



Understanding Youth Unemployment and Underemployment in Cameroon: A Baseline Study of Causes, Consequences, & Coping Mechanisms of Youth in Douala, Garoua and Yaoundé.



“Our lecture rooms are full...we study books, not (how to) work.” A youth in Yaoundé.

A study designed, planned and implemented by Divine Treasures Network (DTN) in collaboration with No Limit for Women Project (NOLFLOWOP) and Réseau National des Association de Tantines (RENATA).

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ACRONYMS

ACPME	Agence Camerounaise de Promotion des Petites et Moyennes Entreprise (Small and Medium-sized Entreprises Promotion Agency)
AfDB	African Development Bank
A/L	Advance Level
BAC	Baccalauréat
BEPC	Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle
CAP	Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnel
DTN	Divine Treasures Network
ECAM	Entreprise du Cameroun
EESI-3	Enquête sur l'Emploi et le Secteur Informel (third wave)
FDG	Focus Group Discussion
GCE	General Certificate Examination
GECAM	Groupement des Entreprise du Cameroun
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GICOM	Groupement Inter-Patronal du Cameroun
CIOP	Cameroon Vocational and School Orientation Centers (Centres d'information et d'orientation professionnelle)
GCs	Guidance Counsellors
ILO	International Labor Organisation
INS	Institut National de Statistiques
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
MINDDEVEL	Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development
MINEFOP	Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training
MINEJEC	Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education
MINESEC	Ministry of Secondary Education
MINESUP	Ministry of Higher Education
MINFI	Ministry of Finance
NEF	National Employment Fund
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIS	National Institute of Statistics
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
NOLFOWOP	No Limit for Women Project
O/L	Ordinary Level
RENATA	Réseau National des Association de Tantines
SME	Small and Medium-sized Entreprises
TVEE	Technical and Vocational Education Examination
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UIS	UNESCO Institute of Statistics
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
WB	World Bank



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The baseline study on *Youth Employment and Employability Gaps in Cameroon* was conducted by Divine Treasures Network (DTN) to generate evidence on the key barriers and opportunities affecting young people's transition from education and training into productive employment. The study draws on data from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) across three major cities in Cameroon, as well as a desk review focusing on the educational system. Diverse stakeholders were engaged, including youth, parents, employers, local authorities, faith-based and community leaders, technical training institutions (TVETs), NGOs, and government representatives.

The study aimed to understand the causes, consequences, and coping mechanisms of youth unemployment and underemployment, while also exploring the role of local leadership, education, training, employability programs, and existing institutional gaps in addressing these challenges.

Key Findings

1. Causes of Youth Unemployment and Underemployment

Findings revealed that unemployment among young people in Cameroon is multi-dimensional:

- **Mismatch between training and labor market needs:** Many youths graduate with theoretical knowledge that does not match current job market demands. Employers consistently highlighted deficits in practical, technical, and soft skills.
- **Limited access to information and opportunities:** Recruitment processes are often opaque, favoring networks and personal connections over merit. Rural youth face even greater informational and logistical barriers.
- **Weak vocational and technical training systems (TVETs):** Despite the government's establishment of technical and professional training institutions and centers under the Ministry of Secondary Education, Higher Education, and Employment and Vocation Training, most institutes and training centers remain under-resourced, with outdated equipment and limited industry partnerships.
- **Lack of career guidance and counselling:** Schools and universities rarely provide structured counselling or mentorship to guide youth career paths.
- **Socio-cultural expectations and economic hardship:** Parents sometimes impose career choices, leading to disinterest or dropouts. Gender stereotypes also limit young women's participation in non-traditional sectors.
- **Limited absorption capacity of both public and private sectors:** The formal job market remains small, while the informal sector dominates, offering mostly low-paying, insecure jobs.

2. Consequences of Youth Unemployment and Underemployment



Youth unemployment has broad **social, economic, and psychological effects**:

- **Economic dependency**: Many young people rely on parents or informal jobs for survival, delaying independence.
- **Social frustration and migration**: Joblessness fuels frustration, social unrest, and a growing interest in migration (“bush falling”) among youth.
- **Rise in informal and precarious jobs**: Youths engage in underpaid or exploitative work without contracts or social protection.
- **Declining mental and emotional well-being**: Youths report stress, frustration, and hopelessness, especially those with higher education but limited opportunities.
- **Wasted national potential**: The economy loses skilled labor, creativity, and innovation due to underutilization of youth talent.

3. Coping Mechanisms

Despite challenges, youth demonstrate resilience and creativity:

- **Self-employment and entrepreneurship**: Many youths engage in small businesses, agriculture, hairdressing, and digital services. However, lack of capital and mentorship remains a constraint.
- **Skill diversification**: Some youths pursue multiple trades or online training to expand employability.
- **Community and faith-based support**: Churches, NGOs, and local associations provide psychosocial, financial, and skills support.
- **Migration and apprenticeship**: Others migrate internally or abroad, or seek apprenticeships to gain hands-on experience.

4. Role of Local Leadership and Institutions

Local authorities (councils and decentralized structures) play an increasingly significant role under Cameroon’s decentralization policy:

- Councils promote youth projects through local employment schemes, public works, and municipal micro-projects.
- Faith-based and community leaders act as influencers in shaping youth values and mobilizing local initiatives.
- NGOs and associations complement government actions by supporting skills training and gender empowerment.

However, coordination between government, private sector, and civil society remains weak, with duplication of efforts and limited follow-up.



RÉSUMÉ

Contexte

L'étude de référence sur l'Emploi et les Lacunes d'Employabilité des Jeunes au Cameroun a été menée par Divine Treasures Network (DTN) afin de produire des données factuelles sur les principaux obstacles et opportunités qui influencent la transition des jeunes de l'éducation et de la formation vers un emploi productif. L'étude s'est appuyée sur des données provenant de discussions en groupes focalisés et d'entretiens avec des informateurs clés dans trois grandes villes du Cameroun, ainsi que sur une revue documentaire portant sur le système éducatif. Elle a mobilisé divers acteurs : jeunes, parents, employeurs, autorités locales, leaders religieux et communautaires, institutions de formation technique, ONG et représentants du gouvernement.

L'objectif de l'étude était de comprendre les causes, les conséquences et les mécanismes d'adaptation liés au chômage et au sous-emploi des jeunes, tout en examinant le rôle du leadership local, de l'éducation, de la formation, des programmes d'employabilité et des lacunes institutionnelles existantes dans la résolution de ces défis.

Principaux Résultats

1. Causes du Chômage et du Sous-emploi des Jeunes

Les résultats montrent que le chômage des jeunes au Cameroun est multidimensionnel :

- ❖ **Inadéquation entre la formation et les besoins du marché du travail** : De nombreux jeunes sortent des établissements scolaires de divers niveaux avec des connaissances théoriques qui ne correspondent pas aux exigences actuelles. Les employeurs signalent régulièrement des lacunes en compétences pratiques, techniques et comportementales.
- ❖ **Accès limité à l'information et aux opportunités** : Les processus de recrutement restent opaques, privilégiant les réseaux personnels au détriment du mérite. Les jeunes ruraux affrontent davantage d'obstacles informationnels et logistiques.
- ❖ **Faiblesse des systèmes de formation technique et professionnelle** : Malgré la création d'instituts et centres de formation par les ministères de l'Éducation secondaire, de l'Enseignement supérieur et de l'Emploi et de la Formation professionnelle, la plupart sont sous-dotés, disposent d'équipements obsolètes et entretiennent peu de partenariats avec l'industrie.
- ❖ **Manque d'orientation professionnelle et de conseil** : Les écoles et universités offrent rarement un accompagnement structuré pour guider les choix de carrière.
- ❖ **Pressions socioculturelles et difficultés économiques** : Les parents imposent parfois des choix professionnels, provoquant désintérêt ou abandon. Les stéréotypes de genre limitent aussi la participation des jeunes femmes à certains secteurs.
- ❖ **Faible capacité d'absorption des secteurs public et privé** : Le marché formel reste réduit, tandis que le secteur informel domine avec des emplois souvent précaires et faiblement rémunérés.

2. Conséquences du Chômage et du Sous-emploi des Jeunes



Le chômage des jeunes entraîne des impacts sociaux, économiques et émotionnels :

- ❖ **Dépendance économique** : Beaucoup de jeunes dépendent de leurs parents ou d'activités informelles pour survivre, retardant leur autonomie.
- ❖ **Frustration sociale et migration** : L'absence d'emploi alimente la frustration, les tensions sociales et l'intérêt croissant pour la migration.
- ❖ **Augmentation des emplois informels et précaires** : Les jeunes s'engagent dans des activités mal rémunérées ou exploitantes, sans contrat ni protection sociale.
- ❖ **Dégradation du bien-être mental et émotionnel** : Les jeunes expriment stress, frustration et découragement, particulièrement ceux ayant un niveau d'études élevé mais peu d'opportunités.
- ❖ **Perte de potentiel national** : L'économie perd des compétences, de la créativité et de l'innovation en raison de la sous-utilisation du potentiel des jeunes.

