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Bolsa Família (Family Grant) Programme: an analysis of Brazilian income transfer programme

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Abstract. Income transfer programmes are common in various countries and play an important role in combating poverty. This article presents a review of the results of the *Bolsa Família* (Family Grant) Programme, implemented in Brazil by the government of Lula da Silva in 2004. Over the last seven years many evaluations of the programme have been conducted, allowing an overview of its results and its strong and weak points to be mapped. Five central aspects relating to the programme are discussed in article five: (1) programme access, (2) hunger fighting results, (3) programme financial impacts, (4) conditioning factors of education and health, (5) supplementary programs and social mobility. The results of scientific research were presented for each of these aspects, and any of these believed to be convergent or divergent were discussed. As a general result it was concluded that the programme has generated significant results for the country, but there are still some issues that need to be reviewed, such as conditioning factors and the integrated management of the programme.

Keywords. *Bolsa Família* (Family Grant) Programme, Income Transfer, Evaluation of Results.

As regards social programmes, in the world in general, and in developing countries in particular, there has been an increase in social actions and policies, as well as a growing concern with their evaluation. The creation of this culture forms part of the framework of development and strengthening of public actions, with two main goals: offering subsidies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the administration of these programmes; and providing responses to society concerning the social effectiveness of the policies that are implemented, in a process of *accountability*.

The *Bolsa Família* Programme–BFP was chosen as a research subject for two main reasons: (a) it is the largest direct income transfer programme in Brazil, involving more than 12 million families; (b) it is directly linked to education and health (a factor conditioning participation by families is that they ensure their children and teenagers attend school and keep medical and vaccination appointments).

It should be highlighted that social policies aimed at fighting poverty are not just implemented in Brazil, but also in various Latin American countries, with an emphasis on programmes existing in Mexico (*Oportunidades*), and Chile (*Chile Solidario*), which also have a wide scope and relevance.

The aim of this article is to present an overview of evaluations of the *Bolsa Família* Programme, taking into account a review of the results of studies published during the seven

years of the programme's existence. The following four central aspects of the programme were considered for this descriptive overview: its results, especially those related to fighting hunger; conditioning factors, with a focus on educational and health aspects; social mobility; and the decentralised management of the programme and its relationship to the re-election of President Lula. Below is a brief reference to the theory and a description of the method, followed by the presentation of the results and their discussion.

1 The Evaluation of Social Programmes

There are different definitions for evaluations in general, and for the evaluation of programmes in particular. The definition by Scriven (1967) states: "evaluation is judging the value or merit of something" (pg. 37). For Worthen *et al.* (2004) "evaluation is the identification, clarification and application of defensible criteria to determine an evaluation object's value, quality, effectiveness or significance in relation to those criteria" (pg. 35). For Almeida (2006, pg. 12), evaluation "is, above all, a socio-political process; it is a shared and collaborative process (...) a process that constructs a reality".

In other words, an evaluation in itself involves a transformation process, as it permits the validation of ongoing programmes, determines the need to make adjustments and corrections and identifies requirements for new programmes. In addition, evaluations are indispensable for bringing transparency to public actions. A fairly complete definition of evaluation is given by Aguillar and Ander-Egg (1994):

“An evaluation is a form of applied, systematic, planned and directed social research; it is aimed at identifying, obtaining and providing, in a valid and trustworthy manner, sufficient amounts of relevant data and information to support a judgement on the merit and value of the different components of a programme or set of specific activities that have been carried out in the past, are carried out now or will be carried out in the future, for the purpose of producing concrete effects and results; it shows the level or extent to which progress is being made and serves as a basis for either making rational and intelligent decisions on courses of action, or for solving problems and promoting knowledge and understanding of the factors associated with the success or failure of its results” (pg. 31-32).

Evaluations of programmes can be defined based on function—formative or summative evaluations (Scriven, 1967); based on types of research guidelines—*ex ante* and *ex post* evaluations (Campbell & Stanley, 1979); and based on adopted processes—formal and informal evaluations (Worthen *et al.*, 2004). Evaluations using these different types, as well as different methodological approaches, were found in the literature review carried out for this study, allowing supplementary overviews of the programme to be obtained.

