 37.5% of respondents who mentioned type of disability. The second most commonly mentioned barrier for people with disabilities was lack of training (62.5%) (see Figure 25).

*Figure 25: Obstacles to people with disabilities being chosen for job openings, as identified by PAE officials (%)*



Source: Prepared by the authors based on the follow-up survey of PAE beneficiaries with disabilities

One noteworthy aspect of the interviews with PAE officials is that they said they contacted companies to let them know they could request adaptations to their facilities if there were any architectural or structural barriers impeding access to people's workstations. In addition, 50% of the interviewees said they used the Law on Employment and Economic Assistance for Persons with Disabilities to persuade companies to hire people with disabilities, an aspect that the companies mentioned as well.

## *Conclusions and general recommendations*

The job matching pilot project for people with disabilities yielded several key insights. One was the usefulness of extending “on-site” training to six months for people with disabilities, instead of the three months offered to other program beneficiaries. This decision promoted the inclusion of people with disabilities and also increased the chances that the beneficiaries’ skills would align with the labor market’s demands. Another important conclusion is that funding workplace adaptations is a major challenge for placing people with disabilities in jobs, since employers do not usually budget for these expenses in their hiring processes, and, due to the complex administrative processes these adaptations involve, the program did not manage to implement them. Part of the challenge is that these adaptations vary by type and degree of disability, so it is not possible to arrange for them in advance. This creates an administrative problem that would have delayed the start of on-the-job training and discouraged employers. For future pilot projects, one option would be to deliver the support directly in cash to the person with a disability and analyze the effectiveness of this course of action.

In this area, we identified that follow-up and support during on-the-job training to help people adapt to the job were crucial to keeping people with disabilities from quitting. Both people with disabilities and employers saw communication as another significant challenge during the pilot project. To overcome this barrier, the project used alternative resources, such as interpreters and written communication or communication via WhatsApp. For similar processes, it would be best to provide better awareness activities and training for staff, particularly in sign language and in how to interact and work with this population in order to improve inclusion.

In terms of officials, specialized personnel and accessible environments are needed to guarantee the effectiveness of the job placement process for people with disabilities. Developing the confidence, self-esteem, empowerment, and autonomy of this group are also key. To this end, it is important to have specialized staff or courses. One of the problems that the pilot project encountered was that the courses and awareness-building processes were carried out at the start of the project, but, for different reasons (including the pandemic) were never repeated. The program would have benefited from an asynchronous online course, which could have been developed using the materials from the in-person courses. For similar processes, we recommend offering an asynchronous training course, given staff turnover, as well as ongoing awareness-building processes. It is essential to train staff on inclusion in order to promote the practice of hiring people with disabilities, for reasons that go beyond legal compliance. The fact that the program's numbers vary from city to city could be partly attributable to the individual sensibilities of the PAE staff. Some staff members may show greater empathy, solidarity, or even feel guilty, which influences their approach to helping people with disabilities.

Upon analyzing the stories and interviews, we found that partnerships with business groups and civil society organizations are key to disseminating the program and benefiting job seekers. The government has comparative advantages over NGOs or other institutions that work to integrate people with disabilities, particularly because of its legal function and access to financing. However, that same general function means that it does not have the same capacity for specialization as other institutions, so partnerships between the government and



these institutions add value, especially through the follow-up and personalized support that some of them provide. Another synergy lies in the flow of information to potential beneficiaries, but it is important to ensure the quality of this information, with appropriate materials and planned events as part of a dedicated communications plan.

For beneficiaries, the 6-month training period does improve their employability, as long as it is tailored to their individual needs. It is important to avoid an overly compliance-based approach and rather help beneficiaries network and make business contacts to increase their employment opportunities. Although a legal obligation does exist, employers react better when they understand and see people with disabilities as productive workers, and their incorporation into the company is also smoother with an inclusion process. This more comprehensive approach should address the family and social environments of people with disabilities, fostering their confidence, self-esteem, empowerment, and autonomy so that they have the support they need to enter the world of work productively and develop professionally. From the perspective of employers, training people with disabilities is an important investment, as they bring valuable skills and diverse perspectives to the table. To promote inclusion, partnerships with civil society organizations and educational actions in the workplace are key. It is necessary to overcome prejudices and stereotypes about disability, casting a positive vision and recognizing the potential of people with disabilities in the workplace.

