

**THE SCHOLARSHIP FAMILY PROGRAM:** a national program to universalize income transfer to all poor families in Brazil?<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** The Scholarship Family Program is an income transfer to poor and indigent families. The objective is to create conditions so the poor families can reach economical and social independence. For this, the program requires some conditions to be met by the families, such as: the maintenance of the children from 7 to 15 years of age in school; frequency of children from 0 to 6 years of age to health unities for immunization; pre-natal for pregnant women; participation of the adults of the families on instruction for literacy and in professional training, besides the participation of all family members in actions of nutritional education. The Scholarship Family Program was created in 2003. It reached in June 2006 11,1 million of poor and indigent families with a monthly family per capita income around U\$ 44 and U\$ 22, respectively. The program's budget is about of U\$ 3.8 billion in 2006, having reached all 5.561 Brazilian municipalities until December 2005, which means that the program reached almost 100% of the poor families with a monthly per capita income up U\$44. The Scholarship Family Program is presented as a strategy to unify the several Income Transfer Programs in Brazil that has been in development in the three levels of governments: local, state and federal levels, since 1995. It is considered an evaluation of the unification process, the development of the program, its limits and possibilities mainly in fighting poverty in Brazil.

**Key words:** Scholarship Family Program; Income Transfer. Poverty. Brazil.

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## **1 INTRODUCTION:** theoretical references and presuppositions

The Family Scholarship Program is conceived in the ambit of these reflections as an expression of the development process of the Income Transfer Programs in Brazil. Those programs started in 1995 in a municipality level, when the first experiences were implemented in Campinas, Ribeirão Preto and Santos, in São Paulo State, and the School Scholarship Program developed in Brasília, the Federal Capital. This process continued with the implementation of State and federal programs, achieving the proposition for the unification of those programs with the creation of the Family Scholarship Program, in 2003.

The Income Transfer Programs are seen in this paper as a direct monetary transfer to families or individuals. The central assumption, in the Brazilian case, is to articulate income transfer with some structural policies and programs, mainly education, health and job policies directed to poor children, youths and adults of poor families. These programs are oriented by two presuppositions. One is that the cost opportunity for poor families to maintain their children in school is too high because of the fall on the already short family income. The second argument is related to the lack of educational formation as a restrictive factor to raise the income of new generations. This situation starts a vicious cycle of poverty in the present and it is determinant of poverty in the future. In this sense, it is worth to define a financial compensation in order to allow poor families to send their children to school. Therefore, an articulation between a cash transfer and structuring policies and programs, directed to poor families, can build a fighting policy against poverty, social and economical inequality in the country nowadays.

It is necessary to point out that there are different conceptions about poverty. They are oriented by different values and they base the construction and implementation of different social intervention policy alternatives. The understanding here is the conception of poverty as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, stressing its' structural determination. It is more than lack of income. It is product of job exploitation; it is inequality in sharing the

wealth socially built; it is non access to the basic social services; non access to information; non access to employment and income; it is non social and political participation<sup>3</sup>.

Now it is important to conceptualize the signification of the articulation between a monetary transfer and structural social policies and programs as the main presupposition of the Income Transfer Programs in Brazil, therefore, the central aspect for evaluating the Family Scholarship Program. I understand that this presupposition demands an expansion and democratization of the basic social services, mainly in the field of education, health and job opportunities. It demands, above all, a quantitative and a qualitative expansion of the Education, Health and Labor Systems, yet very precarious in Brazil and insufficient even to meet the requirements made by the beneficiaries of the Family Scholarship Program.

Another fundamental presupposition that guides this reflection is that those programs must be placed in the Brazilian Social Protection System, nowadays representing its' more significant and prevalent dimension due to the amount of the reached target population and to the amount of resources applied by the federal budget. There is no doubt that those programs changed the content and the shape of the Brazilian Social Protection System<sup>4</sup>.