2 The Bolsa Família Programme

The *Bolsa Família* Programme—BFP was created by the Brazilian Federal Government in 2004 and includes *Fome Zero* (Zero Hunger), which is a public policy aimed at ensuring the human right to adequate nutrition. This programme promotes food and nutritional safety and contributes towards achieving citizenship for sectors of the population most vulnerable to hunger. The Family Grant, depending on the family income per person (limited to R\$ 60 Euros), and on the number and age of children, gives benefits to families that can vary from 14 to 105 Euros (values based on the April 2011 valuation, <http://www.mds.gov.br/bolsafamilia/noticias>, accessed on 25/08/2011).

The programme has three main areas: income transfer, conditioning factors and supplementary programmes. According to the Ministry of Social Development (MDS, 2011), income transfer seeks to promote immediate poverty relief; the conditioning factors reinforce access to basic social rights in the areas of education, health and social assistance; and the supplementary programmes are aimed at family development, so that beneficiaries are able to move out of their situation of vulnerability.

The management of *Bolsa Família* is decentralised and shared between the Union, states and municipalities. These three federal entities work together to perfect, extend and monitor the execution of the programme. The list of beneficiaries is public and can be accessed by any citizen (MDS, 2011). The conditioning factors that ensure the right to receive the BFP financial benefit are as follows: (a) monitoring of the vaccination cards and the growth and development of children under seven; (b) women in the 14 to 44 year age range must also attend medical check-ups and, if pregnant or breast feeding, must attend pre-natal sessions and get medical

check-ups for their health and that of the baby; (c) all children and teenagers between 6 and 15 years old must be registered with a school and attend a minimum of 85% of timetabled classes per month; (d) students between 16 and 17 years old must have a minimum attendance of 75%; (e) children and teenagers up to 15 years old at risk of child labour or rescued by the Child Labour Eradication Programme must participate in the Cohabitation and Strengthening of Bonds Services and attend a minimum of 85% of timetabled classes per month.

The selection criteria for participating in the BFP are based on per capital family income and the distribution of the benefit over the whole country. *Bolsa Família* selects families based on information provided by municipalities to the Single Social Programme Register (MDS, 2011). Registered people are selected by means of an automated process and registration does not imply the immediate entry of families into the programme.

The proposal of conditioning factors ensures that beneficiary families take on commitments to expand their access to basic social rights. In this sense, the conditioning factors are not punitive; they are rather aimed at expanding the opportunities of beneficiaries to exercise their citizenship. Therefore, the strategy is to help prevent these families from reverting to a situation of not meeting the conditions. Families may have their benefits blocked, suspended or cancelled when their chances to reverse their situation run out.

3 Method

The taxonomy presented by VERGARA (1997) was used as a basis for classifying this research and uses the two basic criteria of aims and means. As regards aims, this research is classified as exploratory and is based on reviews and analyses of documents and bibliographies, seeking to systematise the subject as developed by other authors in order to achieve the proposed goals. Bibliographic research was chosen as the means, with the aim of analysing or explaining a certain problem in the light of existing theoretical references (Cervo, Bervian & da Silva, 2007).

The review work was done by consulting databases of Brazilian and international newspapers that had the words “*Bolsa Família*” in their titles. Results of works presented to congresses and documents published by known public economic and social research organisations were also consulted. A total of 63 articles and reports were analysed, with the criteria that recurrence and the goals of the programme should be taken into consideration for the selection of five main categories to be discussed in this study, as follows: (1) programme access, (2) hunger fighting results, (3) the financial impacts of the programme, (4) conditioning factors of education and health, (5) supplementary programs and social mobility. Focusing on these five themes led to a reduction in the number of articles and works that were used, which totalled 45 sources.

4 Results and Discussion

The results shall be presented divided up into the following five main topics: (1) programme access, (2) hunger

fighting results, (3) the financial impacts of the programme, (4) conditioning factors of education, health and civil participation, and (5) social mobility. These topics were chosen based on recurrences found during the literature review. A set of research results discussing the matter will be presented for each of these topics, and attempts will be made to seek points of convergence and divergence between the studies that are analysed.

