

TARGETING MECHANISMS OF THE
SOCIAL SAFETY NET SYSTEMS IN THE
COMCEC REGION

COUNTRY EXPERIENCE:
CAMEROUN

I- INTRODUCTION

- With a surface area of 475,000 km² and a population of around 22 million people, Cameroon is located in Central Africa.
- Like other African countries, Cameroon suffers from an insufficient rate of social coverage.
- At the end of the Copenhagen summit, the Cameroonian Government engaged itself, under the leadership of H.E. Paul BIYA, in an overall reform of its social security system.

Within the framework of the International Labour Organisation, social protection shall mean “the entire institutions, measures, rights and obligations whose first objective consists in providing or to try to provide each member of the society with income security and medical care on the basis of specified regulations”. Such a definition can be interpreted with reference to all societies or countries, to social groups and to the formal and informal sectors of the economy.

At the operational level, one can admit that social protection or social security systems encompass:

- Transfers in cash which in a given society aim at providing income security, thereby avoiding or alleviating poverty (Recommendation 67 of the ILO);
- Measures likely to secure the access to medical care (Recommendation 69 of the ILO), to health and social services; and
- Other similar measures aimed at protecting workers' income, health and welfare as well as their families.

Such a definition and conception are based on the idea that social security is a redistributive system which alleviates or mitigates poverty, thereby fighting against social exclusion and promoting social integration.

II-THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

A- The macro-economic framework

Over the 2000/2010 decade, Cameroon recorded an average real growth rate to the tune of 3.1%. The GDP per capita recorded an annual average progression of 1.13% over the said decade. That notwithstanding, the macro-economic situation has been improved since 2010. As a result, a positive growth rates with about 5% in . As to the GDP per capita, it is expected to follow the same upward trend with 2% in 2011, 2.2% in 2012 and 2.5% in 2013.

B- THE EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

- According to the results from the surveys carried out in 2005 and in 2010 on employment and on the informal sector, around 7 persons out of 10 are economically active persons (69% in 2010). The labour force participation rate stands at 74.1% in men, whereas it stands at 64.2% in women. In the urban area, 67.2% of men are economically active as against 52.2% of women.

- The labour market is largely dominated by the informal sector which accounted for 90.4% in 2010 as against 90.4% in 2005.

III-STATE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION IN CAMEROON

In Cameroon, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security is charged with designing the national policy in terms of social security. The current Cameroonian social protection system therefore comprises:

- The social security scheme run by the National Social Insurance Fund (NSIF) for workers of the private sector;
- The retirement pension scheme run by the State for civil servants and other State employees;
- Social assistance and social action which deal with people affected by specific social problems. This scheme is run by the Ministry of Social Affairs;

- All actions carried out by the ministries in charge of social protection;
- Furthermore, not only Cameroon is provided with several social safety net programmes, but it is currently implementing them in favour of the poorest Cameroonian people as well as of the most vulnerable groups.

IV- SOCIAL SECURITY SAFETY NETS IN CAMEROUN

With a view to alleviating poverty, the State and its partners have designed social security safety nets' mechanisms. These mechanisms which are the new approach developed by the World Bank in Cameroon include pilot programmes as concerns monetary transfers and public works that mainly target the poorest and most vulnerable population groups.

We are implementing a project of the World Bank to put in place a system of social safety net systems including pilotes programs, concerning monetary transfers and public work that mainly target the poorest and most population vulnerable group. The project concerns 420 000.

With a view to curbing unemployment and underemployment, thereby enabling the populations to be granted minimum income, several actions are now being executed through specific employment programmes targeting underprivileged groups such as youths, women, vulnerable groups as well as people with disability. These are as follows:

With regard to economically active persons:

- The National Pact for Youths' Employment (PANEJ);
- The Support Project to Actors of the Informal Sector (PIAASI);
- The Support Programme to the Rural and Urban Youths (PAJER-U);
- The Socio-economic Project for the Integration of young people into the manufacturing of sporting equipment;
- The revival and entering into operation of the National Civic Service for Participation in the Development, etc.

- Furthermore, the Government and its partners have implemented major labour-intensive programmes such as the Yaoundé Sewage Project (PAD-Y) (...) as well as the WFP projects (...)

- Although the PAD-Y mainly focuses on the sewage and cleanliness projects of the Yaoundé city town, it had only recruited 6,000 persons. Moreover, its remuneration rate of CFAF 57,000 per month is deemed higher than the minimum guaranteed inter occupational wage of CFAF 29,000 per month

- The WFP's programme dubbed "food versus job" are fully operational in the North and Far-North regions of Cameroon which are characterized by endemic rates of food insecurity due to ecologic conditions as well as to poorly maintained road networks. This programme covers close to 16,590 families in the said regions.

