

# **A MEMORANDUM BY CAMEROONIAN YOUTHS ON THE SITUATION OF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN CAMEROON**

## **Introduction**

A critical analysis of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Document (PRSP) written by the Government of Cameroon as a response to the high poverty level experience in the country and also as a condition for the attainment of the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Country Initiative (HIPC) by the Cameroonian youths gathered around a project named “DRSP-Jeunesse” reveals that at the level of the elaboration of this document the plight of the youths was not given the attention required.

To avert the situation and create a platform where the concerns of the youths with respect to poverty reduction would be discussed, close to 100 youth associations regrouped themselves in a network around a project called “DRSP-Jeunesse”, a project put in place by the Ecumenical Service for Peace (SeP) in collaboration with the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES).

These associations met and agreed on the necessary steps to take to arrest the situation and create this platform. A document defining an advocacy strategy and plan was therefore elaborated by the young people. The young people at start designed and developed necessary tools, defined principles and a clear methodology to be used in sharing the totality of their vision on Cameroon, poverty reduction and the manner they think most appropriate in facing the challenges posed by poverty in Cameroon especially among the youth class, through dialogue and advocacy.

This memorandum seeks to say that there exist other possibilities and that the actual environment is not well adapted to enable youths face these challenges or better still is inefficient. It seeks to explain that the actions and strategies existing do not respond to the real challenges of the youths; and that in Cameroon, sufficient space is not created for youth development whose consequence is hegemony: in-capacity ; decision making, social stability, in-capacity to build a family among others.

This memorandum is not an instrument of complaint or incrimination. No! The youths have positioned themselves differently. They are expressing in their own words what they think is the reality and propose concrete actions that are capable of arresting the situation. This memorandum is an act of true citizenship and a contribution to the development process of the nation. An act of citizenship by young Cameroonians written with the words of the youths by the youths themselves, all in a bid to demonstrate that the young people of Cameroon have potentials, therefore calling on the powers that be to re-consider the opinion they hold as regards the youths..

We the youth of Cameroon need our voices to be heard and our words understood as we say them. We need our proposals to be considered in all objectivity because in spite of all the difficulties that is befalling our nation, we know that we have a right to hope. This memorandum explains how we think part of our dreams can be realized. The reasons why

it should be considered and that the recommendations made herein be integrated in all spheres having to do with professional training and youth employment .In this way, the youths in Cameroon would effectively stand as pillars of the nation.

## **I Presentation**

### **The General Situation of youth employment and vocational training in Cameroon**

Five principal orientations are presented in this document to enable us understand the situation of youth employment and vocational training in Cameroon.

1. The Problematic of professionalizing Higher and Professional Education
2. The Problematic of the recognition of informal vocational training (Valorization of knowledge, experience and competences acquired by young people through informal training)
3. The Problematic of the creation of Enterprises
4. The Problematic of Informal Sector Integration by young people
5. The Problematic of Public and Private sector integration by young people.

#### **The Problematic of professionalizing Higher and Professional Education**

The formal Education system in Cameroon comprises two sub-systems: The Francophone and Anglophone sub-systems. Each sub-system is composing of five levels (Pre-nursery, Nursery, Primary, and Secondary and High level). The completion of each level of education is sanctioned by the award of an end of course diploma with the exception of the pre-nursery level. The two sub-systems experienced at these various levels of education above is not evident at much higher levels such as the University or Specialized schools and Diploma programmes.

In a general manner, the gap between training and employment is alarming. Recently the National Employment Fund (NEF) published a report which revealed that; 65% of job seekers with certificates and diplomas do not qualify for the job market. Inadequacies abound as we noticed that in Cameroon 80% of students are oriented towards general education, 15% towards technical education and 5% towards vocational training.

For quite some time now, the government has implemented reforms geared towards professionalizing the system of education in Cameroon. At the secondary level, government instituted the creation of Youth Multi-functional Centers and projects aimed at ameliorating the offer in vocational training at the level of SAR/SM.

At the level of higher education, it is affirmed that the offer for technological and professional training is wide and that, actions to improve upon these also seek to develop mechanisms and conditions favoring research and the dialogue between research institutions, universities, University institutes of technologies, and other professional higher institutions. It is in connection to this that programmes of professional diplomas and other specialized diplomas were put in place.