The PAE's job placement pilot program for people with disabilities yielded key conclusions about the process of accessing employment and had positive results, given the level of successful job placements in a challenging pandemic and post-pandemic context. It also shed light on the implementation challenges that similar processes might face. These challenges include obstacles in the job search process like the lack of formal training and certification of many people with disabilities, or demand-side prejudices. The pilot project revealed how effective communication strategies, on-the-job training, and strategic alliances can boost labor market inclusion for people with disabilities and create positive change in the work and social environment.

The pilot project for people with disabilities provided an opportunity to reflect on various issues related to the situation of people with disabilities in the country and their access to quality employment. These issues include the training they need in order to secure jobs, the family and social environments that surround them, and the state's role in ensuring respect for their rights and access to opportunities. We hope these lessons can be useful in similar processes within the country and in other contexts with low labor market inclusion of people with disabilities.

## **Recommendations**

*Design an effective outreach strategy:* For future programs or initiatives, developing a solid and effective outreach strategy is key. Those implementing the initiative should use various communication channels to reach both potential beneficiaries and interested employers. They must provide clear, accurate, and understandable information to avoid misunderstandings and unrealistic expectations. They could also use accessible visual materials and digital resources that are appropriate for different disabilities to ensure broader dissemination and outreach.

*Emphasize comprehensive training:* A greater focus on training, for both beneficiaries and officials involved in the initiatives, is essential. In addition to providing information on the program's conditions and processes, future programs should offer additional training in soft skills and specific techniques to improve beneficiaries' employability. This includes developing communication, teamwork, adaptability, and leadership skills. Program officers also need to be trained to provide comprehensive and effective support throughout the job placement process. This training should be ongoing and open to new personnel as soon as they join the organization.

*Promote strategic alliances with traditional associations:* To boost employment for people with disabilities, programs need to forge alliances with business groups and civil society organizations, especially associations that have historically played a role in finding jobs for people with disabilities in each context. These partnerships can help bring visibility to the program, build trust with employers, and make it easier to connect job searchers with job opportunities. Programs can also reach agreements for exchanging resources and knowledge, and for creating programs that provide mentoring and ongoing support for beneficiaries. These entities are able to specialize and provide a higher level of follow-up than the state can, so they complement government efforts.

*Assess and amend labor regulations:* A thorough assessment of existing labor regulations is needed to identify potential barriers or challenges that may keep companies from hiring people with disabilities. Countries should adjust and improve their regulations, while ensuring that the labor rights of people with disabilities are protected. If the program offers financing for the adaptations needed in order to include people with disabilities in the workplace, it is important to first analyze the administrative context and design a delivery method suited to that context so that the adaptations can actually materialize.

*Allocate sufficient resources for follow-up and monitoring:* It is essential to provide enough resources for effective follow-up and monitoring work by government officials (possibly in coordination with other entities). In this way, programs can quickly address any problems or difficulties that arise during training and final job placement and also help beneficiaries overcome any obstacles they encounter along the way.

## **Future challenges**

Our current understanding of disability emphasizes that it is not determined by the individual, but mainly by existing social barriers. The challenge is therefore to eliminate any obstacle that prevents people with disabilities from fully exercising their rights and completely integrating into society, including, of course, the spheres of education and training.

In the context of employers, the initial motivation to hire people with disabilities in Bolivia comes in part from Law 977, which requires that at least 2% of companies' staff be people with disabilities. However, this mandate does not automatically guarantee accessible hiring processes. It is crucial to foster a more inclusive and open-minded business culture, which can be achieved by creating collaborative networks and alliances, and by re-framing people with disabilities as workers and productive members of society.

Some Latin American countries—Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico, and Peru—

have already created national business and disability networks, and other countries in the region are considering doing the same. Moreover, the Ibero-American Social Security Organization (OISS) has established the Ibero-American Network of Inclusive Enterprises, and the ILO Global Business and Disability Network is working closely with the OISS to bolster inclusion of people with disability at private companies in Latin America (ILO, 2017).

Business have the responsibility to create innovative job profiles that are accessible to people with disabilities, so that limitations do not become an obstacle to equal opportunities. In return, companies will enjoy greater diversity, a productive workforce, and an advantage in an aging world where people with disabilities will be a growing market. Stories about simple adaptations that facilitate effective inclusion can deflate the perception that inclusion is complicated, costly, and requires major changes.