3. Mécanismes d'Adaptation

Malgré les obstacles, les jeunes font preuve de résilience et d'initiative :

- ❖ **Auto-emploi et entrepreneuriat** : Beaucoup créent de petites activités dans l'agriculture, la coiffure, le commerce ou les services numériques, mais restent limités par le manque de capital et de mentorat.
- ❖ **Diversification des compétences** : Certains jeunes poursuivent plusieurs métiers ou formations en ligne pour améliorer leur employabilité.
- ❖ **Soutien communautaire et confessionnel** : Églises, ONG et associations locales apportent un appui psychosocial, financier et technique.
- ❖ **Migration et apprentissage** : D'autres se déplacent localement ou à l'étranger, ou recherchent des apprentissages pour acquérir une expérience pratique.

4. Rôle du Leadership Local et des Institutions

Les autorités locales (communes et structures décentralisées) jouent un rôle croissant dans le cadre de la politique de décentralisation du Cameroun :

- ❖ **Les conseils municipaux** soutiennent les projets des jeunes à travers les programmes d'emploi locaux, les travaux publics et les micro-projets.
- ❖ **Les leaders religieux et communautaires** influencent les valeurs des jeunes et mobilisent des initiatives locales.
- ❖ **Les ONG et associations** complètent l'action gouvernementale en renforçant la formation et l'autonomisation, notamment des jeunes filles.

Cependant, la coordination entre l'État, le secteur privé et la société civile demeure faible, entraînant des duplications et un suivi limité.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Rationale of the study

Youth constitute one of the most dynamic segments of society, representing innovation, creativity, and the human capital necessary for sustainable development. However, across the globe, youth unemployment and underemployment remain pressing challenges. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2022), young people are nearly three times more likely to be unemployed compared to adults, and many who are employed face underemployment in the form of low-paying, insecure, or informal work. This situation is particularly acute in developing economies, where structural economic weaknesses, informality, and a mismatch between education systems and labor market demands persist (Mohan, 2019).

Unemployment refers to the situation where individuals willing and able to work cannot secure employment, while underemployment arises when individuals are engaged in work that does not fully utilize their skills, provides insufficient income, or fails to offer adequate working hours (Fields, 2011). Both conditions are complex, interrelated, and shaped by multiple factors, including limited job creation, gaps in labor market policies, restricted access to resources, and barriers to entrepreneurship.

The implications of youth unemployment and underemployment are far-reaching. At the individual level, they undermine self-reliance, limit career development, reduce lifetime earnings, and contribute to social exclusion. At the societal level, high levels of youth joblessness and precarious work increase poverty and inequality, weaken social cohesion, fuel migration, and in some cases, contribute to instability and unrest (World Bank, 2020; ILO, 2019). From a macroeconomic perspective, persistent youth unemployment represents a significant loss of productive potential, often referred to as a squandered “demographic dividend” (Bloom et al., 2016).

1.2 Theoretical Frameworks on Youth Unemployment and Underemployment

There are several frameworks which show that youth unemployment and underemployment are multifaceted, influenced by individual-level skills, labor market dynamics, and broader structural and system factors. To better understand how these factors interplay, it is important to discuss the theoretical frameworks, their core ideas and applications.

1.2.1 Human Capital Theory

Core Idea: Youth unemployment linked to inadequate education, skills mismatch, and lack of work experience.



Relevance: Many young people may have academic qualifications but lack market-relevant or technical/vocational skills. This theory highlights the need for investment in training, reskilling, and entrepreneurial education.

1.2.2 Labor Market Segmentation Theory

Core Idea: The labor market is divided into “primary” (stable, well-paying, secure jobs) and “secondary” (unstable, low-paying, precarious jobs) segments. Youth are often confined to the secondary sector.

Relevance: This theory explains why youth, even when employed, are often underemployed or stuck in informal jobs with limited mobility.

1.2.3 Job Search and Matching Theory

Core Idea: Unemployment is partly due to frictions in the labor market-young people may not find the right jobs quickly, or employers may struggle to find suitable candidates.

Relevance: This theory emphasizes the importance of career counseling, labor market information systems, and job-placement programs.

1.2.4 Keynesian Theory (Demand-Deficient Unemployment)

Core Idea: High youth unemployment may be due to insufficient aggregate demand in the economy rather than lack of skills.

Relevance: In economics with slow growth, even qualified youth face unemployment because there are simply not enough jobs.

1.2.5 Structuralist Theory

Core Idea: Structure issues in the economy (limited industrial base, weak private sector, overdependence on informal economy) constrains job creation.

Relevance: This theory holds particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa where economic structures limit youth employment opportunities.

1.2.6 Social Exclusion Theory

Core Idea: Youth unemployment is not only an economic issue but also linked to exclusion from networks, resources, and decision-making spaces.

Relevance: This theory explains why marginalized groups (rural youth, women, those from poor households) face greater unemployment risks.

1.2.7 Entrepreneurship and Innovation Theories

Core Idea: Unemployment can be reduced when youth are empowered to create their own jobs through entrepreneurship.



Relevance: These theories are important for self-employment strategies in context with weak formal job creation.

1.3 Context of Youth Unemployment and Underemployment in Cameroon

Cameroon, like many Sub-Saharan African countries, faces significant challenges in providing sustainable and decent employment opportunities for its rapidly growing youth population. The National Institute of Statistics (INS) and international agencies have repeatedly emphasized the pressing need to address both unemployment and underemployment among young people, particularly those aged 15–35, who represent the majority of the working-age population. Government and other stakeholders have defined necessary frameworks to address the issue of education and training of young people and their readiness for the job market and sustainable jobs and career pathways. The Ministries of Secondary, Higher Education and Employment and Vocational Training, provide overall oversight, learning, career development, and preparation of youth for job creation, self-employment opportunities, and job market dynamics. Understanding the critical role that technical and vocational training has on the labor market, government has also defined and created the environment to promote vocational training nationwide. The law No. 2018/010 of 11th July 2018 enacted by the President of the Republic, lays down the general legal framework as well as the basic guidelines for vocational training in Cameroon. The law creates a strong link with employment and sets out clear guidelines on how a successful vocational training could culminate in job creation and employment opportunities. The law promotes and develops:

- ✓ A vocational training system that enables individuals to achieve professional and personal fulfilment and to integrate the society particularly in the labor market, while making graduates fit and willing to show professional flexibility and remain in the labor market;
- ✓ A vocational training system that promotes corporate competitiveness;
- ✓ Equal training opportunity for all;
- ✓ Gender equality, as well as elimination of inequalities inhibiting persons with disabilities in vocational training;
- ✓ Permeability of training types and fields within vocational training, as well as between vocational training and other sectors of the educational system;
- ✓ Transparency in the vocational training system

Other government endeavors through policies and structural measures like establishing national institutions have equally been created and/or capacitated with the responsibility of facilitating job creation for Cameroonians, especially of young qualified people. Structures like the National Employment Fund (NEF), a special program in the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training responsible for the fight against unemployment, National Youth Council, *Agence Camerounaise de Promotion des Petites et Moyennes Entreprise* (ACPME), social and economic affairs departments or units of municipal councils, etc., are addressing the issue of unemployment



in the country. The private sector is not left out of the debate as well as civil society, organizations, and associations through sporadic programs to curb youth unemployment and underemployment.

A quick evaluation of efforts to strengthen the education systems to align with the labor market shows some improvements. Yet, there is still much to be done. UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) data, reported approximately 66% of girls and 73% of boys attend primary education in Cameroon. The secondary education completion rate is lower, at 35.6% of girls and 35.2% of boys. While primary education completion only confers basic literacy (read and write) skills, the lower secondary education completion rate even worsens the possibility of the youth population to be better prepared for the job market. While 31.8% of youth have completed general secondary education, the situation looks rather discouraging and disturbing when only 7.5% of youth in secondary education are attending Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), which is known worldwide to be responsible for training employable young people. Besides, some scholars think that if care is not taken, education can rather lead to unemployment (Friedman, 2025).