As regards technical education, the support project for reforms on technical education and vocational training is undergoing changes after the dissolution of the Ministry of Technical Education and Vocational training on December 8<sup>th</sup> 2004.

Above all the efforts made so far, it is worthy for us to note that the level of success recorded so far in Cameroon at official examinations is low and consequently on the frustration experienced by students, parents and education authorities after such failures.

**🚩 The Problematic of the recognition of informal vocational training (Valorization of knowledge, experience and competences acquired by young people through informal training)**

In Cameroon, there exist a number of informal vocational training offers. These offers are made available by diverse groups of people operating in sub sectors such as;

- The Associative sectors
- Governmental programmes and projects
- International cooperation
- Private sector.

Generally, the knowledge acquired from these informal vocational training programmes helps develop the competence and productive aptitudes.

For example: In the case of the associative sector, several types of training programmes are easily accessible by young people. Skills and knowledge acquired at such trainings go a long way to assist in human, financial and material resource management, the elaboration, implementation and follow-up of development projects, and also the animation of working groups not leaving out the mastery of Information and Communication Technology.

A good number of projects carried out by Organizations of the civil society go along with considerable and impelling capacity building sessions. These initiatives based on the development of competencies enables the rapid development real and productive aptitudes which if valorized could be of great benefit to the entire nation. Examples abound and we site here the case of training on Project development, Advocacy and Lobbying, and the management of a project cycle among others.

International Cooperation equally assist in the provision of quality training on a number of domains: A good number of workshops and capacity building seminars, overseas study programmes and exchange visits are carried out every year.

The private sector remains a sector of quality training for young people without required experiences and in the search of jobs. We would not do a complete presentation if we don't mention training on trades such as Esthetics, Hair dressings, general mechanics, sales, agriculture among others. All these skills acquired above by young people are not essentially acquired from formal institutions.

Many other programmes and projects exist instituted and carried out by the Government favoring the acquisition of knowledge and competencies by young people. It is also worthy to note that these trainings also at various social levels are not valorized. (Ex: Project JE VAIS)

Practically we notice in Cameroon that;

- Recruitments are done based on Certificates and Diplomas obtained and not necessarily on competence
- There exist gaps in the identification and valorization of competencies
- And also that nominations and recruitments are done on ethnic and/or tribal bases.

On the functional plan, we notice that;

- In the public sector there is a high level of in-efficiency, low level of productivity, corruption, impunity and personality sects.
- In the private sector, there is lack of competition, low level of creativity and innovation, poor management, and a series of bankruptcy among others.
- In the society in general, there exist a youth unemployment rate of 49.9%. 85.4% of youths who are employed earn less than 40.000 FRS CFA per month for their labor. 86.2% of youths work under very difficult conditions. There is a waste of high human resource, high level of poverty and young people are miserable.

We equally notice that while estimates reveals a 95% of school attendance rate at the level of primary education, this same report says that only one of every two child finally completes the primary school giving a percentage of 56%. Furthermore, if 60% of the above 95% ends up completing from the primary school and make the transition to the secondary level, only an estimated 25% completes this cycle as at 1998/99 (Source: PNDP document)

### **The Problematic of the creation of Enterprises**

Auto employment most especially the creation of jobs is today one of the greatest alternatives for equating the problematic set by unemployment in Cameroon.

Enterprise development is effectively open to young people with regulations for the creation of enterprises and in-come generating ventures stating a minimal age of 18years. Also the creation of an enterprise requires minimal funds which mostly come from individuals wishing to create an enterprise, family, and from other private sources. In other spheres, savings and loans structures such as cooperatives, cultural meetings and some banks provide the minimal capital needed by young entrepreneurs and groups of entrepreneurs willing to operate enterprises.

Formalities favoring the creation of enterprises differ as a function of the different types and systems of enterprises that could be created in Cameroon. Enterprises in Cameroon are subjected to taxes and must respect certain financial conditions which includes;

Registration fees, the Value Added Tax (VAT), authorization license, Taxes on enterprises, among others.

