Supporting the Expansion of Social Protection

The Rapid Social Response Program is supporting a comprehensive assessment of the country’s social safety net system—a critical step as the country connects and strengthens its existing programs that protect poor and vulnerable people into a single system with coordinated management and expanded coverage. With a recent IDA grant from the World Bank, an estimated 115,000 households, or about half a million people, stand to benefit.

### Rationale

Three years away from the target year of 2015, Rwanda has made notable progress towards many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including those related to access to primary education, the fight against communicable diseases, and better health and survival rates for mothers and children. But the country’s rapid population growth combined with its slow recovery from the global financial crisis mean that its gains in reducing poverty need to be accelerated in order to get closer to the MDGs related to poverty and hunger. The government and external

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population, total</th>
<th>10,624,005</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty headcount ratio at $2 a day (PPP) (% of population) (2006)</td>
<td>87</td>
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<tr>
<td>GNI per capita, Atlas method (current US$)</td>
<td>520</td>
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**Rapid Social Response Funding**

US $2.2 million

**Timeline**

April 2010–September 2012
donors have launched several initiatives for poverty reduction and social protection, as part of the country’s first poverty reduction strategy (2002-2005), but coordination of these initiatives and interventions has been a major stumble-block to efficiently overcoming poverty in Rwanda.

Response

RSR supported Rwanda’s first social safety net assessment, which helped to define and solve some of the implementation issues of the country’s National Protection Strategy approved in 2011. The assessment analyzed and identified gaps in a number of policy areas related to the fast-developing social sector in Rwanda, such as cash transfers, social insurance, targeting, decentralization, and harmonization. The RSR-funded assessment thus made a key contribution to the government’s effort to move social protection to a higher level.

The assessment has paved the way for a US $40 million International Development Association (IDA) grant, approved by the World Bank in March 2012, for the financing of the Support to Social Protection System Project (SSPS-1). This is the first in a series of three World Bank operations designed to support a larger and more efficient social protection system, as envisaged by the 2011 National Social Protection Strategy.

RSR has also funded the technical assistance necessary to carry out evaluations of the country’s largest social safety net program, Vision 2020 Umurenge (VUP), which was originally launched as pilot. This program combines direct cash transfers, public works, and microcredit interventions to benefit the most vulnerable segments of the Rwandan poor population. RSR has also supported the development of beneficiary and administrative databases and training of VUP staff. Altogether, these RSR-funded activities have helped the program to expand, so that the social safety net system can cover more vulnerable families without jeopardizing fiscal sustainability. RSR support as a whole has been instrumental in supporting Rwanda to step-up efforts to address chronic poverty and cushion poor people from the adverse impacts of economic and climatic shocks.

Accomplishments to Date

- Supported Rwanda’s first social safety net assessment
- Supported the design, development, and implementation of the social protection MIS, which includes a unified registry of beneficiaries
- Provided continuous support to the implementation and redesign of Vision 2020 Umurenge, the country’s largest social safety net program