



LOCAL 'JOB COUNTERS' AT CASAL DEL INFANTS

Personal support to help vulnerable young people
into work

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After graduating from university, Warda struggled a lot. For a few years, she had to take odd jobs for that had no security, days off or health insurance. Eventually she connected with YPE partner Casal Del Infants. With their support, she successfully entered the formal labour market. She was selected by Casal to join a jobs programme, where she was trained for one month as a quality control officer. After completing her training, she obtained a placement in maintenance at an automotive company. This was facilitated through Casal's 'Activa Counter', its employment integration desk. This programme supports internships and helps young people to integrate into the private sector. The programme has gained in popularity over the years and has the potential to help many young people into work.

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Cover photo: Warda, a young woman participant in the YPE programme. Credit: Hamza Nuino.

1 INTRODUCTION

'I came to Tangier when I got my bachelor's degree in 2017 and found odd jobs to earn my living. During lockdown, I found myself unemployed. I did courses in French and English via the internet but staying out of work was starting to be a problem.

A friend of mine heard about the association [Casal Del Infants] on Facebook. I was selected for training and in less than two months I already had my current job. I really enjoyed the training – it was very practical, with live examples. It was well organized, the COVID safety rules were very strict. All the conditions to succeed were there, even for those who could not afford things, because we were provided with everything.

I've learned useful things, for work, of course, but I also use them in my life. The trainer was wonderful – she told us, ask all the questions you want, about quality control, about your career, studies, your relationship with the company. It was very focused and enjoyable.

After that, I worked in maintenance at an automotive company. It went very well. All the questions they asked me, I knew, as we were well prepared. We had training in how to prepare a CV, how to value yourself, without lying, without exaggerating, showing what I know how to do, and saying: I can learn what I do not know how to do. The TIP [Professional Service Technician] taught us how to do an interview, the questions to ask, the questions not to ask. She even told us about the rules of life in business, how to dress professionally.

I think it helped me a lot to get off to a good start in the business. The truth, I was comfortable [during the interview], because I knew I didn't have to be afraid. At the association, we were told, we must understand that the one who interviews you, or the one who will be your boss, does not seek to harm you, but they have a responsibility, they must defend the interests of the company. That's why they may look hard, but in fact, they just want to know if we're good or not – that's normal.

Previously, I had only odd jobs, I was helping out. Now I have job security, days off, health insurance. In addition, I feel respected, valued. I love my job and I think I do it well, but it's a way to achieve my goals. I'm someone very ambitious, very organized. Now I've enrolled in training, I'm building the path to this goal.'

2 VULNERABLE YOUTH: THE PROGRAMME'S CORE TARGET

Warda is a 23-year-old single woman from the small town of Ksar El Kebir, about 100km from Tangier. With her bachelor's degree in her pocket, she entered the job market, but up to early 2020, had only found short-term work. Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, these opportunities have no longer arisen, threatening Warda's independence. However, she was determined, so she used this period to learn foreign languages and

communication skills – indispensable in a city like Tangier, where the main job opportunities are in the trading zone. But she soon struggled to cover her living costs.

In September 2020, she approached L'association initiative pour l'éducation, culture et développement (AIPECD), one of the partners in Tangier of YPE partner organization Casal Del Infants. She was selected to join the Passwork programme, where she trained for one month as a quality control officer, followed by group and individual support to take advantage of her personal qualities, in order to get a stable job in one of the programme's major partner companies.

Having faced job insecurity for many years, Warda is now grateful for her situation: an open-ended contract with benefits and a performance-oriented compensation system. She is particularly proud to work in a company where she is respected and valued – yet she also has future plans to work in another field, through training she started this year, which she finances through her job.

3 THE EMPLOYMENT PATH: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH, CONCRETE RESULTS

AIPECD is one of the 10 Casal Del Infants partners with whom the programme has set up employment integration desks, or 'Activa Counters'. Each desk window is run by a Professional Service Technician (TIP). The TIPs benefit from the technical and functional support of the job coordinators, who are employees of Casal Del Infants. This support is part of a comprehensive capacity-building programme, essential given the complexity of the TIP role. Each TIP is responsible for the evaluation, capacity building, placement and monitoring of young people in a counter's portfolio. They also work closely with Casal Del Infants' private sector team, which liaises with private companies.

The Activa programme is based on a structured and integrated approach that begins with the mobilization of private partners, the identification of their needs and the mobilization of young people who are able to meet this demand, via a short training programme. This training consists of one-off technical training, developed on request from private partners (in areas such as quality or sales techniques), group capacity-building workshops and one-to-one coaching sessions. The support programme is customized according to each candidate's needs.

For some people, training of a few days is sufficient, while others need more support over time.

Either way, a young person's relationship with their TIP lasts several months, including post-placement follow-up. For Warda and the young people in her class, the training was followed by close support, which continued for six months following their placement in a company. In some cases, this relationship lasts much longer. 'Some young people still come back, a few years later, to give their news, to ask for advice, on work and sometimes even on a personal level', says the AIPECD TIP. 'Even if you don't give a solution, they are relieved just to feel supported.'

Using this approach, Casal Del Infants has made a significant contribution to achieving the programme's goals. But these achievements alone are not sufficient. What counts are the changes in the lives of young people. Warda's case illustrates the benefits in terms of employability, empowerment, independence and trust. She is grateful for her current situation, while still developing her ambitions. Despite the COVID-19 crisis, she looks to the future with confidence.

The AIPECD TIP sees the benefits of the programme even before young people are integrated into the company: 'The exchange, the sharing of problems, talking publicly about their own weaknesses – already this awareness promotes change in the young. Some have fears, but the solutions are sometimes very simple – for example, attending interviews, even if we know a young person won't get the job, but we just tell them, it trains you. Then when your real interview arrives, it's already easier for you.'

The programme also instils a sense of responsibility in the young people it trains. 'We raise awareness among our young people that the companies that take them had to make an effort at the beginning, in order to overcome their prejudices in relation to young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods', explains AIPECD's TIP. 'Therefore, if these companies are satisfied with their work, the way will remain open for others. Otherwise, we risk losing these partners. Our young people know that if they have had this chance, it is because of the responsible attitude of those who came before them.'

Warda understands. 'We knew the association monitors us. The TIP told us to do honour to the association, and I think we succeeded.¹ They are very happy with us!'

4 COVID-19: CHALLENGES, BUT OPPORTUNITIES

The programme has helped many young people like Warda to get jobs during the COVID-19 period. Although the crisis produces uncertainty for the economy, it also means high turnover. Some sectors continue to recruit, creating opportunities for the programme participants.

The programme's growing reputation means ever-increasing demand for its services – creating challenges for Casal Del Infants and its partners. 'I don't

miss any opportunity to talk about this programme!' says Warda. 'I am very grateful, and I would have liked the association to have more resources, to support more young people. There are so many young people who can succeed.'

NOTES

"ما تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا بَنَاءَ عَنَانٍ" ¹



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