According to the references that guide this reflection, I also think that it is fundamental to disclose the nature of the Income Transfer Programs, because any income transfer represents some intervention in the market as a regulatory function in order to correct the lacks of its' functioning, in order to increase the efficiency of the economical system. In this sense, it can or not redistributes income, depending on the political option. The political options can be **liberal or redistributive**. The **liberal** one transfers income just to maintain the survival of some population, holding a residual and compensatory character. So those programs are useful just to relieve poverty, without helping surpass it, that is, poverty is maintained in some level. In this case those programs function as a social control of the poor population. The **redistributive option** works as a mechanism to decrease social

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<sup>3</sup> A reflexion about the debate on poverty, its' theoretical and conceptual questions are found in SILVA, 2002-a.

and economical inequalities. In this sense, the Income Transfer Programs redistribute income, and as its consequence there is the decreasing of poverty and social and economical inequality.

The Family Scholarship Program represents the present moment in the historical development of the Income Transfer Programs in Brazil. Its main concern is the necessity of the unification of these programs in the context of the Brazilian Social Policies<sup>5</sup>.

The idea of creating the Transfer Income Program was introduced in the Brazilian Social Policies' agenda in 1991. From 1991 to 1995, a proposal to establish an articulation between the monetary transfer with the requirement to enroll and to maintain the children from 7 to 14 years of age in public school was included in this debate. It was also pointed out the necessity to consider the family as a whole unit to be met by the proposed programs instead of the individuals (CAMARGO 1991, 1993; 1995). Those are important innovations that marked the municipal Income Transfer Programs that started to be implemented in 1995; the federal programs were initiated in 1996 and the State Programs started in 1999. The federal programs have been extended since 2001 reaching almost all 51,561 Brazilian Municipalities. They were implemented in a decentralized way with the responsibility of each municipality and the financial support and general coordination of the federal government. I consider the year of 2003 the beginning of a new moment in this process, when Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's government started. Then were developed some important changes directed to build a National Income Transfer Policy, being presented the following propositions:

a) Lula's Government pointed out as its' main priority to fight hunger and poverty and the Social Programs were considered as an important mechanism for facing poverty as long as they were articulated to an Economical Policy that considered the redistribution of income in the country; raising the valorization of the work income; protecting the workers; the inclusion of all formal and informal workers;

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<sup>4</sup> See: SILVA, 2002-b and SILVA; YAZBEK; GIOVANNI, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> The historical development of the Income Transfer Programs in Brazil is discussed by this author in several papers and books, among them: SILVA, 2002-b and SILVA; YAZBEK; GIOVANNI, 2006.

inclusion of the urban and rural areas in universal and national welfare system; development of an agrarian reform with a technical assistance to rural workers, among other actions<sup>6</sup>.

b) A process to unify the Income Transfer Programs has begun, since October, 2003, with the creation of the Family Scholarship Program, as I present below;

c) It was adopted a policy to increase budget resources directed to Income Transfer Programs;

d) It was created, in January, 2004, The Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger in order to carry out the objective to fight poverty and hunger and to support the unification of The Income Transfer Programs.

Therefore, in this context, the distinction was given to the Family Scholarship Program created as an intersectorial policy of the federal government, directed to fight poverty and promote the development of the family who lives in social and economical vulnerable situations. The Family Scholarship was idealized as a proposal for unification the large and spread set of the Income Transfer Programs that were created and developed in the three level of government: local, State and federal ones. The effort to evaluate this Program places in advance some important questions: the unification of the Income Transfer Programs means the beginning of a new moment in the development of those programs in Brazil? What this new step represents for an evolution in the central goals of those programs? Will there be an increase in the level of education and health of the population? Will poverty be overcome by large part of the Brazilian population?

## **2 CHARACTERISTICS OF VULNERABLE POPULATION MET BY FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM IN BRAZIL: an overview**

Brazil is a large South American country, with an area of 8,547,403 Km<sup>2</sup> and a population of about 182 million inhabitants. Brazil is divided into 5 Regions. They present unequal economical and social indicators and cultural diversities. There are 26 States, the Federal District and 5,561 municipalities in the country.