We also notice that different types of enterprises operate in Cameroon such as (CIG, Savings and Loans societies, private Enterprises, and others such as the EI, SARLs, S.A, and the SNC.

To facilitate the creation of these enterprises, a certain number of mechanisms exist such as;

- The Support and Guarantee Fund for small and medium scale enterprises known by its French acronym as (FOGAPE)

This fund has as principal mission to bring technical and financial assistance to small and medium scale enterprise in Cameroon which was created in 1984.

It was also created with the mandate to respond to short, medium and long term credit demands facilitating the creation of enterprises. In general the FOGAPE could intervene at the following stages for the creation of an SME;

- The accordance of guarantees to the acquisition of credits and loans at banks and all financial institutions for the creation of SMEs
- Participates in the capital management of SMEs
- Accord direct loans for the acquisition of equipments and starting capital of SMEs
- Contribute in feasibility studies for possible projects and the provision of technical assistance in training, counseling, and management.

The entrepreneur in contacting the FOGAPE had to be in position of at least 20% of the necessary funds for the creation of the SME while the maximum guarantee of the FOGAPE could not exceed 80% of the loan accorded by the financial institution to the entrepreneur.

The lack of cash by financial institutions coupled with the poor management and the non re-imburement of loans by entrepreneurs crumbled the FOGAPE.

- The National Employment Fund (NEF)

The National Employment Fund is an organization with a social character created under the framework of the Cameroon Structural Adjustment Plan. The NEF became fully operational during the 1991/92 financial year and encouraged;

- Job seekers having an autonomous frame, exhibiting strong management capacities and armed with good project proposals can obtain assistance from the NEF for;
- The creation of micro-enterprises where the entrepreneur proposes a project aimed at creating jobs and needing great investment (up to 20million FCFA)

- Self employment where the entrepreneur creates his/her own employment through a small income generating activity with a maximum funding not exceeding 5.000.0000FCFA, accompanied with support to training and management

Up to 31 December 2005, 26.015 micro projects have been realized with a total of 41.040 employments created.

➤ The Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Crafts (CCIMA)

The CCIMA is an organization created in 1921 with a consultative and representative statue in the business sector on the domains of commerce, industries, mines and crafts.

It has as mission to serve as a transition and linkage mechanism in the private sector, and also as a representative and consultative organ on diverse issues for the Government with Economic issues coming in the first place.

It develops enormous orientation programmes and also works for the promotion of industrial and commercial enterprises in terms of;

- The collection, treatment and diffusion of economic and commercial information
- The realization of publications
- The support in the creation of enterprises
- International exchange
- The promotion of the transfer of knowledge and skills through the organization and participation in international trade fairs and workshops
- Assistance in the research of partners
- Continues training, seminars and conferences.

All industrial and Commercial Enterprises in Cameroon are affiliated and adhere to the CCIMA.

A majority of youths are oriented towards self-employment. In the sector of the creation of enterprises, youths are often implicated in the creation of SMEs, and it is generally noticed that these SMEs created by youths are in the informal sector. Many of such enterprises operated by young people could be found in the urban centers and particularly focused on agriculture in the rural areas. The disparity in sex of the young entrepreneurs is perceptible in the creation of enterprises. More young men than women are interested.

It is unfortunate that concrete statistics and data as regards the creation of enterprises by youths do not exist and if they do are not accessible.

If 3000 enterprises are created each year in Cameroon, very few of them survive the first two or three years due to lack of appropriate and adapted equipment for functioning, finances, counseling to which is added the absence of proper accounting systems. This state of issues is greatly noticed and evident among the youths.

 **The Problematic of Informal Sector Integration by young people**

In Cameroon, the informal sector is generally appreciated as being dynamic. It essentially regroups local economic activities which are neither registered in the Chamber of

commerce nor affiliated to the National Social Insurance Fund. Activities of the informal sector are essentially constituted by arts, local production and provision of basic goods and services and also micro commerce.

It is equally noted that the informal sector is the greatest employer of youths in Cameroon with the merit of associating within it activities of the formal sector such as commerce, the offering of diverse services and also agriculture. This sector employs 90.4% of the youths with 55.2% in agriculture offering greater economic opportunities.

