RSR has supported a thorough inventory and analysis of viable social safety net programs in Cameroon and is now providing technical assistance for the design of a pilot cash transfer which, if successful and scaled up, could address the needs of the poor and vulnerable.

**Rationale**

In response to price increases during the devastating economic crisis in 2008, the government of Cameroon tried to remedy the situation through the use of universal subsidies for food and fuel products. Neither of them was successful in reaching those in most need. Food subsidies on maize, flour, frozen fish, rice, and wheat do not specifically target the poor, children, or other vulnerable groups. (Source: “Global Economic Effects on Children: Effects and Policy Options in West and Central Africa,” UNICEF, 2010) Fuel subsidies do 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.

**Response**

The Government of Cameroon is committed to strengthening its social safety nets system to support the poorest and most vulnerable during crises. RSR supported an assessment of the use of universal subsidies, and an inventory and review of the country’s existing social safety net programs. RSR also supported a feasibility study for potentially viable social safety net programs in Cameroon.
Following the thorough analysis, the RSR project is helping to pilot-test a cash-transfer program that could benefit more than 2,000 households of poor and food-insecure people in the northern regions of Cameroon, especially children and women. RSR supports capacity building at central level for the overall design and monitoring of the pilot, including development of a management information system that will help in maintaining an accurate database of current and potential beneficiaries.

The government funds the implementation part of the project, including promoting the involvement of local institutions, in tasks such as helping to identify the potential beneficiaries, enrolling them, and handling grievance procedures.

Based on the findings of the assessment and lessons learned from the RSR-supported pilot, the government has initiated dialogue on potential future funding from IDA for a scale-up of effective safety nets to reach all poor and vulnerable households in the country.

Accomplishments to Date

• Completed safety net assessment and five background papers

• Conducted feasibility studies, now close to completion, with results already disseminated and discussed with the government, along with research on cash transfers and public works

• Began preparatory work of the development, implementation, and evaluation of a safety net pilot

Five Steps To Strengthen Cameroon’s Social Safety Net System

Step 1. Build an inventory of existing social safety net programs in Cameroon and review their effectiveness

Step 2. Appraise all potentially viable social safety net programs in Cameroon and elsewhere and prepare feasibility plans

Step 3. Design, implement, and evaluate pilot projects to help fine-tune best candidates (from Step 2)

Step 4. Evaluate the results from the background studies (Steps 1 and 2) and pilot projects (Step 3) and present findings to Government staff and other stakeholders

Step 5. Design a comprehensive, flexible, and suitable social safety net system to reach the poorest and most vulnerable households