4.1 Programme Access

Research by several authors indicates that the *Bolsa Família* Programme does in fact help people that are in greatest need (Costa, Salvato & Diniz, 2010; Dias & Silva, 2010; Hall, 2006; Mourão, Macedo & Ferreira, 2011; Tavares, 2010). The BFP is well focused as 66% of the *Bolsa Família* income goes to the 10% of families that are most poor (Soares, Ribas & Osório, 2010). However, based on the 2004 PNAD [Brazilian Home Survey] the authors estimated that the *Bolsa Família* had a high error of inclusion level (49%), which in any case is than income distribution programs in Mexico and Chile. Moreover, estimates by the IBGE [Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics] (2008) show that the monthly average income of participating families is lower than the average minimum wage; in other words, the programme does help people in need.

A significant aspect in the evaluation of the *Bolsa Família* Programme is that it has a high level of unmet demand. In research conducted by Mourão *et al.* (2011) focused on dwellers in *favelas* [term generally used for a shanty town in Brazil] in Rio de Janeiro, 80% of non-beneficiaries surveyed met the conditions for participating in the programme (per capita income of 60.00 Euros or less). However, at the moment of the survey, 9.6% of beneficiaries had per capita incomes over this value; in other words they were already in a condition to leave the programme. This unmet demand also features in other research. Rocha (2011) suggests that despite the programme having achieved its target of helping 11 million homes by the end of 2006, there is evidence that it still does not cover around 3.4 million eligible homes. Therefore, strictly in terms of income transfer, the BFP's main challenge is to be accessible to the entire eligible population.

Finally, it is worth considering the critique by Zimmermann (2006) on programme accessibility, as the author argues that everyone lacking resources for an adequate minimum amount of food must have the chance to request the benefit and must be considered in a short period of time, as this forms part of the human rights of each citizen.

4.2 Results of Fighting Hunger and Poverty

There is practically a consensus that the BFP meets one of its goals—that of promoting immediate poverty relief through the transfer of income directly to families. Dozens of articles that have been studied mention this contribution made by the program. The contribution of the *Bolsa Família* Programme to reducing poverty it also being confirmed by data from the Brazilian Home Survey (PNAD) and from the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA). The 4th Brazilian

Millennium Development Goals Follow-up Report points to a fall in extreme poverty from 12% in 2003 to 4.8% in 2008. According to Soares *et al.* (2010), the *Bolsa Família* Programme is responsible for 21% of the reduction in the Gini Index.

Recent studies, such as those conducted by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), by the Institute of Economic and Agricultural Research (IPEA, 2011) and by the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (FGV, 2005), as well as the national survey conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2008), show a decline in poverty and social inequality in Brazil. In general, the studies give credit for these changes to currency stability, the recent drop in unemployment and income transfer programs, due to their expansion and greater focus on poor populations.

In research conducted by Mourão *et al.* (2011), the number of meals eaten is still lower among beneficiary families, with an average of 2.7 meals per day, than among non-beneficiary families (3.0 meals per day). It should be emphasised that the average number of meals eaten is still low, and it is estimated that the difference in the number of meals per family before receiving the benefit was greater still, as 42% of beneficiaries stated that the main result of the BFP was an improvement in nutrition.

Zimmermann (2006) acknowledge that, in *Bolsa Família* represents significant progress over previous social programmes in terms of the fight against hunger in Brazil, as it has made it possible to improve the nutrition of many poor Brazilian families. The researcher, however, questions the value of the benefit, arguing that it is not sufficient to alleviate the hunger of a family and, as a result, violates the human right to food, considering the Brazilian essential foodstuffs data of the Intersyndicate Department of Statistics and Socio Economic Studies—DIEESE. The author proposes an increase in the value transferred by *Bolsa Família* to an amount equivalent to the cost of basic foodstuffs in Brazil.

In confirmation of this result, the research conducted by Dias and Silva (2010) states that even though the value of the *Bolsa Família* benefit is very low—an amount that does not substantially consider the real material living conditions of beneficiaries—this benefit becomes a significant income, considering the situation of extreme poverty of the people that it serves.