Meanwhile, the government should make sure that the laws it has passed are actually enforced, whether by fining organizations that do not comply with them or by offering incentives to encourage them to meet the quotas of employees with disabilities. But this also requires ensuring training and certification opportunities for people with disabilities so that their skills match what employers are looking for.

Most importantly, Bolivia clearly needs awareness campaigns to spread understanding and acceptance of people with disabilities in the workplace as productive workers who have much to contribute to the country's growth. These campaigns should challenge existing stereotypes and prejudices, emphasize the skills and contributions of people with disabilities, and actively promote equal opportunities in the world of work.

## *Appendix I: Beneficiary stories*

In the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, a group of people meet to work through and overcome the difficulties they experience as a result of their relationship with the barriers created around their disability and the way these barriers limit their opportunities in the country's labor market. This diverse group includes people with physical disabilities and parents of children with disabilities, all of whom are beneficiaries of the PAE.

Initially, this group secured support from the Autonomous Municipal Government of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, which gave them a space to meet. In that space, they set up a sewing workshop where they make clothing to sell. At this cooperative, we met José G., a young bricklayer whose life took an unexpected turn after an accident at work left him in a wheelchair. José wanted to find a way to be able to go back to work. For a while, he sold chocolates in the city's markets and streets, and then he found this sewing workshop. Here, he has been able to learn a new trade and sell his own products, becoming a skilled tailor.

Marisol, a mother of five, is also part of this group. One of her children has a mental disability. For Mirtha, another member of this community, the workshop has been a source of income and given her the opportunity to learn to sew on an electric machine, improving her skills and economic prospects.

Ágeda, who has a hearing disability, has proven to be a valuable member of the team. She teaches her peers sign language, breaking down communication barriers and fostering an inclusive and collaborative environment in the workshop.

This cooperative has over a dozen program beneficiaries, each of whom contributes their skills. The work of José, Marisol, Ágeda, Mirtha, and their colleagues is a powerful testament to the impact that the support provided by program staff can have. The program offered them pattern-making courses and assistance with filling out forms, as well as personalized guidance. For this particular group, the Program to Support Employment team has been instrumental.

### **The intervention process**

The pilot project's actions were based on experiences with matching people with disabilities to jobs during the Program to Support Employment I. The "on-site" training was extended from three to six months because three months was considered insufficient. Additionally, it was understood that "we need to train people with disabilities so that they can improve their skills and align them with market needs" (Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security, 2017). The project's designers recognized the need for occupational and job profiling instruments. They also took into account one of the main difficulties in placing people with disabilities in jobs: financing workstation adaptations that allow people with disabilities to access a greater range of job openings, since employers do not budget for this expense in their hiring processes.

In addition, prior experience showed the need for greater follow-up and support to help people with disabilities adapt to the job and keep them from quitting.

Follow-up and monitoring continued to be mentioned frequently in the in-depth interviews—

both by PAE operational staff and by the beneficiaries and employers themselves—as obstacles and necessities to improve their work.

By systematically reviewing the experience, we were able to gain further insight into: 1) perceptions of the relevance/usefulness of the pilot project, 2) how much people valued the experience, 3) innovative actions, most relevant lessons, and outstanding achievements.

### **Perceptions of the relevance and usefulness of the pilot project**

This section focuses on people's perceptions of how useful and pertinent the pilot project was. The analysis aims to shed light on how different stakeholders perceived the pilot implementation, that is, their opinion on its implementation, as well as their views on its results and challenges.

Officials at the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security (MTEPS) generally saw the pilot project as useful insofar as it led to social inclusion for people with disabilities and brought benefits for their families.

*"In terms of results, that participation was significant because they are emblematic cases that open the door for everyone in the labor market to be able to work with this group. These examples help show that if profiling is done right and a good relationship is established, it can change the conditions for these people in a very significant way and even lead to a major contribution to the company. These stories also showcase the inclusive nature of that company."*

Gonzalo Gozalves, National Head Of Business Outreach,  
PAE I

While precise data is not yet available, during interviews<sup>13</sup> officials expressed concern about the number of people served compared to the number of people who needed some sort of assistance to improve their quality of life, or about the places in the country that the program did not serve. This led them to reflect on how difficult employment is for this group in Bolivia.