While official unemployment rates appear low, underemployment and job informality remain widespread, limiting the country's ability to harness its demographic dividend. Young people (15–35 years) make up more than 70% of the population, yet many struggle to secure stable and decent work (Profil Genre-Pays, 2020). Unemployment rates are significantly higher among youth than among adults, with urban centers experiencing the most acute challenges. Underemployment, on the other hand, is even more pervasive. Recent estimates show that while youth unemployment in Cameroon (ages 15-24) stood at approximately 6.44% in 2023, slightly down in 2022 (The Global Economy.com), the same year, 2023, literature revealed youth unemployment among ages 15-35 reaching an estimate 39.3%, suggesting that older youth are disproportionately affected. The sharp contrast between the relatively low official youth unemployment rate (6%) and the much higher estimate for the broader 15–35 age group (39%) reflects methodological differences. Many young people are “employed” but in precarious, low-paying, or informal activities. Over 90% of jobs in Cameroon fall within the informal sector which employed 77.6% of active labor force in 2010 (EESI-2, 2010) and 70.6 in 2014 (ECAM, 2024) and which typically offers low-income activities such as petty trade, taxi driving, motorbike riding, subsistence agriculture, or casual labor, which provide little job security, no protection, or prospects for upward mobility. In informal employment where youths work few hours than desired or jobs below one's skill level, was reported at a staggering 65% as of the National Institute for Statistics' (INS's) third Employment and Informal Sector Survey (EESI-3, 2022). Underemployment is a more serious challenge than unemployment. It affects young people disproportionately, particularly women, rural dwellers, and those with low education levels.

Among young graduates, approximately 23% are unable to secure formal employment after completing their studies (EESI-3, 2022).



Table 1 Summary table of key youth employment and unemployment indicators in Cameroon (Sources: ILO, World Bank, and NIS)

Indicator	Estimate/rate	Notes
Youth unemployment (15-24)	Approx. 6.2% (2024 ILO/World Bank)	Down from approx. 6.6% in 2023
Youth unemployment (15-35)	Approx. 39.3% (2023)	Higher likely in older youth
Overall national unemployment (all ages)	3.6% (2024)	Lower than youth rates
Informal sector	>90% of jobs	Predominant job type
Underemployment (entire workforce)	Approx. 65% (2021)	Based on EESI-3 survey
Graduate unemployment	Approx. 23% (2022)	Among recent graduates

Youth unemployment and underemployment in Cameroon are linked to multidimensional issues rooted in:

- **Structural Constraints:** Limited industrialization and formal job creation means the economy cannot absorb the annual influx of young job seekers.
- **Skills mismatch:** graduates often lack market-relevant skills, while technical and vocational pathways remain underdeveloped.
- **Demographic Pressures:** Over 70% of Cameroon's population is under 35 (INS, 2020). This demographic bulge creates immense pressure on the labor market, education, and social systems.
- **Informal Economy Reliance:** The informal sector employs the majority of youth, but jobs are often precarious, low-paying, and lack social protections.
- **Regional Disparities and Conflict:** Youth in conflict-affected regions (Northwest, Southwest, and Far North) face even higher risks of unemployment and informal work due to insecurity and displacement.
- **Policy and Institutional Gaps:** While the government has implemented youth-targeted employment programs (e.g., vocational training, entrepreneurship financing), impact



remains limited by weak follow-up, corruption risks, and insufficient private sector engagement.

Consequences:

- Economic: Wasted human capital, low productivity, and reduced competitiveness.
- Social: Frustration, irregular migration, and potential recruitment into crime or extremist groups.
- Political: Rising demands for reform and risk of instability if youth aspirations remain unmet

In spite of these statistics, the general perceptions of different stakeholders in Cameroon put a higher unemployment and underemployment especially among young people.

Several structural factors contribute to this situation. The economy is dominated by informal and low-productivity sectors, while job creation in the formal sector remains limited. The education system produces graduates whose skills often do not align with labor market needs, leading to a mismatch between qualifications and available opportunities (Megan, 2007). Additionally, limited access to finance, weak entrepreneurial ecosystems, and inadequate policy implementation hinder the ability of young people to engage in productive self-employment. Regional disparities—particularly between urban and rural areas, and between the anglophone and francophone regions—further exacerbate youth employment challenges.

The consequences are visible in rising poverty, increased rural-to-urban migration, and frustration among educated youth, some of which has fueled social discontent. For Cameroon to harness its demographic dividend, addressing youth unemployment and underemployment is not only an economic necessity but also a social and political imperative.

1.4 Problem Statement

Low quality of education, lack of training and development of employable skills by adolescents and youth for the job market are major issues in Cameroon. The products of the national educational systems (high school, university, and vocation/professional systems) do not exactly respond to the needs and demands of today job and labor market. Although these challenges might explain why young people are unemployed today, the mismatch between the educational system (counseling/orientation, schooling, training, and skills building) and achieving a sustainable and financially attractive employment merits a detailed analysis in order to strengthen existing efforts by governments and other stakeholders to improve youth unemployment and underemployment.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

This study will seek to explore the patterns, causes, and consequences of youth unemployment and underemployment, with the aim of providing actionable evidence for policymakers, practitioners,



and program managers in Cameroon. By drawing on relevant theoretical frameworks—such as human capital theory, labor market segmentation theory, and the entrepreneurship and innovation theories—it situates the challenges of youth employment within broader socio-economic contexts. At the same time, the study will emphasize the importance of practical interventions, including skills development, entrepreneurship promotion, access to finance, inclusive labor market reforms, and youth livelihood right and choices.

In doing so, this research aspires to generate insights that not only enrich scholarly discourse but also inform national strategies and programs like Divine Treasures Network (DTN) designed to empower Cameroonian youth, enhance their livelihoods, and enable them to contribute meaningfully to national development.

The main objective of the study is to explore and document information needed for improved employment opportunities for youth in Cameroon.

Specifically, the study will:

- Describe the scope of the educational system (orientation, guidance, counseling, career development pathways for students, General Secondary Education, Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Employable Skill Building), the current gaps in achieving education and employment.
- Analyze the preferences of parents and youth regarding career choices and opportunities, job opportunities and accessibility to qualified youth by job creators and employers, and the role of stakeholders who guide the youth's decision for future employment.

Key Research Questions

- What are the reasons for unemployment and underemployment of youth who have had a least a secondary and technical/vocational education/training?
- What policies and programs do exist to support adolescents and youth gain quality and sustainable jobs after training?
- Are there any incentives from the public or private employers that target young people to easily integrate the job or work market?
- Are there any efforts by local authorities like the municipal councils and regional governments to encourage the employment of young people following the decentralization policy?
- What are the government, private, associations, civil society organization, non-governmental organization structures that promote employment of young people and how?



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 About Divine Treasures Network (DTN)

Divine Treasures Network (DTN) is an association created to curb youth unemployment and underemployment in Cameroon with the view to attain the targets of Cameroon's 2035 Vision. DTN's vision, mission, and approaches are guided by scriptural lesson from 1 Peter 4:10 and seeks to promote responsible adolescents, youth empowerment and employability through early detection of their talents and career interests. The association's objectives focus on youth transformational change based on four pillars, which are Counseling, Education, Training, and Empowerment. DTN will

- i. Increase awareness by youth of their natural talents and potential.
- ii. Increase advocacy for policymakers to promote quality education and training of youth for transformation change in mindset with respect to career choices and job creation.
- iii. Increase advocacy for local government and Councils to provide increased material, technical and financial support to youth so that they can realize their full potential.
- iv. Increase advocacy for government to adopt increased participation of youth in leadership roles at all levels.

DTN is an apolitical, charitable, humanitarian, and nonprofit making association, authorized by Cameroon law with its head office in Yaoundé (DTN 2025). Empowering the ever-increasing population of today's youth through exploring and exposing natural talents and skills followed by building human capital for future development challenges has become imperative in nearly all parts of the world. In Cameroon, unemployment and underemployment have been identified as major challenges facing, especially the young population, with important socio-economic effects which affect the growth and development of the country.

This study was designed as a baseline assessment to initiate Divine Treasures Network's program and strategy aimed at contributing to curb youth unemployment and underemployment in Cameroon.

2.2 Study Design

This baseline study is an Operational Research, chosen to assess existing determinants and factors which can be identified and addressed through interventions to achieve a positive change. The baseline study sets the benchmarks for programming to assess the impact of an intervention, demonstrate and document positive changes as planned.

In this study the research team employed a qualitative exploratory research design to understand the causes and consequences of youth unemployment and underemployment, and coping strategies of unemployed and underemployed youth in Cameroon. The choice of a qualitative design was



guided by the need to capture in-depth perceptions, lived experiences, and diverse perspectives of young graduates and key stakeholders, which are not easily quantifiable through surveys.