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<sup>6</sup> However the compromise with a neoliberal economical policy has not allowed the federal government to

A brief overview of the main economic and social indicators can show the situation of the population in Brazil. So, according to IBGE (2004) we have in the country: 17.8% of the domiciles were not met by general net of water; 31.1% of the domiciles were not met by sanitarian drainage; 34.6% of the domiciles did have telephone; 3.2% did not have electricity illumination. In relation to education, 8.9% of the population from 5 to 17 years of age did not go to school. Among them were 18.9% of the children from 5 to 6 years of age; 10.5% of the population from 10 years of age and more were illiterates. Just 26.0% of the population from 10 years and more reached a median of 11 years of study, being 6.6 the median of years of the study of the whole population. At the same time, just 4.1% attended to 15 years of school, that is, they have University degrees. Population from 25 or more years of age just reached a median of 6.4 years of study. Regarding to the job market the data show that the level of occupation of people from 10 or more years of age was 56.5%, being 68.2% of males and 45.6% female. Among them 55.2% were employed, but just 55.0% of the employed people were registered. About infantile work, children and young from 5 to 17 years of age are important to consider that the percentage has been decreased: in 1993 they were 19.0%; in 1999 they were 15.1% and in 2004 they were 11.4%. This must be an important impact of the income transfer programs in Brazil. In relation to income, the same source of date shows that in 2004 the median month income of the whole occupied population was about US\$ 332 and 27.6% won a minimum wage, about US\$ 290 in the rate of 2006. At the same time just 0.9% won more than 20 minimum wages, that is, US\$5.800.

Finely, it is important to consider that there is a social consensus that the economic and social inequality and the extreme income and wealth concentration are the main causes of the poverty and indigence in the country. Data from Social Radar (2005) show the existence of 53.9 million of people who live in poverty situation. They are 31.7% of the Brazilian population who win up to half of a minimum wage that is about US\$145. The indigent are 12.9%, who win just a quarter of a minimum wage that is US\$72.5; 1% of the richer Brazilians (1.7 million of people) get 23% of

the total housing income; 50% of the poorest (86.9 million of people) get just about 13.3% of the housing income. Brazil is the second country with the major income concentration in the world. However IBGE (2004) data shows that there has been a declination in the income concentration in Brazil demonstrated by the Geni Index that was 0,571 in 1993 and 0,535 in 2004. This also can be an important impact of the income transfer programs that must be followed up and evaluated.

The social, economical and political Brazilian context that allowed the arising and the expansion of those programs were marked by the increase of unemployment and by job insecurity; the increase in the violence index in big cities; the increase of infantile work and poverty indexes, achieving mainly children and youngsters. In political terms, we have a redemocratization context in the country and, in relation to the Social Policies, the context is marked by the decentralization and focalization of the social programs on the poor or indigent population, being also placed the necessity of social control on social programs by the creation of several board councils in the different fields of Social Policies.

This is the context of the debate and the experiences of the Income Transfer Programs in Brazil, the subject of this paper.

### **3 CRIATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

The Family Scholarship Program was created in October 2003 by the Provisory Rule n. 132 and transformed in the Law n. 10.836 in January 2004. It was regulated by the Decree 5.209 of September 2004, as a main Income Transfer Program in Brazil. It is an intersectorial program directed to unify those Income Transfer Programs. It is the main program in the ambit of the “Zero Hunger Strategy”<sup>7</sup> of the federal government and has as objectives:

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<sup>7</sup> The “Zero Hunger” is the main strategy established in the beginning of Lula’s government in order to combat hunger and poverty in Brazil, being the Family Scholarship the principal program in the ambit of this strategy.

- a) To combat hunger, poverty and inequalities by a monetary transfer associated to the warranty to the access to basic social rights – health, education, social aid food security;
- b) To promote social inclusion for emancipation of the beneficiary families, giving them conditions to leave the vulnerable situation in which they are living (MDS, 2006).

The arguments that justified and placed the necessity to unify the Income Transfer Programs developed in Brazil were based on a diagnosis. They were related to the social programs in development in Brazil, carried out during the transition from Fernando Henrique Cardoso's government to Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's government, in the second semester of 2002. The diagnosis points out the following aspects, among others:

- a) Existence of competing and superposed programs in their objectives and in their target population;
- b) The lack of a general coordination of those programs, causing waste of resources;
- c) The lack of administration planning of those programs and their dispersion in several ministries;
- d) The lack of budget to support those programs;
- e) Non-reaching of the target population as a whole (Brasil, 2002).