*"In Bolivia, a large number of people create their own jobs. Self-employment is also a fallback in times of crisis... People generate their own work, try to sell things, etc. This is a strategy that can't be overlooked, especially considering another aspect that is completely missing from the PAE, which is work in rural areas, where people have a different relationship with disability."*

Gonzalo Zambrana Ávila,  
Vice-Minister of Employment, Civil Service and Cooperatives, Ministry of Labor,  
Employment and Social Security

One problem that in reality seems linked to the PAE and that is beyond the scope of the pilot project is the role of the Public Employment Service,<sup>14</sup> which could have been more active.

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<sup>13</sup>We conducted interviews with officials in September 2022.

<sup>14</sup> The Public Employment Service (SPE) is nationwide and costs nothing to use. Its purpose is to connect job seekers with

However, this matter raises an additional point related to what the service and ministry itself should do in the future, a question already on the state's policy radar.

For operational staff, the pilot project added to their workload and required them to find creative solutions to meet its job placement goals. An example of these creative solutions was making inclusion of people with disabilities in the program a condition for receiving PAE resources for people without disabilities.

*"We went to service companies and told them that we are helping them comply with Law 977. We said, 'Include people with disabilities in the group, and for six months you will be able to train them and then hire them to meet the law's requirements. The program will pay for them during the training process.'"*

Departmental Coordinator of the PAE

Communication was identified as one of the top challenges when assessing the pilot program. Because of a lack of specialized personnel, project staff had to make do with the resources they had, like writing back and forth on paper, using messaging systems on their cell phones, or seeking assistance from supportive nongovernmental organizations or relatives who know sign language, for example. This difficulty also carried over to settings where people with disabilities received training.

*"They are very, very eager to learn and do things. The problem is they can't make themselves understood. We have to have an interpreter to communicate with them. And not just for interviews or problems that come up, but also to improve coordination between the employer, colleagues, and people with disabilities at that company. The interpreters are NGO volunteers."*

Departmental Coordinator of the PAE

*"People without disabilities often have to do a lot of paperwork, coming in several times to complete it. But for people with disabilities, we find ways to get it done in a single visit, accommodating them and saving them unnecessary hassles. The support of their families or the organizations they belong to plays a crucial role, since it is often difficult for them to get from place to place or communicate, especially those with hearing disabilities. Fortunately, we have Noel, who helps us in situations where communication becomes difficult. When we can't communicate in writing, they gives us a cell phone where we can send messages or notes to fill out forms or send relevant information. We strive to maintain effective communication, albeit in alternative ways."*

PAE operational officer

Meanwhile, beneficiaries highly valued the pilot project because it gave them opportunities to earn a more secure income. For them, the program was a gateway to workplace inclusion and to the possibility of achieving greater financial independence. It also allowed them to acquire resources that would enable them to start their own business or even get tools that

make living with their disability easier.

They saw the training provided by the pilot project as positive, because they were able to gain new skills and knowledge that are relevant in the workforce. They highlighted the importance of this training as they prepared to join the workforce and achieve greater autonomy.

When they are hired by a company, people with disabilities see it as essential to be considered employees on equal footing with the rest of the staff. They value receiving the same benefits and opportunities for professional growth, which gives them a sense of belonging and recognition at work. When they experience discrimination or are excluded, they become frustrated and discouraged.

With regard to the program's administration, beneficiaries expressed concern about delays in stipend payments. While they understand that administrative difficulties can arise, they are worried by how long it takes them to receive their financial compensation. This situation can cause them financial difficulties and make them unsure whether they will continue to receive payments in the future.

*"Payments shouldn't be delayed, because you really need your paycheck." When waiting turns to desperation, it's a problem. I was already a month into program and I wasn't getting paid, and the stress and anxiety about the bills I had to pay was weighing on me, and day after day I wasn't getting paid. I tried to stay calm, and I know it wasn't the company that owed me the money, but rather a program with procedures that were causing the wait. And I wouldn't say I'm angry, but I would say that it was problematic."*

Carla has a hearing disability; the interview was conducted through an interpreter.  
Waitress

As for employers, we found that they consider the program to be a valuable opportunity for corporate social responsibility or to show solidarity. By including people with disabilities, they received talented and free labor through the PAE. But they also recognized that this inclusion could lead to a set of challenges, like communication difficulties and the need for additional training for effectively interacting with this group of people.

*"We hired Mar (not her real name) because she lives nearby and neighbors told us she was looking for work. We suggested that she go to the PAE and, after a process, we sought her out for training. She has Down syndrome and has an incredible ability and patience for turning over stuffed animals. She does it with remarkable precision and always in a good mood. She takes her job very seriously and we all learn from her attitude."*

CEO of a factory in the city of La Paz.