From the study by Duarte, Sampaio and Sampaio (2009), it can be inferred that 88% of the value of the benefit is used for food consumption, with the conclusion that *Bolsa Família* has a positive impact on the consumption of food by these families. The study by Soares *et al.* (2010) also suggests that the BFP is an important poverty relief mechanism for very poor families, and that it has significant effects on child malnutrition.

Oliveira *et al.* (2008) analysed the differences in the nutritional situation of children registered with the BFP in a Brazilian municipality, using the parameters of weight, height and haemoglobin levels. The prevalence rates of anaemia and height deficits were 22.6 and 6.3, respectively and there was no statistical difference between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. However, the authors warned that initially the beneficiary group showed worse socio-economic conditions, which were raised to the same level as non-beneficiaries after participation in the Programme. Therefore, it is possible that

the similarity between the nutritional statuses of the two groups could be attributed to receipt of the benefit, both due to a financial increase and to the growth monitoring required as a conditional feature of the programme.

However, in contradiction to the other studies, research by Saldiva, Silva e Saldiva (2010) conducted with children under five years of age in a municipality in the north-east, showed deficits in weight and height but no statistical differences between the nutritional status of BFP beneficiary and non BFP beneficiary children. Levels of fruit and vegetable consumption among both groups were low and similar to each other. Moreover, the authors found that *Bolsa Família* children were at three times more risk of consuming sweets. This result shows that it is not sufficient for families to have sufficient income for adequate nutrition; it is also necessary to invest in educational activities on nutrition to ensure balanced and healthy diets.

In municipalities in the north-east hinterlands of Brazil, Rego (2009) found that, for most of the surveyed families, *Bolsa Família* represents their only monetary income and their first regular experience of obtaining income, allowing them to put some food on the table without it being the object of a daily struggle.

Suplicy (2007) analyses the success that the *Bolsa Família* Programme has had in fighting hunger and eradicating poverty, but warns that it is just the first step towards the implementation of the *Renda Básica de Cidadania* (Basic Citizen Income – RBC) provided for by law. The author clarifies that the RBC will be implemented in stages, starting with those most in need, and that it is unconditionally associated with the right of all people to receive sufficient income to provide for their vital needs.

4.3 Financial impacts of the Programme

A survey conducted by IPEA (2011) found that 56% of costs of the government's social programmes returned to public coffers through the levying of taxes. The report states that the BFP is the greatest multiplier of Gross Domestic Product–GDP and family income. GDP will increase by R\$1.44, and family income will increase by 2.25% for each R\$1.00 spent on the programme, after taking into account the entire income multiplication circuit in the economy. The report concludes that the BFP generates more economic benefits than it costs, and this benefit is twice that of the benefit generated by the payment of interest on public debt (IPEA, 2011).

For Costa (2005), income transfer programmes, as well as benefiting poor families, are increasing the amount of money circulating in municipalities; in other words, this federal action contributes to families and municipal growth. However, Ferreira, Jimenez & Holzer (2011) warn that federalism is playing a dual role by promoting a welfare state. On the one hand it could support intergovernmental policies and programmes, as in the very successful case of the BFP, but on the other hand it could lead to small municipalities putting less effort into raising tax revenue and improving the quality of life of the population.

The study conducted by Rosinke, *et al.* (2011) shows that public income redistribution policies help the economic and

social development of the country. These actions help the economy in times of crisis and serve as tools to maintain levels of consumption. The authors place an emphasis on the fact that, for some municipalities, the *Bolsa Família* Programme represents an important part of the local economy and concludes that the results are positive from an economic point of view, as it has led to an increase in the propensity to consume in Brazilian society and it contributes to a reduction in the imbalance of income between families.

Rosinke, *et al.* (2011) analyses that, with a fixed monthly income that can be proven, beneficiaries are able to gain access to micro-loans, allowing them to pay in instalments to acquire equipment and household appliances, thereby increasing the income circulating in the outskirts of cities and encouraging small-scale traders.

Considering these other advantages of the BFP, Kerstenetzky (2009) emphasises that the programme cannot be seen as a social policy aimed at the alleviation of poverty and that only benefits one sector of the population. The author warns that the programme needs to be understood as an integrating and developmentalist policy to leverage more extensive support and to avoid financial restrictions, which makes the BFP more sustainable.