In order to surpass the above problems and to increase the budget and the value of the cash transferred by those programs, it was created the Family Scholarship. Its main objective was to unify the Income Transfer Programs and to build a National Policy of income transfer to poor families. The unification has been so far limited, more specifically, to six federal programs: School Scholarship, Food Scholarship, Gas Aid, Food Ticket Programs and, more recently, the Child Labor Eradication Program and Young Agent for Social Development were included. The income transfer programs created by States and municipalities have been developed besides of the federal program.

It is important to say that the proposal to unify the Income Transfer Programs in Brazil is placed in the ambit of the priority given by the President Lula

to fight hunger and poverty. It is seen as an evolution of those programs by their formulators because it proposes to protect the whole family group, represented by the mother, and it also proposes to raise the value of the amount of the monetary transfer to poor families. The proposed unification must represent a step ahead in the field of the Social Policies in Brazil (FONSECA, 2003), as well as the institution of a more fair, rational and efficient program, as said the President Lula in his speech when he presented the Program to society. It is an alternative for a better focalization of the target population in fighting against hunger and poverty, adjusting the focus of attention and the development of a systematic follow-up and evaluation process as well as to simplify the access to the benefit. As other Income Transfer Programs, the Family Scholarship is implemented in a decentralized way in all 5.561 municipalities throughout the country. Its implementation demands shared responsibility among the federal, State and local government and the organized participation of the society. It is directed to indigent families who have a per capita monthly income around to U\$ 23 and to poor families who have a per capita monthly income around U\$ 55. The indigent families get as a benefit a fixed cash transfer of U\$ 23 and U\$ 7 more per each child up to 15 years of age, for no more than three children, so it can reach a total benefit of U\$ 44. The poor families get variable cash transfer of U\$ 7 per each child up to 15 years of age, for no more than three children, so they can reach a benefit around U\$ 21<sup>8</sup>. The families have the freedom to use the money and as long as they can remain in the program while the eligible conditions do not change and they meet some requirements fixed by the program, since they have access to some basic social services. For that, besides a cash transfer, the Family Scholarship considers necessary to carry out other actions, such as instruction for literacy; professional training; support to small agricultural productions; generation of jobs and income and small credit, access to education and basic health care for children. The objective is to create conditions so the poor families can reach economical and social independence. In this sense, the program points out the some counterpart and conditionalities to be met by the families, such as: the maintenance of the children from 7 to 15 years of age in

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<sup>8</sup> It is important to consider that dollar changes on as daily basis in Brazil because we have a mobile

school; frequency of children from 0 to 6 years of age to health unities for immunization; pre-natal for pregnant women, participation of the adults of the families on instruction for literacy and in professional training and the participation of all family members in nutritional education.

The Family Scholarship Program has reached 3.6 million of families with a budget around 2 billion dollars in 2003. Until December 2004, 6,571,842 families were met by the Program, with a budget around 2.5 billion dollars, reaching 5.533 of the 5.561 Brazilian Municipalities (99.50%). Until December 2005 the program had benefited 8.7 million of the families, reaching all 5.561 municipalities; 77% of the families with a monthly per capita income of U\$ 46, applying a budget of 3 billion dollars; with a median benefit per family around U\$ 33 per month. There were met 11,1 million of families in the Program until June 2006, which represents 44,4 million of poor people, around 99% of the total of the poor families in Brazil (they are 11.206.212). Therefore, the goal is to universalize the Program meeting the whole population who answers to its' eligible criteria.