Communication again stands out as one of the main challenges, as employers and staff in the workplace are often unfamiliar with the different methods of communication used by people with disabilities, such as sign language. This can lead to day-to-day difficulties in communication and in giving clear instructions.

Some employers also mention the need for other staff to receive additional training to ensure that they include people with disabilities and treat them appropriately in the workplace. This includes giving them more information about each individual's specific needs.

Despite these challenges, employers recognize the program's benefits and opportunities. Not only does including people with disabilities promote diversity and equal opportunities, it also can have a positive impact on the work environment and the company's corporate image.

*"Hiring people with disabilities is one of the principles of the hotel and franchise, as is nondiscrimination. So it is both our policy and legal obligation to reach out to these people."*

Head of human resources at a hotel in Santa Cruz

### **Assessment of the experience**

This section describes the challenges that PAE officials, beneficiaries, and companies encountered in order to identify areas for improvement, risks, and opportunities, as well as draw lessons for the future.

Regarding PAE operational officers, the perception interviews conducted with PAE departmental coordinators revealed that the pilot project for people with disabilities produced a certain degree of confusion and lack of clarity about its actions. We found that their actions were based more on individual initiative than clear operational rules or directives. As a result, we conclude that some of the actions carried out in relation to the pilot went beyond the established responsibilities and functions, to the point of creating aid dependence in some cases, with coordinators or other staff taking actions like filling out forms for people with disabilities.

*"It wasn't just up to us to work with the beneficiaries, their environments, their families—they had to learn too. In one case, a young woman was hired by an airline, and her job was to help people take a number for their turn at a service desk. The problem was that a member of her family was always with her and was really the one who took care of handing out the numbers. It was a job meant to be well within the young woman's capabilities, but her family didn't get it."*

Bertha Pinto, Former PAE Coordinator

It also became clear that even though the process followed the same structure as PAE job matching, nobody kept a digital registry. People with disabilities were identified directly and in person on the platform, in an intuitive way, which could make it difficult to follow up properly and manage participants efficiently. The practice also leaves room for subjectivity and personal preferences when selecting people, which could affect the fairness and transparency of the process.

Despite the efforts made by operational staff, which sometimes even went beyond what was required of them, numerous obstacles that people with disabilities face when seeking employment were reported. These problems are rooted in education and training. For example, inability to respond appropriately during a job interview in a way that reflects the interviewee's capabilities is considered one of the main reasons why people with disabilities



have more limited employment opportunities.

*"We would teach them over and over again how to answer interview questions. We even got an institute to give them classes on things like public speaking, depending on their disability. We would go with them to their interviews, and it was maddening to see how they could not give an answer they knew or could not express themselves, not even with sign language interpreters in the case of the hearing impaired."*

Luis Quiroga, PAE operational officer.

For beneficiaries, one of the challenges we found was related to the lack of accessible transportation in the cities of La Paz, Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz. Not only do these environmental barriers make it hard for people with disabilities to get to the workplace, they also impact the continuity of training processes.

Additionally, beneficiaries perceive that the diversity in their skills and training makes it difficult for them to find employment. They also feel that benefits or additional support, such as flexible schedules or modifications to tasks, are lacking, which can leave them tired and frustrated.

There can be stubborn prejudices even among those closest to them. These include beliefs that "they won't be able to do it," "they will get worn out," or "they will be mistreated," even within their own families. These prejudices discourage them, which in turn cuts into their job performance.

*"Parents don't understand that their children can and should follow the same schedule as everyone else. A complaint we commonly hear is that employers are inconsiderate because they don't let them come in later or leave earlier. When parents believe that their children can't manage, it is discouraging for the beneficiary, the employer, and us."*

PAE operational officer

Several of the people with disabilities we interviewed said that without the PAE, they would not be able to find work and blamed the state for not creating a sustainable, long-term mechanism. Based on their perspective of their own abilities and companies' decisions, they do not see prospects for continued employment. In other words, a sense of dependence on the program has emerged.

We found that opportunities for people with disabilities are limited and depend on their level of education, place of residence, relationship with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that offer help or assistance, and even on the organization that refers them to the PAE.