The design allows for the collection of rich, contextualized insights from young people directly experiencing employment challenges and key stakeholders shaping youth development and employment policies.

The study combined Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with youth and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with institutional stakeholders, complemented by a desk review of existing literature and policy documents on the national education system of Cameroon. The multi-source design ensured a balance exploration of both individual experiences and systematic perspectives.

2.3 Sampling Strategy

A purposeful sampling approach was employed to select study sites and participants. Youth participants were selected to reflect diversity in gender, age (18-30 years), and educational background (currently pursuing or having completed a university degree or professional diploma or having completed high school). This ensured that the voices of those transitioning into the labor market were captured.

For KIIs, stakeholders were strategically chosen to represent the range of actors engaged directly or indirectly in youth employment and wellbeing, including government ministries, private sector employers, businesses, civil society, religious organizations, parents/caregivers of youths, international or local development agencies.

The sampling strategy was a mix of insider perspectives from youth and institutional insights from decision-makers and influencers.

2.4 Study Population and Location

The baseline study population consisted of two main groups:

1. Youth Participants: Between 120 - 200 boys and girls age 18-30, participated in 15 Focus Group Discussion (FGD) groups of 6-10 group members, who are either currently enrolled in higher education/professional programs or had completed such programs and either 'employed' or unemployed.
2. Key Informants: Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with 30 individual representatives from government institutions, private sector business or enterprises, employers, employers' association, civil society organization, religious institutions, parents/caregivers of youths and international/local agencies working on youth development,



The study was conducted in three cities of Cameroon deliberately chosen as the country's main economic hubs and representing of the three of the four major cultural and ethnic groups that make up Cameroon rich and diverse ecosystem that were earmarked for the study. These cities include Douala, Garoua, and Yaoundé. The choice of these sites will ensure that findings will reflect not only economic realities but the social and cultural diversity of Cameroon. Both FGDs and KIIs were conducted evenly in the three cities, namely 5 FGDs and 10 KIIs in each of the cities.

Desk review of literature, reports, policy documents, and secondary data of recent results 2022-2025 General Certificate Examinations (GCE), 2024 Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle (BEPC), and 2024 Baccalaureate (BAC) from examination Boards. The websites of Ministries of Secondary, Higher Education, Employment and Vocational Training will be reviewed.

2.5 Data Collection Approaches

2.5.1 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Five (5) FGDs in each of the three(3) cities (15 FGDs of 106 participants), on the understanding that each FGD consist of 6-10 participants per group. Discussions were structured around the study's core themes, namely causes, consequences, and coping strategies of unemployment and underemployment. The FGDs provided a space for collective reflection, peer-to-peer validation of experiences, and gender-sensitive exploration of issues.

2.5.2 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

KIIs of 30 key resources persons from state, private sector, civil society, local non-governmental organization, vocational training centers, youth organizations/associations, confessional organizations, community leaders, and parents were conducted. The interviews were carried out in the same sites (10 interviews per site).

2.5.3 Facilitation and Interview Approaches

DTN engaged experienced and trained facilitators and interviewers from partner civil society organizations/associations through a partnership approach. Four facilitators were identified from each of the organization and were responsible for collecting the data in each city (2 for FGDs and 2 for KIIs). The seven-day trainings of the facilitators took place in each site of data collection and facilitated by the research team from DTN. The data collection facilitators were drilled on understanding and implementing the FGDs and KIIs exercises using the FGD guides and KIIs semi-structured questionnaires, as well as addressing the techniques of selecting/booking appointments for the discussions and the interviews.

FGDs were moderated in a participatory manner, encouraging contributions from all participants while managing group dynamics. KIIs on the other hand, were conducted by one-on-one and face-to-face, ensuring confidentiality and depth in responses.



2.5.4 Desk Review

A desk review of existing national policies and implementation of guardian counseling, labor market studies, scholarly articles, statistics of performance of students at final year certificate examinations, and institutional reports on youth employment in Cameroon was carried out. This provided contextual grounding and helped triangulate findings from the primary sources.

2.6 Data Analysis Approach

Cameroon's Education Systems was extensively studied by consulting information available at the Ministry of Secondary Education, Ministry of Higher Education, and Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training. Data were reviewed from the General Certificate Examination (GCE) board and the office de Baccalaureate, to appreciate the quality of secondary education through end-of-year certification results of students.

Primary qualitative data in transcriptions (FGDs and KIIs) from the partners were translated using Google translate from French to English. Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer (ChatGPT), an QI4OR (Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Operational Research) was utilized to analyzed all data using thematic approach. Transcripts and detailed notes and audio recordings from FGDs and KIIs were systematically coded, with codes grouped into broader themes corresponding to the study objectives and research questions.

- Coding: Simple and axial coding was carried on. The aim of coding was to identify recurrent patterns in causes, consequences, and coping mechanisms.
- Themes and sub-themes were used and redefined with the simple coded and axial codes to establish the hierarchical structure, which can be visible using tables and mind maps,
- Illustrated interconnections between root causes, consequences, and coping strategies were developed. Thematic classifications were equally carried out from data on labor market, youth employment policies, and based on the DTN four pillars of Youth Counseling, Education, Training, and Empowering.
- Triangulation: Findings from FGDs, KIIs, and the desk reviews were cross-compared to validate results and strengthen reliability.

2.7 Limitations of the Study

- Qualitative Scope: As a qualitative baseline, finding is not statistically generalizable but provide deep context insights.
- Geographical Focus: While the study covered major cities representing Cameroon's cultural and economic diversity, rural dynamics may not be fully captured.
- Self-Reporting Bias: Youth participation may not have moderated their responses due to group dynamics or social desirability.



- Time and Resources: The study was conducted within limited time and resources, which may have restricted the breadth of the study.



3. FINDINGS OF THE BASELINE STUDY

3.1 Introduction

Desk review was done from May through September while qualitative data was available from Yaoundé (August-September); from Douala and Garoua (September-October). Information was not available from Bamenda as planned as a result of security concerns.

The Facilitators and Interviewers were chosen from two organizations, namely No Limit for Women Project (NOLFOWOP), which was responsible for data collection in Garoua and Yaoundé; and Réseau National des Associations des Tantines (RENATA), conducted data collection in Douala.

NOLFOWOP is a community-based initiative in Cameroon focused on advancing the health, autonomy, and well-being of women. NOLFOWOP is explicitly highlighted by the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) for efforts to combat maternal mortality in Cameroon. NOLFOWOP activities include outreach sensitization, animation, HIV screening, prevention, treatment of opportunistic infections, pre-therapeutic follow-up, support for people living with HIV, and assistance to orphans and vulnerable children.

RENATA stands for Réseau National des Associations de Tantines (National Network of Aunties' Associations). It is a grassroots network created in 2005 that brings together young mothers, commonly referred to as "Tantines". RENATA works to: i) Support young mothers who often face stigma, school dropout, and economic exclusion, ii) Promote sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) among adolescents and young people; iii) Prevent early pregnancies, HIV/AIDS, and gender-based violence through peer education; iv) Provide psychosocial, health, and economic empowerment support to teenage mothers and their children. RENATA has become a leading voice in Cameroon on issues affecting adolescent girls and young women, especially those marginalized by early motherhood. It collaborates with government institutions, NGOs, and international partners in advocacy, training, and community outreach.

The following table summarizes the breakdown of FGDs and KIIs by each partner and sites:



Table 2 Summary of the number of FGDs and KIIs achieved by site and partner

Study Site	Data Collectors	FGD (number)			KIIs (number)	Date of Data of Collection
		Females	Males	Total		
Yaoundé	NOLFOWOP-Yde	32	6	38	10	1 st August – 21 st September
Douala	RENATA	13	20	33	10	4 th September – 10 th October
Garoua	NOLFOWOP-Gar	16	20	35	10	1 st Septembre – 8 th October
	Total	61	46	106	30	

A total of ten (10) interviews conducted in each of the three cities with different representatives giving a total of thirty (30) interviews using semi-structured guides. These interviews captured expert perspectives on similar themes in the FGDs. The information sought out also included perspectives on the labor market dynamics, policies, and programs addressing youth employment, as well as gaps and challenges faced by youth and employers to fight unemployment and underemployment. The findings of this baseline study are presented under the objectives of the study by responding to the key research questions and presented in the following sections:

3.2 Describe the scope of the educational system (orientation/counseling, General Secondary Education, Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Employable Skill Building), the current gaps in achieving education and employment.