### **3 THINKING ABOUT THE MAIN QUESTIONS IN THE FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

#### **3.1 Unification of the Income Transfer Programs**

The conception of the unification of the Income Transfer Programs aims a major rationality of those programs in order to increase their effectiveness in the combat of hunger and poverty, as the main priority fixed by Lula's government. It represents, according to the official point of view, an evolution and an innovation in Social Policies, in Brazil, because of the proposal to protect the whole family; to enlarge the number of beneficiaries and to increase the amount of the monetary transfer to the families. Its orientation is a shared perspective among the federal, State and municipal governments what means an important step ahead in the field

of the Social Policies (FONSECA, 2003). Its objective is the creation of a more fair program and it represents a search for a better focalization in the combat of hunger and poverty in Brazil with the adjustment of the focus of attention and the development of a systematic process of follow-up and evaluation, besides to search a simplification for the access of the families to the program.

From the above conception of unification built by the administration of the Family Scholarship Program, it is possible to formulate an initial analysis of the Program. I understand that the intention of unification of so many Income Transfer Programs in development nowadays in Brazil is a hopeful thought. However, it is challenging to reach this objective because there are many people, many institutions and many political interests involved in this issue. Furthermore, it is necessary to consider some pre-conditions to allow real functionality of such an unification proposal, such as:

The unification of the Income Transfer Programs is not enough. This is just a management task. The most important issue is to build a Brazilian Social Protection System with the capacity to reach anyone who is under risk and in a vulnerable situation.

It is important that the unification must develop a system that considers poverty as a complex and a multidimensional problem that requires income allocation as well as democratic social services to meet the basic needs to all citizens.

The proposed unification demands local and national agile and efficient coordination and an appropriate structure in local level, because the Family Scholarship Program is implemented in a stable, decentralized way. It also requires qualified professionals for its implementation.

Existence of a local network of social services to meet the necessities of the families in the program is also required, as well as use of adequate and efficient mechanisms to assure the focalization on the target families.

However, the main requirement must be the warranty of an effective articulation of a monetary transfer with other social and economical programs in order to promote the life conditions and to surpass the conditions of poverty of the

families. That demands to stress social programs that could be more effective if happen an effective articulation between social programs and economical policy, to reach economical and social development in order to change the high level of income concentration and to decrease the large number of people who are living below the poverty line.

In relation to the implementation of the process of unification of the Income Transfer Programs in Brazil, so far, carried out by the Family Scholarship Program, empirical research that I have been coordinating, already allows to indicate the following situations:

The unification process is limited so far just to six federal income transfer programs, without reaching several programs that are created by municipalities and States and that are implemented besides of the Family Scholarship Program.

Besides, the unification of the two more important points of the programs was not reached so far: a) the monetary values considered to classify the family as poor or indigent family, establishing two categories is still applied; b) the monetary values transferred to the families are also too small and they are differentiated according to the poverty situation of the families, if they are poor or indigent, with small change in the life situation of the families<sup>9</sup>;

It was also identified unsatisfactory articulation between the monetary value transferred to the families and their access to the basic social services and to structural programs, even in the field of education and health, as indicated in the proposal of the Family Scholarship, limiting the possibilities of the future independence of the families.

The empirical research indicates as well non identification of a significant improvement in the teaching and in health services offered to the families, although it is registered a quantitative increase attendance for school and health services by the Family Scholarship's beneficiary families because theses services are required by the program in order to the families remain on it.

Finely, I understand that the unification of the Income Transfer Programs, represented by the Family Scholarship Program, needs to be followed-up and

evaluated in its development to allow to make necessary corrections. However, I must say that the proposal of unification itself represents, without any doubt, an advance to the Brazilian Social Policies and it must walk toward the establishment of a national Income Transfer Policy as a strategy to combat hunger and poverty. This Policy must consider the different realities, specificities and autonomy of the local governments and stimulate and support the States and municipalities according to their specific economical situation, above all, each citizen must be socially and economically included with dignity.

### **3.2 The Proposal of the Conditionality of the Family Scholarship Program**

The Family Scholarship Program maintains a set of requirements called conditionalities, considered by the authors of the Programs as social counterparts that must be followed by the members of the beneficiary families so they can receive the monthly benefit of a monetary transfer. The conditionalities have as a goal to verify the responsibility and the compromise of the families and they aim the right practices for the families so they can increase their autonomy and, so, they can reach a sustainable social inclusion.