Among companies, we noticed skepticism from employers and human resource managers toward hiring people with disabilities because of a lack of information and existing prejudices. They initially question the potential capabilities of people with disabilities, and they think that hiring them could be costly if they do not have support from the pilot project or if they have to hire them after the training process because of the law that makes it functionally impossible

to dismiss them. This uncertainty leads employers to select the type of disability that they believe will lead to the least amount of problems in terms of adapting to the workplace and relating to the rest of the staff.

But as employers become more involved in the pilot project and have the opportunity to interact with people with disabilities, their perceptions begin to change. Many employers praise the devotion of people with disabilities, recognizing that their diversity benefits the company by creating an inclusive environment.

*"He initially joined the company for six months. We hired him as an administrative assistant in sales, and we kept him on in that position because of his good work and the values he exemplified. He has made a very positive contribution to his department. So when evaluating his performance, it's fair to say that he was not hired just because he was a person with a disability; his disability has been an additional factor that has enriched his involvement in the company with all his skills. We offered him the chance to stay. We have found an equilibrium that benefits both parties: the company benefits from the value he provides and he benefits from opportunities to grow and develop. "*

Pedro L.  
Assistant manager of a food company, PAE II beneficiary

The businesspeople we interviewed continue to face challenges and obstacles to inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace. These challenges were related to a lack of both knowledge and experience. It is often difficult for employers to understand the specific needs of each type of disability and to provide necessary and reasonable accommodations, without considering them to be unnecessary expenses for the company. They also lack awareness of the rights of people with disabilities, which can lead to discriminatory practices or limit their opportunities for professional growth and development.

### **Innovative actions, most relevant lessons, and outstanding achievements**

The pilot project for people with disabilities was in itself an innovative initiative, marking an important step forward for labor market inclusion in the country. Through actions and a focus on creating opportunities, the program gained important insight and made big strides towards employment for people with disabilities. Through steps ranging from creating accessible workplaces to raising awareness among workers and partnering with different stakeholders, the pilot project has sought to break down barriers and create an inclusive work environment. This section describes some of the program's most significant lessons and achievements.

In the view of government officials, open calls for participants in job placement programs are important, but they have not been found to be particularly effective at securing employment for people with disabilities. Effectively promoting their inclusion in the workplace requires specialized personnel and accessible environments, even in the PAE's own offices.

The operational officers interviewed understood the importance of valuing people with disabilities and fostering their confidence, self-esteem, empowerment, and autonomy. These aspects are key to keeping people from disabilities from depending exclusively on those around them and instead reach their full potential in the workplace.

Training staff on inclusion is highly important, as are arguments for hiring people with disabilities that go beyond legal compliance and instead foster an inclusive business culture that values each person's specific capabilities.

Partnerships with business associations proved pivotal for initial outreach about the program and for sharing lessons learned. Likewise, partnerships with Civil Society Organizations or associations of people with disabilities allow for networking that benefits job seekers and promotes greater inclusion.

In some cases, the departmental units took steps to acknowledge—and thus encourage greater participation from—the companies in the pilot program.

*"We started doing this three years ago, and it was a very positive move by the PAE Program here in Cochabamba. I don't know if they did it in other regions. We gave awards to companies that work with people disabilities, giving them the distinction of inclusive companies. These companies can be large or small, but they want to contribute to working with people with disabilities. This has really helped us get the companies themselves to spread the word to other companies. We also presented them with a certificate endorsed by the Ministry of Labor."*

Operational officer in Cochabamba

However, the idea that government employees cannot be removed from their positions generates expectations that may discourage people with disabilities from participating in the program or lead them to quit the program at higher rates. This issue needs to be addressed with options that promote labor market inclusion in different sectors.

From the beneficiaries' perspective, the six-month training program was an effective way to boost the employability of people with disabilities and help them develop the skills they need for successful employment. Later, it also provided opportunities for guardians to find training and jobs.

It is essential that training be tailored to the specific needs of people with disabilities, taking into account their individual limitations and strengths. This ensures that they can develop their skills and overcome the barriers they face in the workplace.

*"First they asked me to be in charge of cleaning, but this company has very large windows and I am visually impaired, so I said no, and they had me work as a courier, which is fine with me. It is a unique opportunity; my husband is visually impaired and so is my little boy. I twisted the PAE's arm for the chance to be here."*

Belen  
Courier at a food factory in El  
Alto

In addition to the skills they gain, program participants also benefit from the opportunity to make contacts and build networks in the labor market, which gives them a greater chance of securing employment and advancing their careers.