To achieve the above study objective, we sought to answer the following research questions:

“What policies and programs do exist to support adolescents and youth gain quality, counseling, education and training, and sustainable jobs after training?”

This objective and research question were investigated through desk review of literature and other data sources mentioned in the data analysis section. The results were further subdivided under the following headings:

- A. Summary of post-primary educational system (structure, examination & certification).
- B. Performance of the secondary systems measured by percentage pass of final certificate examination.
- C. Policy review of Guidance and Education Counseling, and the implementation of the policy, and current gaps.



3.2.1 Summary of Post-Primary (Secondary and Higher) Education System

Cameroon's educational system is unique in Africa as it operates under a dual structure inherited from its colonial history-the Anglophone (British-inspired) and Francophone (French-inspired) subsystems. Both are officially recognized and integrated into national education policy, they differ in curriculum structure, language of instruction, and certification.

(i) Secondary Education

Post-primary education begins with secondary general and technical & vocational education, which is divided into two cycles:

- First Cycle (lower secondary): Last five years in the Anglophone system and four years in the Francophone system. Youth prepare for the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary Level or *Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle (BEPC)*. Youths of the Anglophone systems who pursue the technical & vocational education spend the same five years and prepare for the GCE TVEE Intermediate Level, while students of the Francophone system who pursue technical and professional or vocational specialty sit in for the *Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle (CAP) Industriel et Science Technologie*, which are recognized as a vocational certificate of proficiency.
- Second Cycle (upper secondary): Lasts two years in the Anglophone system and three years in the Francophone system. Youth prepare for the GCE Advanced Level and TVEE Advance Level (Anglophone system) or the *Baccalaureat(BAC) l'enseignement generale or BAC Technique or BAC Professionnel* (Francophone system).

Technical and Vocation/Professional schools focus on developing practical skills in fields such as mechanics, commerce, agriculture, home economics, marketing plumbing, hospitality, etc., general education prepares youth for higher education.

(ii) Higher Education and Professional Training

Post-secondary opportunities are the primary responsibility of the Ministry of Higher Education. However, there are some additional ministries which either owned some higher institutions or cost manager/provide technical oversight to the training. Examples include Ministry of Public Health for some nursing and paramedical courses, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for higher institution of agriculture and agric-sciences, Ministry of Sport and Physical Education for the higher school of sport and physical education, etc. The post-secondary offered through:

- Universities: Cameroon currently has eight (8) state universities and several privately-owned institutes of higher learning (which operate under supervision of the state universities) with rank of universities offering different programs in arts, sciences, engineering, health, and social sciences.



- Professional Institutions: Specialized institutions (e.g., teacher training colleges, nursing schools, agriculture colleges, engineering schools) provide professional diplomas and certificate.
- Vocational and Technical Training Centers: These institutions, most of which are privately owned institutions, focus on developing employable skills in trades and crafts, often in partnership with local industries.

Challenges

While Cameroon’s post-secondary education system is extensive, it faces several challenges:

- Higher enrollment but weak labor-market align: Many graduates lack practical skills demanded by employers.
- Infrastructure gaps: Overcrowded classrooms, insufficient laboratories, and lack of modern equipment are common.
- Post-secondary education system, especially the state universities and higher institutions, which designed to serve an independent Cameroon and since then there have not been a significant reform. Graduates of some programs from the state universities and higher institutions are prepared only for the civil service.
- Transition bottlenecks: A large number of students graduate from secondary, university, higher learning institutes, and professional programs each year without adequate pathways to employment, limited opportunity to have access to internship and apprenticeship training opportunity with potential employers.
- Weak Guidance and Counseling Systems: Few schools and universities have professional career counselors.

3.2.2 Performance of the secondary systems measured by percentage pass of final certificate examination.

In 2025, 213,360 youths registered, and 182, 886 finally sat for the four certificate examinations of the GCE Board of the Ministry of Secondary Education, as shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3 Summary statistics of the four GCE Board certificate examinations of the Ministry of Secondary Education in 2025 (Source: GCE Board)

Examination level	Candidate sat	Number pass	Pass rate
GCE Ordinary Level	87,219	68,411	78.56%
GCE Advanced Level	68,644	54,419	79.38%
TVEE Intermediate Level	16,974	8,829	52.03%
TVEE Advanced Level	10,049	7,153	71.19%
Total	182,886	138,812	75.46%



Only 14.8% of candidates who sat for all GCE board examinations in 2025 were candidates who entered for the Technical & Vocational Education. This probably indicated lack of interest for technical and vocational training by youth and/or their parents, and the society; and hence fewer potential options for labor market and employment for youth.

Table 4 Performance of Secondary Education System: Pass Rates of Final Certificate Exams in Cameroon (recent years) (Source: GCE Board)

Year	GCE Ordinary level	TVEE Intermediate level	GCE Advanced level	TVEE Advanced level
2025	75.46%	52.03%	78.56%	71.19%
2024	62.15%	49.37%	61.24%	62.39%
2023	67.16%	68.46%	Not Available	72.29%
2022	67.01	Not Available	69.47%	Not Available

The Technical & Vocational Education and Training (TVEE) levels (Intermediate and Advanced) show lower pass rates compared to the General Education (Ordinary and Advanced levels) in many years, and more volatility, though there was improving trend for TVEE from 2024 to 2025 for both Intermediate and Advance.

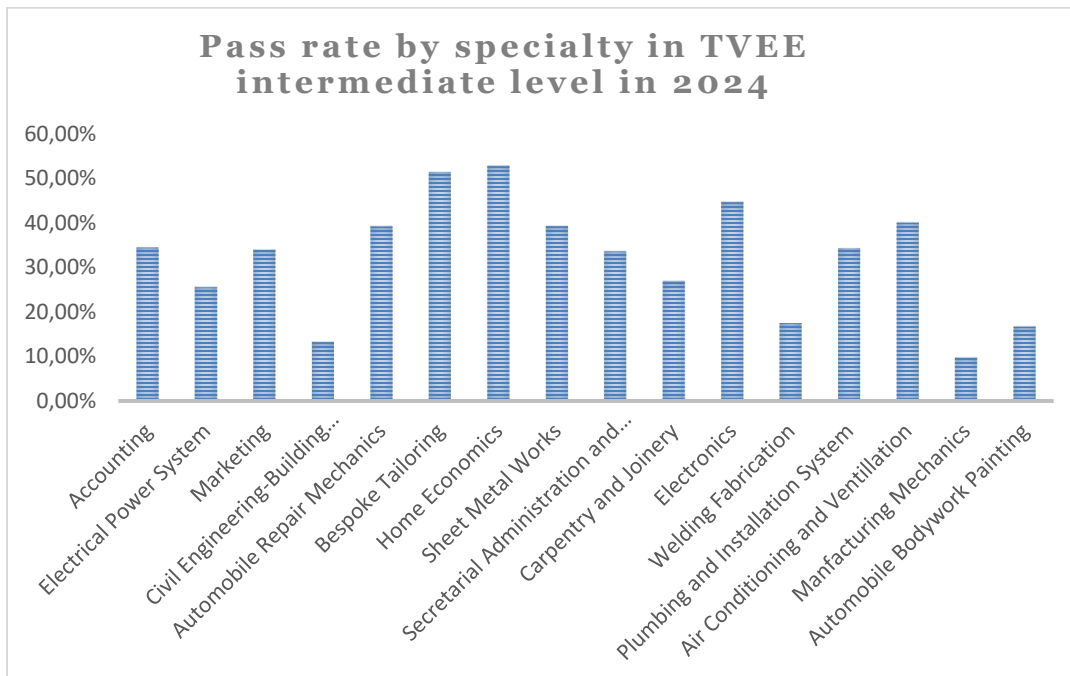


Figure 1 Performance of Students in different specialty in the 2024 TVEE Intermediate Level certification examinations.



In 2024 (see figure 1), for example, Home Economics (52.72%) and Bespoke Tailoring (51.33%) recorded relatively higher success, probably reflecting strengths in applied, skill-based trades with accessible practical training.

Accounting (34.42%), Secretarial Administration (33.53%). Plumbing (34.19%), Civil Engineer-Building Construction (13.32%) had very poor outcomes, while Manufacturing Mechanics (9.68%) had the lowest performance.

These weak results point to serious gaps in teaching quality, training infrastructure, and student preparedness in technical field that require modern equipment.