Social transfers with regard to the elderly

Regarding elderly persons in Cameroon, the social security mechanism provides for income transfers targeting paid workers governed by NSIF as well as persons retired from the public service and other State employees.

In the same vein, a social welfare programme run by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MINAS) is also in charge of carrying out income transfers in favour of the elderly persons.

Social transfers with regard to health

- Protective measures earmarked for the most vulnerable groups to be implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs based on social surveys.
- Free retroviral drugs allocated to the population as a whole and especially to children and women thanks to the mother to child;
- The management of tuberculosis-affected patients;
- The free of charge management of malaria in children aged between 0 and 5 years;
- The distribution of the impregnated long-term action mosquito nets to the population as a whole;

Children's programmes

- Children's income security is characterized by their access to education, food and health care. In addition to the social security schemes which govern the private and public sectors as concerns the branch of family benefits, they also provide pre-natal, maternity and family allowances, as well as daily maternity benefits, medical fees resulting from pregnancy and delivery.
- As concerns crisis assistance, the government implements certain measures in various sectors with a view to building up families' and communities' capacities

In this connection one can enumerate:

- The National Support Programme to orphans and to other vulnerable children due to HIV/AIDS infection. Such a programme has led to the management of street children through the financing of 30 social centres which have been benefiting since 2007 from a Government support especially allocated by the Ministry of Social Affairs;
- State's help and assistance were allocated in 2009 to poor children and to their families through an allowance close to CFAF 99 million granted to 189 social centres;

- Specific measures were equally taken in favour of native children originating from the marginal populations such as pygmies and Mbororos;
- School food programmes funded by the World Food Programme and the Ministry of Basic Education (MINEDUB) have contributed to manage the needs of 55,366 children in terms of food. It is worth noting that such children originate from 367 target schools, on annual average, which were selected between 2008 and 2010, representing 5.3% of children as a whole who were drawn from the primary schools of the target regions (cf. WFP and MINEDUB reports, 2011).

IV-ACHIEVEMENTS

The implementation of social protection programs in Cameroon has resulted in the realization of major achievements, the most prominent of which are as follows:

- Political commitment: the public authorities of Cameroon have publicly expressed their will to consider social protection as a key instrument for the fight against poverty;

- The existence of formal social insurance mechanisms and of social safety net systems set up by the State and development partners or even by the communities themselves, as well as of formal mechanisms based on the family, village and occupational-related solidarity networks;
- As far as the social security scheme governed by NSIF is concerned, steps are taken to ease its enjoyment, notably:

- ✓ The supervision of pensioners during the payment of their social benefits;
- ✓ The improvement of reception conditions;
- ✓ The improvement of their medical follow-up;
- ✓ The payment at home of bed-ridden pensioners;

- ✓ The coming of the social insured body nearer its pensioners and the opening of about fifteen social benefits' periodical payment units;
- ✓ The softening and streamlining of the terms and procedures governing the opening of rights as well as the safety of payment benefits.

V. DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

Despite the existence of social protection measures which include transfers in cash, access to medical care and any other similar measure likely to protect the workers' income, health and welfare, some difficulties still persist, namely:

- The irrelevance and insufficiency of the existing benefits, which is due to the differences observed among the existing schemes, the insufficient coverage in terms of health as well as to the bottlenecks inherent in the access procedures governing regulatory benefits;

- The insufficiency of support actions directed towards vulnerable groups;
- The weakness observed in correlation with the inter sectoral and intra sectoral coordination, notably at the elaboration and implementation levels of the programmes. Several ministerial departments are involved in the social protection sector thanks to the implementation of a wide range of social protection programmes.

- Informations relating to the efficiency of programmes are not yet sufficient; which is due to the absence of a realistic appraisal of the latter.

V- PROSPECTS

- Put in place a proper mechanisms of evaluation of the impact of the programmes;
- Fine-tune studies, thereby specifying the resources likely to fund the social safety nets' budget, whether they derive from monetary transfers or they are implemented through labour-intensive-related public works;
- Enhance communication means for a more reliable targeting;
- Implement projects targeting a larger population in such a way that social security floors can be put in place;

- Put in place a mechanism of coordination of various interventions;
- Put emphasis on good governance, thereby drafting unambiguous manuals of procedures;
- Put in place appropriate information, sensitization and popularization strategies.

THANK YOU!