4.4 Conditioning Factors of the Programme

The requirement of conditions is a novel feature in the design of *Bolsa Família*, which generated a lot of controversy. The legitimacy of conditions has been brought into question, as this benefit is a social right and should be unconditional (Monerrat, 2007). But supporters of the programme believe that mechanisms that encourage the insertion of families into education and health services are fundamental to breaking the vicious cycle of poverty.

Lavinias (1997) discusses European experiences with conditional income transfer programs. The author analyses the fact that the central feature of proposals developed in France, for example, was that of rescuing links with productive activity on the jobs market and with different sociability networks, whereas in Brazil conditioning factors are aimed at health and education activities.

Cardoso & Souza (2004) discuss the *Bolsa Escola* (School Grant) Programme (which gave rise to the *Bolsa Família* Programme), as important strategy for combating child labour and increasing the population's level of schooling. The authors compare the programme to others from different countries, which also link income transfer to educational inclusion and, in some cases, to health rights, such as: Mexico (*Oportunidades/Progresar*–Opportunities/Progress); Colombia (*Familias en Acción*–Families in Action); Honduras (*Programa de Asignación Familiar*–Family Assignment Programme–PRAF); Jamaica (Program of Advancement through Health and Education–PATH); Nicaragua (*Red de Protección Social*–Social Protection Network–RPS); and Bangladesh (Food for Education).

Silva (2007) recognises that conditioning factors are a structural dimension of Income Transfer Programs like *Bolsa Família*, but warns that although these conditioning factors are apparently aimed at guaranteeing access to basic social

rights in the sense of boosting the positive impacts of the empowerment of the families involved, they damage the principle of the unconditional nature of the right of every citizen to have access to social programs that guarantee a dignified life.

Another reflection made by Silva (2007) is that the basic social services offered by the vast majority of Brazilian municipalities, even in the areas of education, health and work, are quantitatively and qualitatively insufficient to meet the needs of families that benefit from Income Transfer Programmes. In this sense, it would not be fair to require families to meet conditioning factors that the state itself (at its three levels—federal, state and municipal) cannot provide. The author proposes replacing the conditioning factors with educational, orientation, guidance and follow-up activities aimed at allowing families to make adequate use of available services; this would represent a way of expanding social rights without imposing restrictions or obligatory activities.

Along the same lines, Monnerat (2007) analyses the fact that, on the one hand, conditioning factors have the potential to facilitate access to services by swathes of the population that have difficulty accessing such services; on the other hand doubts arise concerning the capability of education and health services to adequately deal with the increased demand resulting from the implementation of the programme. Therefore, the author believes that the concept of punishing families that do not comply with the conditioning factors seems to be incompatible with the social advancement goals of the programme.

The study conducted by Mendes, Barbosa and Rodrigues (2009) showed that, although it contributes to reducing poverty, it seems that the BFP has still not achieved its goal of reinforcing the exercising of basic social rights in the areas of health and education through compliance with conditioning factors, which could contribute to families being able to break the vicious cycle of poverty between generations.

The research conducted by Monteiro, Ferreira and Teixeira (2009), shows that compliance with conditioning factors depends on inter-sector coordination (between health, education, work and social development areas), as well as on coordination between municipal, state and federal governments. Their studies demonstrated deficiencies in the management of conditioning factors relating to health and education.

However, it should be noted that the results of the research point towards significant positive correlations between the number of years studied and the family income of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, which confirms that education is a predictor of income in the studied population (Cacciamali, Tatei & Batista, 2010; Mourão *et al.*, 2011, Tavares, 2010).

Melo & Duarte (2010) assessed the impact of the *Bolsa Família* conditional income transfer programme on school attendance of children and teenagers aged between five and 14 years involved in family-scale agriculture in four states across the Brazilian north-east. The results indicated that, in general, the program increases school attendance in the aforementioned age range from 5.4 to 5.9 percentage points. However, there are significant differences when boys and girls are considered separately, as the programme is effective for girls but ineffective for boys. This could possibly be due to gender differences in work opportunities in the rural environment.