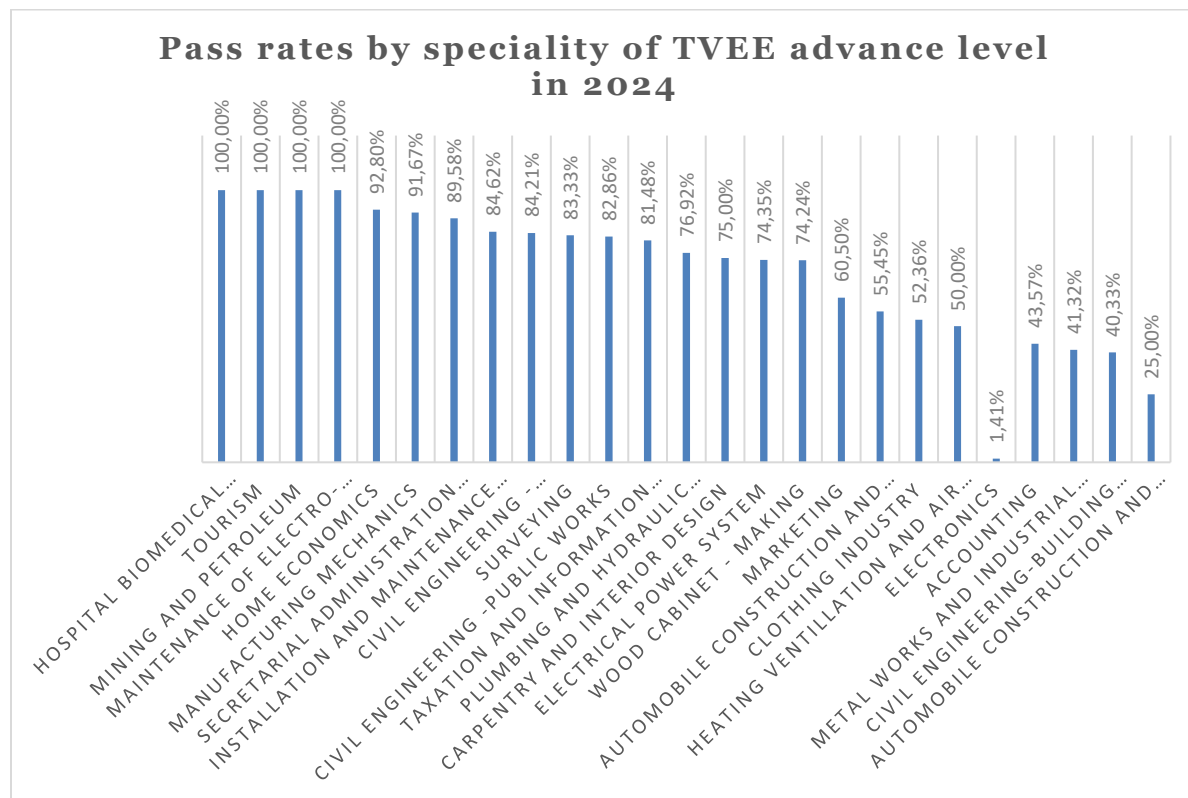


Figure 2 Performance of Students in different specialty in the 2024 TVEE A Level Advanced Level certification examinations

The review shows that currently technical and vocational training in Cameroon (Figure 1 & 2) offers training in specialties that easily lead to job creation.

At the level of TVEE Advanced level, Home Economic, Secretarial Administration, Civil Engineering-Draftsmanship, Electronic Systems, Maintenance, and Surveying had the best outcome (Figure 2).



At the advanced level, students are more mature and receive specialized training, are better resourced. This could lead to higher pass rates, especially in professional fields aligned with labor-market (e.g., civil engineering, surveying, tourism).

Table 5 Summary statistics of the four BAC Board certificate examinations of the Ministry of Secondary Education in 2025 and 2024 (Office de Baccalaureate)

Examination Level	Candidates Registered	Candidates Sat	Pass Rate
BEPC (2024)	53,850	53,137	60.86%
CAP Industriel (2025)	NA	NA	86.88%
CAP Science et Technologie (2025)	NA	NA	68.10%
BAC (General Education (2024)	132,920	132,920	37.2%
BAC Technique (2024)	4,226	4,222	62.06%
BAC Professionnel (2024)	10,193	10,059	83,37
Total	201,189	200,333	66.41%

The *Brevet d'Études du Premier Cycle (BEPC)* pass rate has shown a decline, dropping from 73.3% in 2022 to 60.86% in 2025, while the pass rate for *Baccalaureat (BAC) de l'enseignement general* was significantly decreased from 75% in 2022 to 37.2% in 2024.

Unlike the technical and vocational education for anglophone systems, the *CAP Industriel* and *Science et Technologie*, *BAC Professionnel* examination comparatively had better performance (with the exception of *BAC Industriel*). However, the number of students in the anglophone and francophone subsystems, offering these technical and vocational certificate examinations, had lower attendance compared with general education. These specialized certificates which offer opportunities for “non-white collar” fields such Mechanical Engineer, Electrical & Electronics, Civil Engineer-Construction, Accounting, Management, Computer Science and IT, Plumbing, Sanitation, Carpentry & Woodwork, Hospitality, Tourism, Tailoring/Textile, etc., which are highly needed in the labor market, are currently accessed by 7.12%.

3.2.3 Policy review of Guidance and Educational Counseling, and the implementation of the policy, and current gaps.

- **There is a Guidance & Counseling Unit in the Ministry of Secondary Education:** This unit is found in the central administration under the Department of Guidance, Counseling, School Life and Assistance. This unit is responsible for preparing informational materials on study opportunities counseling & guiding students based on their potentials, informing students and



parents about study paths and job market outlets; and doing research in guidance and psychometrics.

- **Decree/Laws:**
 - Law No. 98/004 (on education) has a section (29) stating that “educational counseling and psychology activities shall be carried out during the child’s period of schooling at all levels of education in Cameroon.” This gives legal backing for counseling services from early levels through to higher secondary and university.
 - There is also a governmental structure through decree of 5 December 2000, which lays down rules and regulations for civil servants in national education, including some guidance and counseling tasks.
- **The National Youth Policy:** The National Youth Policy (Politique Nationale de la Jeunesse) also touches on youth wellbeing, mental health, employability, training, participation, etc. it doesn’t always lay out detailed mechanisms for counseling in schools, but it frames youth development broadly to include wellbeing, access to services, participation and inclusion.
- **Cameroon Vocational and School Orientation Centers (*Centres d’information et d’orientation professionnelle-CIOP*):** Cameroon has created centers found in the regions. The mission is to provide information and vocational guidance/counseling of youth, students, dropouts, parents, etc. These centers are meant to offer services free of charge, provide documentation, pass psychometric tests, organize job fairs, etc.
- **Policy Tools & Strategic Documents:** Education Sector Strategy Papers (ESP) and Government development plans include as objective to strengthen educational counseling, reduce school wastage, monitor vulnerable learners, health and psychological support in school.

How is this policy Implemented:

- **Guidance Counsellors (GCs) in School:** Secondary schools have GCs. They are supposed to guide students about study opportunities, career options, help with issues affecting academic progress. The school guidance counseling service also includes psychosocial support, assistance with personal/social issues, as well as academic guidance. Social Workers trained by the Ministry of Social Services are supposed to play this role.
- **National Day for Guidance & Counseling:** The government marks a day each year in schools. In 2022, there was a push to digitalized counseling services: a Counseling Helpline was set up so students can access guidance and psycho-pedagogic help by phone. This is intended to help students in schools that lack a full-time counsellor.
- **Vocational & Career Guidance via CIOP:** CIOP centers in the region provide vocational guidance.
- **Materials & Awareness:** Informative materials for students and parents are produced, regarding studying fields, job market, etc. School inspectors and Guidance Counselling units are supposed to disseminate these. Awareness raising (National Day, school events)



are used to highlight role of guidance counseling, to sensitize school staff, parents, and students.

What Seems to be Working and What Challenges or Gaps in Guidance Counselling in School?

From literature and reports reviewed, there are both successes, challenges and gaps:

- The legal framework exists and mandates guidance counseling across educational levels.
- Institutional structures (Guidance Counseling Unit, CIOPs) are in place.
- Innovations like digital counseling helplines are emerging leading increase access.
- Vocational guidance is now more visible via dedicated centers and career information services,

Challenges/Implementation Gaps.