The conditionalities required by the Family Scholarship Program are:

- a) In the field of education, a minimum of a month frequency of the 85% of the time scheduled by the school for the children from 6 to 15 years of age who should be enrolled in some school;
- b) In the field of health, the family who has pregnant women and children from 0 to 7 years of age should meet a health agenda, composed mainly by the routine medical examinations, vaccination and following-up the nutritional situation of the children.

It is the administrators' role to follow-up the conditionality giving conditions for the families to meet the above requirements, with attributions for each level of the government: municipal, State and federal levels. The previous sanctions in case the families fail to meet the conditionalities were gradual when there was no

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<sup>9</sup> The median value transferred to the families is around U\$ 33 a month, being U\$ 7 the down value and U\$ 44

justification by the families. The sanction starts with a temporary interruption of the monetary transfer benefit during thirty days, sixty days, until cessation of it. In case of the interruption of the benefit, the family is notified and can return to the Program after eighty hundred days, if the previous situation of the family is maintained and when there is available budget to meet new families in the municipality, where the family lives.

I understand that the conditionality indicated by the Income Transfer Programs, created by municipal, State and federal governments and reaffirmed by the main federal program, the Family Scholarship, seems to assure the access of the families to the basic social rights in the sense of increasing the positive impacts of the programs on their independence. Even so, I think that such conditionalities present some problems and challenges to be considered. First, they hurt the non conditionality of the right of all citizen to access job opportunities and to access social programs in order to assure a life with dignity; second, the offered basic social services by the majority of the Brazilian municipalities, even in the field of education and health, are insufficient, quantitative and qualitatively, to meet the necessities of the beneficiary families. In this sense, the conditionalities should be required from the State and not from the families, considering that the need of expansion and the democratization of the basic social services are a State responsibility. I understand that if those services were available they would be used by the population without any obligation. I also understand that what should be developed are information, orientation and education actions for those families to take advantages of the social available social services.

The already referred empirical research shows that just two conditionalities required by the Family Scholarship have been followed-up: frequency of the children to school and the vaccination. It is important to register that the administrators and the practitioners of the Family Scholarship consider that the indicated conditionalities have been considered more in the implementation of the program in an educative sense then in a punitive one. They said that they are trying to give orientation and support to the families to take advantage of the

available social services. However they recognize that the available social services are not enough to meet the family basic necessities.

### 3.3 The Focalization in the Family Scholarship Program

It is important to point out the conception of focalization that bases my reflection. I considered, in a previous book, that focalization is in a large sense, the direction of some resources and programs toward some specific groups of the population, considered vulnerable in the society” (SILVA, 2001, p. 13). I also pointed out that focalization was oriented by a neoliberal ideology in the context of the reform of the social programs in Latin America. In this sense, it meant just compensatory measures on the effects of the economical and structural adjustment that weakened an already vulnerable population. This conception tried to stop a fighting that was developed towards the construction of a social movement for the universalization of the social rights. Therefore, we can have different conceptions of focalization. A conception that I call **progressive/distributive** demands a completion between Social Policies and Economical Policy and it also demands the social responsibility of the State; it asks for large coverage of the needed population; good quality of the social services and it demands appropriate institutional conditions; qualified professionals and sufficient coverage of the target population. I call a **positive discrimination** to increase the life conditions of the excluded populations who need special attention, in order to reach their effective inclusion in the access of the wealth and goods socially built (SILVA, 2001, p. 14). In this sense, I understand that focalization is not the opposite of universalization. When all the population who need to be considered is included, we have a universalization in relation to that population. Difficult is the definition of a fair criteria and the real possibility to reach the whole population who is in need. Another conception of focalization is guided by a **neoliberal/liberal/conservative** perspective whose objective is just to relieve poverty. It is oriented by no social responsibility of the State and by the cut of the budget for social programs; it is centered on compensatory, discontinuous, insufficient and emergency measures directed to the population who live in extreme situation of poverty. This conception of focalization fractionates more than

focalizes on some poor population because it is unable to reach the poor who demands special attention as a whole.

The Family Scholarship is a program guided by the principle of the focalization because it is directed just to meet a poor population as I pointed out above. The matter is to know which is its conception of focalization.