In this sector, the average monthly income is very low with 11.100FCFA as income for employers in agricultural activities and 27.300FCFA as monthly income for employers involved in non agricultural activities. Besides the situation of low monthly income faced by the informal sector, this sector continues to also suffer the consequences of the devaluation of the FCFA. At the advent of economic crisis, the activities of the informal sector experienced an important growth rate with 75% of the urban labor force recorded to be employed by this sector. Six out of every ten household gains its subsistence and income from this sector thus resolving the economic difficulties faced by the people.

However, while we agree that this sector provides alternatives to the high level of unemployment in the Country, it is not structured or organized hence does not guarantee stability and a sustained source of income for the youths.

Workers in the informal sector can be classified into four socio-professional category which are;

- Independent workers who work for themselves
- Apprentice learning a trade
- Salaried workers working for remuneration
- Family helps working on family accounts

A study carried out by the Government of Cameroon established that in 1993, 90.000 informal production units existed in Yaounde, and that the production from these units was equivalent to that of the formal industrial sector. These units employed about 125.000 people with most of the people operating private businesses.

For several years the World Bank was interested in the dynamism of the informal sector and funded several projects from this sector. The principal motivation for the World Bank's interest in the sector was its capacity to influence and advance the development of the nation.

### **The Problematic of the integration of the Public and Private sector by young people in Cameroon**

Several public and private institutions in Cameroon have as mission to integrate youths into employment.

- It is the case for example of;
  - The Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training
  - Ministry of Labor and Social Security

- The National Employment Fund
- The National Observatory for employment and vocational training
- Recognized placement institutions
- Civil Society Organization

The integration of youths into the public sector of Cameroon is done using two basic procedures which are;

- Competitive entrance into higher institutions of learning like the National Advanced School of Administration and Magistracy (ENAM), Higher Teachers Training College (ENS), Combined Military Academy (EMIA), International Relations Institute of Cameroon (IRIC), Higher Technical Teachers Training College (ENSET), National Police College.
- Direct recruitment of contract and temporal workers in the public service by the Government.

In the private sector, integration is equally done following two procedures;

- Through employment and/or self employment by being available to occupy a vacant position.
- Through the recruitment of youths in private enterprises, civil society organizations, NGOs, etc.

According to the 2005 statistics on employment and the informal sector in Cameroon, 4.9 percent of the active population is employed by the public sector, 4.7 percent by the public sector, and 90.4 percent by the informal sector.

The conclusion drawn from this statistics was that in the public sector there is the influx of youths who want to participate in competitive entrance examinations into the public service which is often limited. On the other hand we experience a situation where unskilled youths are seeking for employment .This situation is due to the socio-economic policies of Cameroon which gives room to certain mal-practices such as corruption etc.

It has been proven to a certain extent that integration in the private sector is linked to direct relations between individuals and professional competence. This is the case of enterprises whose personnel come from a particular class or who originate from the same region. Self employment which happens to be the last resort when formal employment attempts have failed in Cameroon is hampered by high taxes, administrative and banking difficulties which do not favor the youths at the level of the informal sector.

## **II Analysis of the situation of youth employment and professional education in Cameroon**

### **Professionalizing Higher and Professional Education in Cameroon**

Why Informal and Vocational Training?

The policy of higher and professional education in Cameroon is deficient thus requires amelioration. In the informal sector, there exist quite a good number of certificate holders



from secondary and higher education without jobs and the number keep increasing every year. Amongst them are those with professional certificates like engineers in the agro-food industry, journalists, computer experts, and nurses, not forgetting youths with professional diploma.

In reality, professional studies in Cameroon don't offer a wide range of specialties and is therefore limited in the number of entrants admitted per year. There are many projects under study and yet to be realized which during the elaboration process did not take into account the involvement of un-employed youths with diplomas.

The instability and nature of the public institutions, lack of communication facilities from the base level to enterprises does not facilitate the effectiveness of the system of education. This explains why the public and Para-public sectors are presently the sole employers offering better working conditions for youths. It is also important to note that the engineering sector is the most appropriate form of education which can favorably respond to the socio economic development of our nation Cameroon.