- Insufficient staff: Many schools lack full-time guidance counsellors. In many cases one counsellor has huge responsibility, or students are served by teachers who are not trained.
- Neglect/low priority: Some studies indicate that guidance and counseling is frequently neglected in practice, considered less essential relative to teaching and administration. In many schools, counseling is limited to occasional talks rather than structured, continuous support. Schools may function “normally” without strong counseling services.
- Resource constraints: Limited funding, lack of materials, limited capacity for psychometric testing, etc.
- Uneven implementation: Rural vs urban disparity, some regions do not have CIOP centers, etc. Helplines are not found in some schools, especial the private schools, and schools outside the big cities.
- Awareness & usage: Even where counseling services exist, students or parents may not make use of them, either through lack of awareness, stigma, or perception that they are not helpful.
- Quality & training: Counseling are sometimes under-trained; many do not receive ongoing training. Psychometric tools may be limited.
- Mismatch with Market Needs: Counseling programs focus more on academic progression than on employability, entrepreneurship, and alternative career pathways.

3.3 Analyze the preferences of parents and youth regarding career choices and opportunities, job opportunities and accessibility to qualified youth by job creators and employers, and the role of stakeholders who guide the youth’s decision for future employment.

Information from FGDs and KIIs from Douala, Garoua, and Yaoundé were successfully analyzed into two (2) thematic core areas namely:



- Summary of findings of FGDs and KIIs.
- Main themes analysis (Youth Counseling, Education, Training, Employability, Local Leadership, Causes, Consequences, and Coping mechanisms of youth unemployment and underemployment).

Insights from both youth participations and key informants were integrated in the two dimensions to provide a balance view and triangulation of facts and findings, as well as to provide responses to the following research questions:

- *Are there any incentives from the public or private employers that target young people to easily integrate the job or work market?*
- *Are there any efforts by local authorities like the councils and regional governments to encourage the employment of young people following the decentralization policy?*
- *What are the government, private, associations, civil society organization, non-governmental organization structures that promote employment of young people and how?*

3.3.1 Summary of findings of FGDs and KIIs.

Table 6 showing the responses of youth on unemployment and underemployment in Garoua, Douala, and Yaoundé (Source: 15 FGDs of youth 18-30 years)

Theme	Common Patterns Across All Cities	Regional / Gender Differences	Illustrative Verbatim Quotes
1. Demographics / Youth Profile	Participants mostly 18–30 yrs; secondary and university graduates; mixture of unemployed, students, artisans, and informal traders.	Garoua: more agro-pastoral youth; Yaoundé/Douala: more educated and urban. Females more likely to be job-seekers or self-employed in trade and fashion.	<p>“We are educated but idle.” (Yaoundé Male)</p> <p>“I studied but I’m still selling puff-puff to eat.” (Garoua Female)</p>
2. Current Employment Situation	Informal economy is the main absorber of youth; formal jobs extremely limited. Many rely on “hustles,” volunteering, or unpaid internships.	Douala: larger variety of informal services; Yaoundé: administrative volunteering; Garoua: agriculture and small trade.	<p>“Today you sell phones, tomorrow you push truck — that’s our reality.” (Douala Male)</p> <p>“We work without salary just to keep experience.” (Yaoundé Graduate)</p>
3. Sector Absorption (Formal vs Informal)	Informal sector seen as open but insecure; formal jobs described as politicized, nepotistic, or corrupt.	Garoua youth feel excluded from formal structures; Douala youth cite exploitation in private companies;	“Formal jobs are for those with someone behind them.” (Garoua Male)



		women often confined to informal.	<i>“Informal work feeds us faster than office work.”</i> (Douala Female)
4. Education & Skills Relevance	Consensus that education is theoretical and poorly aligned with market needs. Technical, digital, and entrepreneurial skills largely missing.	Garoua and Douala youths value technical/vocational training more; Yaoundé students stress mentorship gaps.	<i>“We study books, not work.”</i> (Yaoundé Male) <i>“Our schools have no tools; we learn with imagination.”</i> (Garoua Student)
5. Career Aspirations / Idols	Youth aspire to entrepreneurship, financial independence, and respect. Many admire self-made businesspeople and local success stories.	Females in all regions highlight economic autonomy and leadership; males more inclined to agro-business and logistics.	<i>“I want to build something of my own, even small.”</i> (Douala Male) <i>“We admire women who made it by their hands.”</i> (Yaoundé Female)
6. Barriers to Employment	Corruption, nepotism, lack of capital, and absence of mentorship dominate. Gender bias and harassment affect women.	Garoua: lack of infrastructure and funding; Douala: exploitation and bribes; Yaoundé: political patronage.	<i>“They ask for experience we don’t have.”</i> (Yaoundé Male) <i>“Even to rent a kiosk, you must pay bribe.”</i> (Douala Male) <i>“They prefer men for serious jobs.”</i> (Garoua Female)
7. Institutional Awareness & Support	Low awareness and poor trust in public programs (NEF, FNE, NYC). NGOs and church groups seen as more accessible.	Garoua participants least informed; Yaoundé aware but skeptical; Douala mentions NGOs more.	<i>“We hear about FNE (NEF) on TV but never see them.”</i> (Garoua Male) <i>“Only associations help us, not the state.”</i> (Douala Female)
8. Suggestions / Recommendations	All request vocational and entrepreneurial support, access to finance, transparency in recruitment, and reform of education toward practical skills.	Women emphasize micro-credit and mentorship; northern youth stress agricultural investment; urban youth call for linkage between schools and employers.	<i>“Teach us how to work, not just to read.”</i> (Yaoundé Student) <i>“Give youth small loans and let us prove ourselves.”</i>



			<p>(Garoua Male)</p> <p><i>“Pay interns — experience without pay is exploitation.”</i> (Douala Student)</p>
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The demographic profile of the 15 FGDs carried out in Garoua, Douala and Yaoundé revealed participants in Garoua appeared to have been from a sub-urban-informal patterns; while those from Douala showed an urban pattern, competitive, and market-driven; and Yaoundé more administrative pattern. Participants were young with an average age of 24 years (18-30 years), females and males, and either schooling or university/professional graduates, all in keeping with the sampling objectives of the study.

Across all sites, youth felt that schooling does not fully prepare them for real employment. When compared with the career aspirations, youth reported diverse careers such as accounting, sewing, fashion design, agriculture, engineering, construction, human resources, medicine, and teaching, which often contrasted with career paths which are often influenced by family-based mentors, in the absence of continuous professional guidance and counseling usually available in schools or training centers. *“I wanted to be a chartered accountant, but it didn’t work out. Now I’m considering agriculture,”* said by Olive, a participant from Douala, showing a lack of guidance.

The vast majority of the youth demanded more emphasis on technical and entrepreneurship curricula for schools and university education to better prepare students for the job market. One of the participants said, *“Even when you have a bachelor’s degree, you may end up unemployed; school didn’t prepare us for real work.”* (Rebecca, FGD participant from Douala). Most participants expressed the lack of jobs and employment opportunities and despite the expressed frustration, they expressed a strong drive for autonomy and dignity through entrepreneurship.

Youth were asked to conduct a self-evaluation of their capabilities for seek for employment, they identified important barriers which include lack of employable soft skills, financial constraints, limited access to professional networks, bureaucratic procedures for entrepreneurship, and saturated labor markets.

The study was also interested in state-owned institutions and programs, as well as decentralized structures of governance, which may offer opportunities for youth employability (National Employment Fund, Small and Medium-sized Entreprises Promotion Agency (ACPME), local councils and municipalities, etc.), the majority of youth reported a lack of awareness of such structures and therefore missing-out on potential information that could lead to job creation or employment.

When asked to suggest or give useful recommendations to improve the unemployment and underemployment situation, they called for transparency in the management of the potentials of



the youth, mentoring and support including in schools and after schools, render viable the vocational training centers, and increase youth-accessible funding mechanisms and promote entrepreneurship.