Nevertheless, Estrella & Ribeiro (2008) question these conditioning factors, arguing that basic education is already universal and that the government should focus more on the quality of education and health services that are provided, and not on their existence. In fact Mourão *et al.* (2011) did not find significant differences relating to school attendance by beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries between 6 and 17 years of age. However, Pires (2008), in research conducted on the initial registration of BFP beneficiaries, showed that prior to participating in the programme there was a high percentage of people who neither worked nor studied (45% of children over 18 years old), which shows that conditioning factors may serve some purpose.

Estrella & Ribeiro (2008) highlight low levels of efficiency in the control of conditioning factors. According to the authors, decentralised management causes registration problems, which “make the structural aspects of the *Bolsa Família* Programme somewhat untrustworthy and reduce the chances of being able to suitably measure the capability of municipalities to ensure compliance with envisaged conditional requirements, particularly those related to health” (pg. 637). As regards conditioning factors in the area of health, more positive results among beneficiaries than among non-beneficiaries have only been found with child vaccination (Mourão *et al.*, 2011).

Problems with the management of the conditioning factors of health and education are also suggested in the study by Monteiro, Ferreira & Teixeira (2009), who highlight the fact that these factors expose the fragile nature of the public management of social issues at a municipal level and compromise the efficiency of the programme.

However, in the controversial debate on the conditioning factors of the BFP, just as some researches believe that they represents progress over income transfer programmes, as they imposes conditions that can contribute towards breaking the poverty cycle (Estrella & Ribeiro, 2008; Ferreira, Jimenez & Holzer, 2011, Oliveira, Fabiana de Cássia Carvalho *et al.*, 2011), other authors (Monnerat, 2007 and Zimmermann, 2006) question the existence of conditioning factors, as access to a minimum amount of food is a right guaranteed to all citizens by the Brazilian constitution, without the need for any type of conditions.

Aside from the issue of whether or not it is suitable to impose conditioning factors in the BFP, Monteiro, Ferreira & Teixeira (2009) indicate discrepancies surrounding conditioning factors and highlight the existence of limitations relating to the quality of registration information, particularly its validity, which makes it difficult to analyse whether or not the conditioning factors are being complied with.

4.5 Supplementary Programmes and Social Mobility

The absolute number of people in extreme poverty in Brazil is still very high, to the point of exceeding the total population of many countries (Fonteles *et al.*, 2011). One of the goals of the *Bolsa Família* Programme is to allow beneficiaries to escape from vulnerable situations; in other words, it allows them to escape situations of poverty or extreme poverty and to break the cycle that is passed on from generation to generation. This means that the programme is aimed at

the social mobility of beneficiary families and, as a result, it represents a “way out” for the families that it assists.

Participation in supplementary programmes is a method designed to allow the BFP to attempt to break the generation-to-generation poverty cycle and promote social mobility. The idea is to coordinate various programmes to combat inequality and to promote social inclusion (MDS, 2010), thereby reducing the social vulnerability of participating families. This is an important issue, as highlighted by Kerstenetzky (2009), because a frequent objection to the programme is the thought that it could be welfare, which would increase the dependency of the poor instead of encouraging responsibility and autonomy.

Figueiró (2010) also discusses the dilemma of welfare and emancipation, and believes that one of the problems of the BFP is that it could suffer a setback if initial proposals were to be reduced, leaving it as a mere income transfer programme. For the author, the success of the *Bolsa Família* Programme is directly related to the existence of an active and participatory civil society, to allow de facto social mobility and poverty reduction to occur.

Fonteles *et al.* (2011) believe that social mobility involves one social group becoming another, and that the members of the group will notice considerable changes in consumption, as well as greater stability provided by the BFP. For the authors, having access to products that were previously off-limits, increased spending power and the acquisition of furniture and utensils that facilitate daily life are factors that make a positive contribution to social mobility.

The study by Pires (2008) shows the importance of coordinating *Bolsa Família* with other universal public policies as a means of helping the poorest families to escape from their situations of vulnerability. Along the same lines, Silva (2007) believes that coordination between monetary transfers and structuring policies and programmes, aimed at poor families, may make it possible to build a policy to tackle poverty and social inequality.

Santos (2011) studied the inter-sector nature of the BFP in a Brazilian municipality and concluded that there is a lack of defined parameters for inter-sector actions, which represents an obstacle to the programme achieving its goals of social mobility and the use of social rights by citizens. Therefore, the author suggests that there should be more planning and that partnerships should be established between the sectors, with more contact between managers.