Mothers of people with disabilities also have difficulty finding job opportunities, as they have to juggle caring for their children and finding a suitable environment to study. It is therefore important to provide additional support to these women so that they can secure job opportunities.

*"She's at home all day because I can't find a place for her to go to school. She dropped out of school because she was just going to suffer, and she made the other kids uncomfortable. My parents help me out, because if I don't work, the two of us have nothing to live on."*

Program beneficiary from El Alto who has a daughter with autism

The legal compliance argument that operational personnel frequently used could have a negative effect on hiring people with disabilities, as it could limit their opportunities for professional development. There needs to be a broader vision that recognizes the value of each person's individual capabilities and promotes unrestricted inclusion in the workplace.

From the employers' perspective, the PAE staff worked proactively to meet the pilot project's goals, especially starting in 2021, which was when the economy began to rebound after the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. In several cases, this allowed companies that had been struggling to recover.

*"Our staff was down to half of what we had before the pandemic, and we had to close more locations because we couldn't hire any more people. An agreement between the PAE and the chamber of food industries allowed us to get through the crisis by giving us additional personnel. Later, we were asked to hire people with disabilities, and when we interviewed them, I was convinced they would be valuable to our company. Specifically, we hired people with hearing disabilities, who have performed even better than people without disabilities. They continue to work for us to this day."*

Human Resources Manager, food company in Santa Cruz

Employers emphasize the partnership with the program, even when they are "pressured" to hire people with disabilities. Some interviewees realized that people with disabilities—especially those with hearing impairments—perform even better than those without disabilities in some cases. These remarks underscore the value and useful skills that people with disabilities bring to the workplace.

They recognize that training people with disabilities constitutes an important investment for companies, as it gives them access to a group of workers with valuable skills and a distinctive perspective. Not only does including people with disabilities in the workplace benefit them, it also enriches the work environment and promotes diversity and equal opportunity.

Employers can better understand the needs and limitations of people with disabilities when they collaborate with civil society organizations. This collaboration helps boost inclusion in the workplace, overcoming barriers and promoting a more inclusive and accessible work environment.

Some disabilities do pose specific challenges for employability, like difficulty adapting to work environments, limited understanding of the disability among other workers, and additional

payroll expenses. These barriers need to be addressed, and reasonable adjustments should be made to ensure that people with disabilities are effectively included in the workplace.

*"I had to deal with an issue with two young women who had been hired. They complained that they were being ignored and that "other women are chatting and they don't include me." They felt discriminated against, but the rest of the staff does not know sign language. We tried to get the interpreter to give us some classes, but even I felt at a complete loss to understand them. Ultimately, they decided to leave."*

Human Resources Manager

In general, employers expressed the perception that people with disabilities are extremely sensitive, making it difficult to get them to follow instructions.

## Appendix II Interviews

We interviewed national authorities (7), including Luis Garcia, PAE coordinator; program staff (7) in the cities of La Paz, Santa Cruz, and Cochabamba; employers (5); and beneficiaries (8) in La Paz, Santa Cruz, and Cochabamba. We also interviewed former program coordinators Bertha Pino and Gonzalo Mamani.

PAE, national level		
1	Gonzalo Zambrana Avila	Vice-Minister of Employment, Civil Service and Cooperatives Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security
2	Luis Garcia	PAE Coordinator Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security
3	Marcelo Oliva	General Director of Employment Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security
5	Roty Martínez	Head of the Public Employment Service, Ministry of
6	Juan Carlos Espinoza	Head of Employment Policies, Ministry of Labor,
7	Gonzalo Gozalves	National Director of Business Outreach.
<p>We conducted the interviews in groups (with the exception of the one with Gonzalo Gozalves). They were based on two questions.</p> <p>What are the main employment strategies used for people with disabilities? What mechanisms does the PAE established for labor market inclusion for people with disabilities?</p> <p>We asked them to give their perspective based on their specific position within the pilot project.</p>		
Departmental PAE		
1	Gonzalo Quiroga	Operational officer in Cochabamba He has worked at PAE since 2012 and has been an operational officer since 2015.
2	Judith Camargo	Operational officer in Cochabamba She was hired in 2018 and took a one-year break in 2020. Her opinion on the role of non-governmental organizations that partner with the program is important.
3	Roxana Bonilla	Coordinator of PAE Santa Cruz She was hired in 2018, took a one-year break in 2020, and came back in 2021. She is very committed to the pilot project and has forged partnerships, along with other noteworthy efforts.
4	Ariel Villalpando	Operational officer in Santa Cruz He has a mild physical disability and was an advisor to various disability groups and associations in Santa Cruz before being hired by the PAE.

