



8th INTERNATIONAL GEM-IWG CONFERENCE
ENGENDERING MACROECONOMICS AND INTERNATIONAL
ECONOMICS

July 20- 22, 2007

Organized by GEM- IWG in Collaboration with
The Levy Economics Institute
Department of Economics, University of Utah, Salt Lake City

With Support From
The Ford Foundation

Labour, employment and social policy: the case of
Argentina.

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The assistance policies of conditional cash transfers represent the latest wave in public interventions addressed to the population with insufficient income in Latin America. In the case of Argentina, the maximum expression of this new wave was reached with the implementation of the Unemployed Family Heads Plan (Plan Jefes y Jefas de Hogar Desocupados, PJJHD), in mid 2002.

This type of programs, within the 'workfare' paradigm, is characterized by requiring some type of labour activity in exchange for the benefit received. In the case of the PJJHD, it is either a work activity or a job-related training activity.

One of the issues being discussed about these programs is: to what extent does this type of assistance provide their beneficiaries with an actual improvement in the access conditions to the labour market? Or to what extent does transit through this type of programs modify the job careers of this population group?

The objective of this work is to provide elements to discern this issue, from the empirical evidence of the PJJHD case. This article aims to demonstrate that: i) the transit through this program modifies people's job opportunities and careers weakly; ii) this transit is different for men and women; iii) the type of abilities re-created by the labour activity required in exchange, strengthen the gender segregation already available in the labour market; iv) the PJJHD does not operate on the main gender restrictions available in the labour market.

The present work is organized in four sections. The first section presents the implementation context for the assistance program under study, particularly, the current conditions in the labour market. The second section briefly describes the core characteristics of the PJJHD, its coverage and evolution. The third section provides empirical evidence (quantitative and qualitative) allowing the evaluation of the PJJHD according to the proposed hypothesis. The fourth and last section will highlight the principal findings.