Research conducted by Magalhães (2007) reveals that the programme’s sustainability and effectiveness are associated with the convergence of other public social activities in each district. In other words, management encompassing different sectors and the federal, state and municipal areas of government is fundamental to allow the BFP to promote social mobility and to define itself as an emancipation programme rather than a welfare programme.

No social mobility was verified in research conducted by Mourão *et al.* (2011), but possible indicators were found, as the beneficiaries’ perception of their quality of life now and in the future (10 years) tended to be more positive than the perception of non-beneficiaries. However, no significant difference was noticed in the perception of quality of life

between the present and 5 years in the future; this may be evidence of the fact that the programme is expected to have more long-term than medium-term results. Having said this, in supplementary programmes a significant positive difference was seen in participation in professional and IT courses over the last three years by beneficiaries when compared with non-beneficiaries (Mourão *et al.*, 2011).

Similarly, Silva (2007) calls attention to the fact that the *Bolsa Família* has not been implemented for long enough to allow social mobility impacts to be seen, as the results of increasing the number of years of education received by Brazilian workers and reducing poverty rates will only become apparent in future generations.

As regards the controversy over the programme being a disincentive to work, studies show that this is not the case with the BFP once families have a guaranteed income. Tavares (2010) investigated the existence of this possible disincentive to work among mothers benefited by the *Bolsa Família* Programme and found that, although work decisions made by mothers are affected by the negative income effect, it does not seem to be sufficient to generate the so-called “idleness effect”. Even so, Tavares (2010) supposes that the fact that children are left at school gives mothers more time available to work, which serves as another argument for the positive effect of the programme on the labour supply.

Medeiros, Britto & Soares (2007) also show that, despite the fact that the BFP represents an average increase of 11% in the income of beneficiaries, the amount received is not sufficient to represent a disincentive to work. Kerstenetzky (2009) also deconstructs criticism relating to dependency on the BFP, pointing to the fact that adult participation in the jobs market is greater among beneficiaries than in the rest of the population, based on data from the Brazilian Home Survey (PNAD) (2006).

5 Final Considerations

The research generally shows that the average family income of non-beneficiaries is greater than the income of beneficiaries, even in the same region of residence. This is a significant indicator of the BFP’s criteria of equality. Several pieces of research relate receiving the benefit to low income. However, despite the growth of the programme, a lot of research states that there is still a large contingent of people who meet the requirements to be beneficiaries, but are not due to lack of availability. This means that it is necessary to expand the programme. Similarly, there are still cases of beneficiaries with higher incomes than non-beneficiaries, which signal a need to take greater care during the programme’s selection process and/or to perform frequent analyses of exit conditions.

The review of surveys of the programme also pointed to the importance of the BFP for increasing the income of beneficiary families, for reducing poverty in the country and for fighting hunger (with an increase in the number of daily meals). Survey results show that the number of meals eaten by beneficiary families is still lower than the number of meals eaten by non-beneficiary families living in the same districts, which may signal the importance of increasing the value of the benefit.

Another significant finding is that the social cost of the BFP also brings economic benefits, as it plays a fundamental role in the conciliation of the goals of economic growth and income distribution. In this sense there is no doubt that the increase in social expenditure over recent years was an integral and essential part of improving the living conditions of the Brazilian population.

As regards social mobility, research states that the BFP is not being effective in changing the conditions of the beneficiaries; in other words, few are achieving the conditions necessary to exit the programme. However, data show that beneficiaries are participating in more professional and IT courses and are more optimistic about their future quality of life. An issue that needs to be considered is the programme's maturity period, as it is about to turn eight years old; maybe this period is too short to promote social mobility, as the BFP is aimed a lot more at children than at the generation of parents. Therefore, the time taken to create this "way out" could be longer than the time that the programme has been in existence.

The results suggest that the managers of the programme need to pay particular attention to conditioning factors, especially those related to rights to health, which are still little-used. Even so, thought should be given to the universal nature of secondary education, as basic education is now practically universal; it is fundamental to pay attention to the quality of education.