5	Olga Limache	Operational officer in Santa Cruz
She was hired in 2018, took a one-year break in 2020, and came back in 2021. "Administrative problems with payments lead to problems with beneficiaries, who in this case are very sensitive about delays."		
6	Gabriela Chavarría	PAE Coordinator in La Paz- El Alto
She has been working at the PAE since 2021. Her proximity to the main office makes her job easier.		
7	Rosalía Del Villar Hinojosa	Operational officer in La Paz
She has been working at the PAE since 2021. She was a member of the assembly that wrote Bolivia's new constitution and participated in the debate about including the rights of people with disabilities in it.		
8	Belen Romeo Salamanca	Operational officer in El Alto
Beneficiaries		
1	Edgar Portillo	Administrative Assistant at Alimentos Alfa Productos Nordland Ltda. Cochabamba
Physical motor disability.  Degree: Moderate  He has completed training and is now employed by the company.		
2	Luis Ezequiel Durán	Marketing and sales assistant. Hotel Toloma Cochabamba.
Mental disability: Down syndrome Degree: moderate He is in his third month of training		
3	Carla Lara	Waitress at Novotel Santa Cruz
Hearing disability Degree: Moderate She is in her third month of training.		
4	Irene Peñaranda	Employee at Teñas, a food company in Santa Cruz
Hearing disability Degree: Moderate She is in her third month of training		
5	Micon Caira	Employee at a cleaning company in Santa Cruz
Hearing disability Degree: Moderate He was hired after six months of training. He is studying at INFOCAL and plays on his association's soccer team.		

6	Adolfo Gomez	Employee at a cleaning company in Santa Cruz
<p>Hearing disability, degree: Moderate</p> <p>He was hired after six months of training. He is studying at INFOCAL and plays on his association's soccer team.</p>		
7	Cinda Mamani	Employee at Toby, a food company in Santa Cruz
<p>Hearing disability, degree: Moderate. She is in her third month of training.</p>		
8	María Rene Chambi	Administrative Assistant at Empresa Constructora y Servicios Dufrense Santa Cruz
<p>Physical motor disability</p> <p>Degree: moderate, has had problems in the right arm and hand since birth. She joined the company as an assistant accountant. After 6 months of training, she was hired as an administrative assistant.</p>		
<b>Employers</b>		
1	Pedro Leoni	Assistant Manager Norland Cochabamba (operations)
<p>He was a beneficiary of the PAE I. 18 PAE beneficiaries have been trained at the company, 9 were hired, including Edgar Portillo and a guardian PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.</p>		
2	Sandra Flores Encinas, and Bethania Hinojosa.	General Manager and Head of Marketing and Sales, Hotel Toloma Cochabamba
<p>She has a relevant perspective: Training people with mental/psychological disabilities is difficult if you don't receive some kind of training on how to do it. Their work is very intuitive, they are self-taught and require a lot of "patience."</p>		
3	Vania Schwarm and Patricia Bravo	Head of Human Resources and Human Resources Analyst Novotel Santa Cruz.
<p>The hotel was opened in 2021 and a significant percentage of its staff was from the PAE. It included people with disabilities in part because <i>Accor Hotels</i>—the French chain that owns it—has a policy of inclusion of people with disabilities.</p>		
4	Ilton Cachaga	President of COFEC LTDA



She runs a cooperative of people with disabilities that received resources from FESE for buying machinery for a sewing workshop in 2015. The workshop “ employs” 15 people with disabilities. The interview included:

**Marisol Castro Rivera** (mother of a disabled person), who has 5 children and is working for the first time.

**Mirtha Limón**, who has a moderate physical disability and is working for the first time

**José Guarachi**, a bricklayer, who had a work accident that left him in a wheelchair. He sold chocolates in the markets until he joined the cooperative. He has custody of a child.

5	Dyana Benitez	Head of Human Resources at Cadena Boliviana de Comida, Jimmi Nils, (Toby) Organizata (Teñas)
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After the COVID-19 pandemic, many of their employees were temporarily hired under the PAE modality, which allowed them to reactivate their businesses.

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