Several researches about focalization of the Income Transfer Programs on their target population have showed major power of focalization on the target population of those programs if compared to other social programs. In spite of this we see several denunciations in the national means of communication about some deviation situations. I understand that to focalize on a target population of some programs, in a country as big and as heterogeneous as Brazil, largely influenced by a culture of the favor and the deviation, is ever very hard. However this situation can be minimized with the improvement of an Unique Cadastre of the population and by crossing the cadastre of the population with some national bank data in development around the country.

The central point of the debate is the question of universalization and focalization. However, the real problem does not seem to be an opposition between universalization and focalization, but the challenge to develop an effective proceeding to identify and to reach the poor population. This means that we can have a relative conception of universalization and we can also understand focalization as an effort of positive discrimination. In this sense, some social programs can be universal, when they can reach the whole population of the target groups.

From an analysis of the focalization in the Family Scholarship, I understand that the main problem seems to be the applied criteria for the inclusion of the families in the program. It is considered a very low level of family monthly per capita income (up to U\$ 55). This leaves out a large number of the families who are in poverty situation because they can not acquire what they need to have an acceptable life condition. This aspect becomes worse if we consider that the income is the only criteria used to classify the families as poor or as indigent and the income transferred to the beneficiary families is also very low, in median U\$ 33

a month. In the other hand, those families have a small possibility to surpass their poverty situation because they do not have adequate access to the basic social services, as I considered above, and most of them live in severe and structural poverty during their whole life. The adults of those families have limited access to information and they have a very low level of professional qualification and only a few years of schooling.

#### **4 CONCLUSIONS**

The reflection presented above shows some possibilities, some potentialities and some limits of the Family Scholarship that is considered as main expression of the Income Transfer Programs in Brazil at the present, such as:

I understand that the proposal for unification of Income Transfer Programs in Brazil, represented by the creation of the Family Scholarship Program in 2003 represent a advance in the development of those programs and a step ahead in the development of a national Income Transfer Policy in Brazil.

In the other hand, there is no doubt that the Income Transfer Programs represent the main face of the Brazilian Social Protection System nowadays because of their geographic dimension (they are implemented in all 5,561 Brazilian municipalities); because of the amount of the families met by the Family Scholarship (11,1 million of the families in June 2006) and because of the amount of the budget resources applied (about 3.8 billion dollar in 2006).

Several evaluations show that those programs represent the most successful experiences in focalization on poor population in spite of some denunciation by the means of communication.

However the challenges are still big: the criteria of inclusion needs to allow to meet poor families and not just indigent families as happens so far; the income benefit needs to be increased in order to reach at least a minimum wage; the monetary transfer needs to be really articulated to the access of the families to the basic social services and to the structuring programs, like job and income; the Income Transfer Programs, like other social programs, must be, above all,

articulated to an Economical Policy able to distribute income and the wealth socially built, to generate job and income to the population who can become autonomous.

Finally, it is important to say that a recent research developed about the outcomes of the Income Transfer Programs on the reduction of the inequality and poverty in Brazil (SOARES, 2006) has demonstrated that the Family Scholarship Program is very well focalized on poor families but it just improve the situation of living of the families, that means it has a low contribution to withdraw the families from their poverty situation<sup>10</sup>. How I said above: those programs are useful just to relieve poverty, without helping surpass it, that is, poverty is maintained in some level. In this sense those programs function more as a social control of the poverty situation.

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<sup>10</sup> The same research demonstrated that just the Income Transfer Programs that transfer one minimum wage (about U\$ 159) to the individuals have been successful to withdraw the population from their poverty situation. Among those programs are: the **Continuous Action Benefit** that was created in 1996. It is a program of cash transfer to people from 65 years of age and older who live in families with per capita monthly income below a quarter of a minimum wage and to handicap people, living in the same economical situations; The **Rural Social Security**, as determines the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988, is an Income Transfer Program because it is flexible in relation to the requirement of a previous contribution. It is directed to the rural population who has been working in the agricultural field. It can reach, in case of retirement, the women 55 years old and over and the men who are 60 years or over; widowed, people in health licenses or in case of job injuries.

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