Building Safety net Systems to Protect Poor People—Before, During, and After Crisis

The Rapid Social Response Program is supporting the government of Kenya in their effort to bring about a systemic change of the social protection system, and deliver more tangible and sustainable results for vulnerable people.

Rationale

Historically small and not coordinated with one another, Kenya’s safety net programs have had local successes but have not attained a scale that could broadly reduce poverty or lessen the vulnerability of Kenya’s population to crises. Poverty and vulnerability are perhaps Kenya’s greatest challenges, with almost half of the population classified as poor and nearly 20 percent as extremely poor, and with many households at risk of sliding into poverty for a number of reasons—natural disasters, environmental degradation, health events, unemployment, and a lack of income in old age. Social and economic inequalities are added factors that weigh on both poverty and vulnerability. In addition, the country lacks adequate programs for youth, given that one in three of Kenya’s poor is from 15 to 19 years old and that young people are a disproportionately large share of the unemployed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population, total</th>
<th>40,512,682</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty headcount ratio at $2 a day (PPP) (% of population) (2005)</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNI per capita, Atlas method (current US$)</td>
<td>790</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rapid Social Response Funding**

US $2.9 million

**Timeline**

April 2010–December 2012

**Partners**

Ministry of State for Planning; Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Development; Kenya Private Sector Alliance
The government has made social protection a priority in past couple of years, with the aim of reducing poverty and inequality and responding better to future crises. A draft National Social Protection Policy proposes a new institutional framework for managing the sector, with a focus on social assistance and social insurance. The policy, currently being considered by the Cabinet, also covers reforms to the country’s health insurance and pension systems. Safety net programs, such as public works programs and cash transfers to the poor, could accomplish more with their limited implementation capacity if they were better coordinated.

Response

RSR has supported a set of activities that are helping Kenya improve the efficiency of existing programs, while laying the groundwork for reform, particularly in the social assistance programs.

RSR has funded technical assistance for the design of the government’s single registry of beneficiaries, across all safety net programs. RSR resources have also financed technical assistance to the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Development to improve overall financial management of its Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children program. Within that program, RSR has supported a pilot to test use of conditional transfers to needy individuals. When complete, such testing is anticipated to produce credible evidence on the use of conditions to improve selected development outcomes in the Kenyan context.

To address the specific needs of youth, the government is implementing a pilot project, also funded by RSR, as part of its Kenya Youth Empowerment Program. In the pilot, the Kenya Private Sector Alliance places young men and women, aged 15 to 29, in six-month internships to allow them to gain skills and work experience. Interns split their time between training in business and life skills and work placements. The first internship program was completed in February 2012; the second will end in June 2012. RSR resources were used to develop a management information system for the internships, to provide technical assistance, and to conduct a comprehensive evaluation, still in process, of the internship component.

Accomplishments to Date

- Completed review of the urban food subsidy program and made progress on creating single registry of beneficiaries
- Funded technical assistance for financial management of the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Development
- Began pilot on use of conditional cash transfers
- Installed MIS to support the youth training and internship program