STREAMLINING PROGRAMS, GAINING EFFICIENCIES: A NEW SPL SYSTEM IN THE MAKING

In Cameroon, a system for social protection is being developed through a collaborative and inclusive process with support from RSR. The extreme poor and vulnerable will be better reached while the government spends less than it does today on safety nets and subsidies combined.

CHALLENGE

While the Cameroon economy possesses tremendous resources in human and natural capital, poverty gaps are growing. The vulnerability to droughts, given that almost half of the country’s population is dependent on subsistence agriculture, is high. In 2007, only 37 percent of the total population was considered food secure, and that was before the Food, Fuel and Financial Crisis hit in 2008.\(^1\)

The Government of Cameroon is committed to applying mechanisms for social protection to reduce vulnerability, but due to fragmentation and a limited scale of interventions, the efforts have so far not produced tangible impacts. Indeed, the subsidies used to respond to the economic crises of 2008 proved to be both costly and ineffective. The food subsidies on maize, flour, frozen fish, rice and wheat did not specifically target the poor, children or other vulnerable groups. And, the fuel subsidies did not benefit the poor either, because commercially available fuel, such as, gasoline, is more likely to be consumed only by households in higher income groups.

APPROACH

A review of programs and a safety net feasibility study, supported by RSR, demonstrated that it is possible to transform the array of social protection interventions into a system that reaches all of the extreme poor for less than what the government currently spends on safety nets and subsidies altogether.

The participatory nature of the analytical work contributed to strong interest and ownership by the government. In addition, the outcome of the studies led to the preparation of a US$ 50 million IDA operation, the country’s first for social protection, approved in March 2013.
ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND RESULTS

- Contributed to the first bricks in new safety net system, through a review of existing social safety net programs and a feasibility study to inform the government’s cash transfer pilot, including scale, cost and duration of implementation.

- Following the analysis, RSR helped to set up a cash transfer pilot that benefits 2,000 poor and food-insecure households (approximately 12,000 people) in two disadvantaged regions of Cameroon.

- Support set-up included all aspects of design (benefit level, targeting, benefit structure, beneficiary identification methods) and implementation (payment agency, institutional arrangements).

- Built capacity at the central level for managing and monitoring of the pilot, including development of a management information system which will help in maintaining an accurate database of current and potential beneficiaries.

- Associated IDA Project: Social Safety Nets Project (US$ 50 million)
  - Benefits 420,000 vulnerable people directly through cash transfers and public works programs in the five poorest regions—Adamaoua, the East, the North, the North-West, and the Far-North.
  - Contributes to a coordinated safety net system that can make existing programs better targeted to the poor and vulnerable.