#### **The recognition of informal and vocational training (Valorization of knowledge, experience and competences acquired by young people through informal training)**

The major reason why a good number of people (youths especially) take on the informal and vocational training is the need for survival. Very often we would notice that these people have confronted difficulties in the exercise of their duties, or in a quest for a more profitable employment, thus the necessity to develop new skills and competence. Example is the fact that one can hardly secure certain jobs without the necessary computer skills.

Often it is noticed that Informal and Vocational trainings are acquired as a matter of urgency and thus offers far reaching advantages.

Are Informal and Vocational Training credible?

Informal and Vocational Training are often carried out differently as compared to trainings offered in formal establishment. The leading word here is qualification; as a matter of fact the issue is to develop the competence needed for emphasis has often been laid on the stakes of performance and qualification.

“The learning by doing” principle happens to be the major rule of Informal and Vocational Training. Training begins by observation, explanation and finally experimentation and application. The techniques acquired have proven in the long run that practical approach generally develops competence and productive aptitude with a better understanding of the job market.

Should we valorize Informal and Vocational Training in Cameroon? Why and How?

The real obstacle to the effective valorization of the Informal and Vocational Training is the fear to discredit the formal system. This is often the argument advanced in consequence. The fact is that, to preserve the real advantages derived from Informal and Vocational Training, many people have made sacrifices for national interest. They voluntarily oppose the formal systems of training and carry on campaigns for the recognition and valorization of diploma and certificates obtained through Informal and Vocational Training.

We notice that, the recognition of Informal and Vocational Training is a booster to carry out research on performance, efficiency and productivity.

The recognition and valorization of Informal and Vocational Training could be a benefit to all people irrespective of the certificate the individual has obtained since it provides a space for the acquisition of new skills.

The campaign for the recognition and valorization of Informal and Vocational Training is not a campaign against certificates and diplomas acquired in the formal system of Education, but a recognition that can serve as a plus or an input to the successful attainment of an equivalent formal certificate due to knowledge acquired. The result is to adopt a type of competition based on competence and performance and not simply of certificates.

It is evident that Informal and Vocational Training has as goal to target the problem of quality training received and thus enable the trainees develop skills and competencies required for development. Trainings are almost often offered by experts. The measures put in place to obtain certificates in Cameroon seem to be the essential condition for securing a good employment.

The major challenge for schools and training institutions is how certificates can be geared to acquiring real competence and productivity, this can help to justify the progressive depreciation of the value of certificates, of education and of vocational training acquired through a cross section of former training in Cameroon.

It is incontestable to think that competence is not part and parcel of productivity. Those who are competent are given the right to positions they deserve. Further more there is suppose to be the recognition and the valorization of competence. But how can this are done?

The recognition and the valorization of the informal and vocational training should be through a good system of training based on the successful validation of points and credits before a certificate is awarded.

## **The creation of enterprises**

There exist a good number of laws governing the creation of enterprises that are quite demanding and interesting, but whose application is often very challenging and unrealistic.

Despite the global framework on the creation of enterprises, it remains very clear that youths are still to make out their way. A majority of the youths do not have the means to initiate the creation of enterprises and those who have taken the courage to try testify that this line of activity is not for their social class.

The lack of motivation from the government coupled with insufficient information on the creation of enterprises is often a problem. For example to create an individual enterprise, an entrepreneur is required to fulfill six basic conditions alongside side twenty four other formalities.

Each type of enterprise has its exigencies and settling on a choice of enterprise demands a mastery of the procedures. Consequently youths who engage themselves in the creation of enterprises most often make the wrong choices. Financial handicap is also another set back.

Earlier in this work, we mentioned the principal sources of financing for the creation of enterprises available to youths but unfortunately these are not quite accessible.

- Personal funds are generally insufficient (this explains why most enterprises are in the informal sector)
- The funds from family do not often meet up with the needs and demands of the projects.
- The funds from groups (njangi) are often on short term basis (duration of 3, 6 or 12 months).
- Loans and credits schemes from banks are also exorbitant, demanding interest rate which varies between 20 and 30 percent. It is to a great extend not open to the youths since it requires guarantees, cautions and other formalities beyond their reach)

All these are indicators that the world of entrepreneurship is not accessible to the youths.

