During his first inaugural speech as President of Brazil, on 1 January 2003, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula) stated that his first priority was to combat hunger. He regarded it as shameful that in a country as rich as Brazil people go hungry. This led to the establishment of a program of food security, *Fome Zero* (Zero Hunger). Lula stated that if – at the end of his term – all Brazilians had the possibility of eating three meals a day, he would have accomplished the mission of his life (Silva, 2003). His other ‘obsession’, as he stated in the same speech, was creating jobs focusing particularly on first jobs in his *Projeto Primeiro Emprego* (First Job Project; Silva, 2003). This would entail a number of economic and financial measures. He has dedicated significant resources to promoting economic growth and investing in energy diversification. Creating jobs (increasing formal employment) was one of his campaign promises, as he firmly believed that having formal employment is one of the best ways to combat poverty and create security (Singer, 2009). While five million jobs had been created during the administration of his predecessor, Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995–2002), that number increased threefold during Lula’s term (2003–10), to 15.3 million jobs. In ten years, unemployment decreased by 6.8 percent, from 12.3 percent in 2002 to 5.5 percent in 2012. These numbers include the first two years of the Dilma administration, which started on 1 January 2011 (Sicsú, 2013).

Lula’s fundamental aims were to reduce hunger and poverty, to diminish deficiencies such as illiteracy and to make it generally possible for Brazilians to live with dignity. Lula’s focus on these specific issues may be, in part, due to his own background. President Lula is the first Brazilian president who does not come from the Brazilian elite. He has experienced hunger. He did not finish primary school. He was a manual laborer and
lost part of one finger while working in a factory. He was one of the foremost and most active trade union leaders during the harshest years of the military regime and is responsible for organizing some major strikes. Although the strikes were somewhat successful, they also made trade union leaders aware that working through a trade union has limitations, and that workers needed real political organization (Keck, 1992, pp. 64–66). So when, in 1979, it became possible to set up political parties and Brazil became a multiparty nation again, the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT, Workers’ Party) emerged as one of the first parties and was formally established in 1980. Lula was one of its most important founding fathers. When democracy and direct elections were re-established, he ran for president. He was runner-up three times but only succeeded in 2002, when he was elected with a very comfortable margin.

Lula immediately acted on the promises of his 2002 campaign, starting to develop social projects on his first day in office. The aim of this study is to get a closer look at Lula’s social policies and evaluate their impacts on Brazilian society. Furthermore, as the election of president Dilma has been seen as the option for continuity – the first time there has been real political continuity in Brazil – this study will also look at the social policies of her administration and will point out the implementation of policies that are the same, those that have been transformed, and those that are entirely new. This will be done on a policy-by-policy basis. The focus will be on the Bolsa Família program (BFP, Family Allowance or Grant), as it is the main social program, encompasses many sub programs, and is considered to be the most significant and representative of the Lula administration’s social policies. A number of other social programs are discussed in different chapters of this volume such as housing (Bonduki, Chapter 8) and small-scale farming (Buainain et al., Chapter 9), but the BFP has grown and has had an impact on about one quarter of the Brazilian population. This study will start with a historical background. The empowerment of women through this program will receive specific attention as this topic is widely discussed in programs of conditional cash transfer (CCT) in different countries. A third part will be dedicated to an evaluation of the BFP, followed by a conclusion.

Attention to education became another major social issue for Lula, especially from his second term onwards. As he stated in his second inaugural speech on 1 January 2007:

It is to be certain that your children will study in a school of quality and that the children of poor families can dream of having