When the youths get into entrepreneur hood, they are faced with so many difficulties. The first thing is that, accompanying mechanisms do not generally exist which can provide support to youths in terms of counseling, training and managing their own enterprises. The private sector offering support for the creation of enterprises is often not pre-occupied by youth's entrepreneurship as they demand high charges in terms of payment for support rendered.

Finally, the fiscal policies of enterprises in Cameroon remain a permanent handicap to the youths. Youths often chose the sector of activities with specific opportunities as they do not require a certain demand in competence and qualification. The pressure from taxes

mounted on them as they make their entry into the business world often inhibit their zeal to progress.

The demand of taxation formalities during the creation of enterprises requires close to 30% of the starting capital of the enterprise which is not stable as each financial year is accompanied by modifications in tax exigencies, thus condemning to death the new enterprises which can not stand up to these exorbitant exigencies.

Support mechanisms put in place by the Government is limited. The National Employment Fund has proven its limitation as it can not meet the demand in employment at the national level. At one point this Fund operates as an employment structure which is not specific attempting to answer the question of employment in all social categories.

Consequently, not all the questions on the creation of enterprises are given attention. Mechanisms put in place at the National Employment Fund offers support to emerging ventures targeting the informal sector (SMEs) thereby exposing youths who want to venture in the creation of large scale enterprises to certainty and doubts on the actual capacity of the Fund.

To boost the creation of large scale enterprise by the youths requires that specific mechanisms be envisaged to encourage and support these youths who want to venture in large scale enterprises.

As concerns the FOGAPE, an audit report on the FOGAPE carried out reveals that this Fund is either very silent or doesn't operate any more in the country as a result of deficiencies in management. However, the reasons for the creation of the FOGAPE and the audit report highlight the relevance of this institution. However, the evolution of the sector having to do with the creation of enterprises in Cameroon within which we identify gaps could be revived with the re-functioning of the FOGAPE.

The procedures on the creation of enterprises which can stimulate the desire of the youths to engage in this venture are often not known. Where they are made known, they reveal long and laborious conditions coupled with highly exigent fiscal policies which youths can not challenge. Statistics on enterprises do not really exist, hence best practices cannot be easily copied by youths and also consequent on the fact that qualitative and quantitative follow up becomes almost impossible.

There equally exists a crucial problem at the level of necessary local resources for the creation of enterprises such as obtaining a land title for the construction of a base.

### **Informal Sector Integration by young people**

The informal sector serves as the major employer of the youths. However its informal character makes it a real jungle for the youths. Highly characterized by very low salaries this sector doesn't fully empower the youths to actively take up social responsibilities and hampers their contribution to the development of the nation.

Building a family which in effect is a natural desire becomes an almost impossibility for the youths and the zeal to meet up with this social demand exerts pressure on them to move into the job market. Marriage is general decided upon by the social position of the man and rarely by that of the woman in our traditional African society. Difficulty faced in meeting the required social conditions both by young men and women alike has given birth to new forms of marriage code named {come we stay or trial marriages, prostitution among others. Marriages between youths are becoming a rare phenomenon {to look for a man is very easy but to find a husband has become a gigantic enterprise}. The proportion of youths among married persons doubled between 1987 and 1996 passing from 18.2% to 34.6%

In 2001, statistics show that only 13.6% of youths got married, revealing a drastic propensity in reduction of marriages and family union by youths, which worked to the favor of the older generation as this same statistics revealed that the ancient phenomenon of contracted marriages between older people who have the social and financial backings and youths especially young women is fast resurfacing.

When we analyze these statistics and link it to youth employment in the informal sector, we understand that this sector is not yet an appropriate solution to the un-employment situation of the youths for;

- It provides less hope for the future of the youths which it employs
- It also limit job and social security from a professional point of view
- Professional stability is irrelative
- It promotes the production and consumption of low quality goods and services.

### **Public and Private sector integration by the youths**

#### ➤ Public sector integration

The integration of youths in the public sector in Cameroon appears to an extent as an avenue which takes charge of youth employment in consequence of the need and the structures available.

The inertia generated by corruption, administrative bottlenecks, favoritism, impunity and the misuse of public property culminates to systematic functional restraint of the public service in Cameroon which upon creation was well structured.

This inertia greatly contribute in demoralizing a greater number of youths especially when they meet in-justice in the organization of entrance examinations and the arrangement of results {Example: Conflict of list of successful candidates between Directors of different schools and ministers. This in-justice which is further reflected in the recruitments of state personnel in the public service of the nation does not work to the favor of national development.

Another major reality is the proliferation of youths with certificates from primary, secondary and universities who do not have access to qualified employment opportunities

offered by state instituted frameworks yet have the possibility to go in for meager jobs such as Night Watch, Baby sitter, house helps etc offered by this same institutions.

The real mission of Ministries in-charge of employment in Cameroon is pre-occupying to the young people searching for jobs in the sense that certain principles and conditions put in place for recruitment processes does provide permanent employment rather they provide employment on temporal or contractual bases.

➤ Private sector integration

If we look at the statistics of the survey on employment and the informal sector conducted in 2005, we notice that the informal sector which is part of the private sector employs 90.4% of the active population of Cameroon. Looking at this statistics we are tempted to conclude that all is well in this sector in the country.

It can be said here that the integration of youths in the private sector in Cameroon is marred by fiscal pressure which demoralizes qualified youths who, using their limited resources try to create employment for themselves. This is verified when a good number of micro enterprises close their doors as a result of the fiscal pressure before the attain three years of existence.

For those enterprises which can manage under the prevailing situation of high taxes, employment is reserved to a particular category of people from the same family thereby promoting mediocrity as employees are not recruited on the bases of competence, thus frustrating a majority of competent and un-employed graduates.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSALS OF THE CAMEROONIAN YOUTH FOR THE AMELIORATION OF THE SITUATION OF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN CAMEROON**

### **🇨🇲 The amelioration of Higher and Professional Education to favor youth employment**

- ❖ The Cameroonian system of education should be revised by the Government in the global context with its objectives redefined
- ❖ A regulatory and institutional framework favoring the development of vocational training should be created and educational policies be elaborated in a concrete manner that would favor youth employment upon completion of education
- ❖ Mechanisms should be created to facilitate periodical update of policies on professional training
- ❖ Promote qualitative training through the creation of technical and professional schools offering a wide range of innovative specialties oriented towards meeting the employment needs of the rural youth.
- ❖ Further encourage south-south cooperation on professional bases which permits youths of different countries to exchange knowledge on innovations and research findings on development between countries.

- ❖ Involve good managers of public and private enterprises in the elaboration of training offers and equally involve them in the delivery of specialized knowledge.
- ❖ A framework for the exchange and sharing of knowledge and experiences should be established between managers of private and public enterprises and higher professional institutions which would facilitate the transfer of knowledge to students.
- ❖ Citizenship and family education should be valorized and integrated in school curricula.
- ❖ Rapid training programmes should be put in place for certificate holders aimed at providing them with necessary skills for enterprise development and the creation of jobs.
- ❖ National and international institutions should provide necessary support to training programmes of youth associations, and also assist under privilege youths meet their educational needs.

#### **The recognition of Informal and Vocational training as a value added to youth employment strategies in Cameroon**

- ❖ Government and all stakeholders involved in the informal and vocational training sector in Cameroon should elaborate a plan for the identification of all Informal and Vocational Training options available in Cameroon
- ❖ Put in place a system which would award points and/or credits for training options available in a bid to facilitate the recognition of training offered by the different stakeholders
- ❖ Diversify and make accessible informal training offers with a basic principle of “Learning by doing”.
- ❖ Institute mechanisms that would facilitate the integration of youths trained in the informal sector on diverse specialties so as to respond to the demand in specialized knowledge on development.
- ❖ Create a certification board that would check competence, efficiency and the value of training delivered through the informal and vocational sector.

#### **To boost the creation of enterprises in Cameroon by youths**

- ❖ We recommend the creation a structure for the promotion and follow-up of youths on entrepreneurship. That this structure possesses a plan and curricula developed for secondary, university and other professional institutions which would facilitate the promotion of the culture of entrepreneurship within the youths. The structure would have a counseling and information point on the creation of enterprises in the country
- ❖ We recommend that the Support and Guarantee Fund for small and medium scale enterprises known by its French acronym as (FOGAPE), be restructured with its managerial team composed essentially of experts in the domain of enterprise development.

- ❖ We recommend that youths be given a chance to carry out large scale projects by Government and other stakeholders by breaking down the barriers facilitating access to funding which has been limited to micro-projects
- ❖ We recommend that full bloom projects rather than micro project schemes become a major preoccupation during the elaboration policies linked to the development of enterprise by the young people
- ❖ We recommend the progressive exclusion of taxes on all youth enterprises upon creation to enable them establish. These tax exclusion instituted upon creation, would be restored progressively as the enterprise take root over a period which might go up to five years. During this period, the allocated amount for taxes to be paid by youth enterprises is transformed into investment in these enterprises, and tax controllers do come to control investment rather than taxes.
- ❖ We recommend that a study on the state of the creation of enterprises by youth be carried out in a bid to identify the real potential of the youth in the sector of enterprise development. This report would serve as a data base for competence and would enable development stakeholders enhance the participation of the youth in the economic life of the nation.
- ❖ We recommend that poorly organized and under developed income generating sectors be developed to optimize local production in basic goods and services.
- ❖ We recommend that youths be part of the National Employment observatory to a bid to assure fair competition and the full and effective participation of the youths in decisions governing the employment sector in Cameroon.

#### **To provide better opportunities for the Informal Sector**

- ❖ We recommend the creation of an Informal Sector Observatory whose mission could be;
  - The definition of the vision of the sector
  - The follow up of different activities of the sector
  - To carry out a census on the real needs of the sector
- ❖ We recommend the institution of a technical support structure for the Informal sector which could have as mission;
  - To build the capacities of the different stakeholders involved in this system in terms of, management, fiscal policies, accounting techniques etc..
  - To provide practical training to various actors of the sector
  - Counseling and support
  - To ameliorate the productivity of the sector in terms of quality and quantity
- ❖ We recommend that a collective convention be clearly defined concerning the different domains of youth employment in the informal sector so as to encourage regulation by all and accountability by employers on treatment of employees.
- ❖ We recommend a review of the labor code in Cameroon.



## 🇨🇲 **To facilitate integration of youths in the Public and Private sector of Cameroon**

- ❖ Produce a database which would be annually updated on the situation of graduates of the primary, secondary, university and other professional institutions and their employment situation
- ❖ Government should institute a frame work that would facilitate the valorization of youth expertise through partnerships with private and public establishments obligating these establishments to employ on a regular basis, a quota of youths with certificates in a bid to facilitate their acquisition of professional experience.
- ❖ Render obligatory the process of transfer of technology and competence by foreign experts
- ❖ Recruit workers for the public service through formal call for candidature at least two months in advance through official journals to enable qualified applicants enough time to compile their application files.
- ❖ Due to the high dependency level experienced in the country, we recommend that the minimal age to access public functions be increased to 40years
- ❖ Permit enterprises that have deposited applications for authorization to commence operations at most five months after the deposition of application files.
- ❖ Increase subvention for the internship of young people in enterprises
- ❖ Provide subvention to vocational training institutions offering training opportunities to young Cameroonians.

### Conclusion

This memorandum is a platform for dialogue, the beginning of a reflection and action carried out with a different understanding by the youths. This document invites all partners of youth development in Cameroon to come on board and enable the youths respond to their challenges. In the first place the call is addressed to the Government of the Republic of Cameroon, secondly, civil society organizations, the private sector, donors and all international institutions.

The anticipated result of this memorandum is its integration in the design of development policies favoring youth employment and vocational training in Cameroon, especially at this time when the National Youth Policy is about to be finalized, and when our Country just attained the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Country Initiative (HIPC).

In a bid to preserve the absolute value of this work, we recommend that youths be always implicated in the design and implementation of strategies and policies favoring national development and particularly youth development.

*<All you do for us, without us, is against us>* Nelson Mandela