Table 7 showing a comprehensive breakdown about Youth Employment & Employability by key informants in Garoua, Douala, and Yaoundé (Source: KIIs DTN baseline study)

Type of Informant	Name / Organization	Key Observations on Youth Employment	How They Support Youth	Challenges / Gaps	Programs / Initiatives	Cultural / Societal Influence
TVET / Vocational Training	Marie Dominique Vocational Training Center, Yaoundé	Young people often lack practical skills; focus on hospitality and catering	Practical skills training (25 hours/week) International standards, internships	Limited subsidies; retraining trainers; low enrollment	Short-term vocational programs; workshops with private partners	Low family awareness of vocational training value; gender focus (girls)
TVET	Garoua Health Care Training Institute	Need for quality health personnel; gap between curricula and actual field needs	Align training with field needs; supervised internships; advice	Limited private clinics for partnerships; demotivation among students	Internships in clinics; future plans for polyclinics	Parental pressure can influence career choice; gender balance improving
TVET	CHIALA Training Center, Douala	Short courses on manufacturing cleaning/cosmetic products; youth lack resources to start businesses	Short-term self-employment training; microloan support (limited)	Low interest in some trades; government harassment of small businesses; funding issues	Certificates of completion; collaborations with other centers	Gender-neutral, but financial constraints affect uptake
Private Sector Employer	GICAM, Yaounde	Lack of readiness among graduates; mismatch of skills	Support continuing education; advise employees	Skills mismatch; limited collaboration with training institutions	Apprenticeship and training programs; advocacy with government	Professionalism valued over gender; culture shapes career preferences
Private Employer	Hairdressing & Beauty Salon, Yaoundé	Experience is more important than formal qualifications	On-the-job training; internships	No formal training program; limited certification	Practical training for interns	Youth willingness to work influences success
Private Employer	Develop Africa Through Agriculture (DATA SARL), Garoua	Participatory management; skills gaps among young recruits	Seminars, informal mentorship; support for entrepreneurial youth	Low corporate experience; lack of structured internships	Support for self-employment; guidance seminars	Cultural emphasis on traditional jobs vs. entrepreneurial work
Private Employer	LA ROSA Medical Center, Douala	Competence and recognized qualifications critical	Advice, short-term internship guidance	Limited formal partnerships with training schools	Referrals to hospitals; on-site mentoring	Culture and ethics influence professional behavior



Parents / Guardians	A parent in Yaoundé	Unemployment is biggest challenge; mismatch between training and jobs	Guidance based on abilities & desires	Limited job opportunities; lack of adequate career info	National Employment Fund	Education, health, training positively impact employability
Parents	A parent in Garoua	Disinterest of child and parent affects career readiness	Encourage girls' education and autonomy	Limited access to formal sector; informal sector is precarious	NGOs, National Employment Fund	Girls' independence emphasized; parental expectations can restrict career choice
Parents	A parent in Douala	Financial constraints and youth mindset challenge employability	Career guidance based on skills & experience	Access to internships difficult; limited higher education options locally	National Employment Fund	Peer pressure and community advice affect youth decisions
Local Government / Councils	Mayor's Office & Youth Desk	Facilitate local employment; limited resources	Organize local job fairs; support youth projects	Poor awareness of programs; weak private sector linkages	Local grants for entrepreneurship	Political patronage may influence opportunities
Faith-Based Leaders	Churches, Mosques, Religious Associations	Promote moral and life skills; sometimes offer vocational support	Mentoring, ethical guidance, occasional skills training	Limited labor market connections	Skills-based youth programs; microloans	Gender roles often reinforced; influence attitudes toward work
Local NGOs / Associations	LNGOs, Associations	Empower vulnerable youth, especially girls	Training, mentorship, advocacy	Funding constraints; uneven geographic coverage	Vocational training; entrepreneurship workshops; networking	Promote gender equality; challenge societal norms
Youth Leaders / Associations	Local youth associations, student unions	Peer-led advocacy; awareness campaigns	Peer mentoring; mobilization for opportunities	Limited authority and capacity	Leadership training; peer education; volunteer programs	Peer pressure can positively or negatively influence career choice
National Agencies / Ministries	Regional Delegations of MINJEC	Policy design and youth engagement	Skills development, internships, career guidance	Bureaucracy; centralized planning; gaps in local implementation	National Employment Fund; vocational grants; youth entrepreneurship programs	Policies shape youth expectations; sometimes mismatched with local reality
National Employment Fund (NEF)	NEF (Garoua, Douala, Yaoundé)	Funding youth employment projects; linking job seekers to employers	Grants, microloans, job placement	Awareness gaps ; limited funding	Employment support; grants for skills development	Incentivizes youth toward formal employment
National Youth Council (NYC)	NYC (Garoua, Douala, Yaoundé)	Advocacy, youth representation	Leadership training; networking; mentorship	Limited rural coverage; coordination gaps	Internships; advocacy workshops;	Encourage Civic engagement ; Shape youth aspirations



The above table captures key observations, support mechanisms, challenges, programs, and cultural influences about youth employment and employability in Cameroon. These findings resulted from responses provided by 30 individual and semi-structured key informants from ministries and state-managed institutions, private agencies, local non-governmental organizations, private employers, head of Technical and Vocational Education and Training centers, youth associations, religious leadership, local councils/municipalities, and parents of youth.

The study found out huge opportunities for youth employment speaking to these key informants. These opportunities are below:

Table 8 showing the role that each actor (key informant) in youth employability (Source: KIIs of baseline study)

Actor	Role in Youth Employability
TVET Institutions	Equip youth with practical and theoretical skills; provide internships; align training with labor market needs.
Private Sector	Offer apprenticeships, mentoring, and on-the-job training; provide guidance on professional norms; occasionally provide financing or resources.
Parents / Guardians	Offer guidance based on abilities and resources; support education and training financially and morally; influence career aspirations.
Government / Ministries	Policy design, oversight of TVETs, facilitate grants and employment funds; provide national programs like NEF.
NGOs / Associations	Provide training, mentorship, and advocacy for youth, often focusing on vulnerable groups (e.g., girls, rural youth).
Youth Leaders / Councils	Advocate for youth, raise awareness of opportunities, lead peer mentoring initiatives.
Faith-Based Leaders	Offer moral guidance, sometimes provide skills training or microloans; influence youth behavior and values.

All the head of TVET centers we interviewed talked of the great opportunities for building both the practical and theoretical skills of youth through training, internship and apprenticeship programs, and aligning training with the labor market.

The key informants representing the private employers mentioned their role in training, offering internship and apprenticeship to youth to build their employable skills. They also mentioned that they equally provide some mentoring and professional guidance to youth under their supervision.

Key government institutions attest to the role in developing policies, providing oversight in training youth, facilitate access to information and occasional grants to assist in youth employment such as the NEF.



Local NGOs and associations have as main role to advocate for youth employment, while youth associations increase awareness of youth to existing opportunities for employment.

Despite these potential opportunities that could enhance the employability of youth, there are still some significant barriers for youth employment in Cameroon including;

Barriers to Youth Employment.

- **Structural / Institutional:**
 - Limited partnerships between TVETs, private employers, & industries
 - Short duration of vocational courses due to funding constraints.
 - Informal labor market dominates, offering low-security jobs.
 - Limited access to internships or mentorships in both formal and informal sectors.
- **Financial:**
 - Parents struggle to finance training or start-up ventures.
 - Youth lack funds to purchase raw materials or implement learned skills.
- **Motivational/Social:**
 - Disinterest among youth or parental pressure affects career choices.
 - Peer influence can redirect youth away from planned careers.
 - Gender differences: girls often have fewer opportunities but are increasingly motivated to pursue education and autonomy.
- **Cultural:**
 - Traditional perceptions undervalue vocational training, especially for girls.
 - Community expectations may influence career choices, sometimes limiting entrepreneurship.

3.3.2 Main thematic pillars of DTN: Youth Counseling, Education, Training, and Employability

The objective of this section is to link that qualitative findings (FGDs + KIIs) directly to the main thematic pillars of DTN program strategy, which are youth counseling, education, training, and employability or empowerment. Below is a comprehensive, evidence-based synthesis showing how the data responds to each theme.

Table 9 showing findings the main themes of the study (Source: Baseline study data)

Thematic Pillar	Findings
Youth Counseling	<p>1)Insufficient guidance mechanisms: Many youth reported that career decisions are influenced by parents, peers, or chance, not professional counselling. This often leads to wrong educational or vocational paths.</p> <p><i>“Parents push their children into fields they don’t like, and later they lose interest.” – FGD, Garoua</i></p> <p>2)Counselling not institutionalized: Most schools and TVET centers, especially the private institutions lack career orientation units or psychosocial guidance.</p>



	<p><i>“We receive young people with motivation but no clear sense of direction; we help by guiding them informally.” – TVET, Douala</i></p> <p>3) Employers’ perspective: Companies noted that youth lack professional conduct, communication, and workplace ethics — areas that counselling could address.</p>
Education	<p>1) Quality and relevance issues: The education system is largely theoretical, insufficiently adapted to evolving labor market needs.</p> <p><i>“Most young graduates lack practical skills; they must learn on the job.” – Employer, Yaounde.</i></p> <p>2) Limited access to quality education: Cost, and issues with education infrastructure reduce access to appropriate and quality education.</p> <p>3) Weak link between education and employment: There’s weak collaboration between professional institutions, universities and industry, and limited exposure to internships.</p> <p><i>“There are schools, but they train without connection to real jobs.” – FGD, Yaounde.</i></p>
Training	<p>1) TVETs play a crucial role but are under-resourced and undervalued socially.</p> <p><i>“Parents prefer general education because they think TVET is for failures.” – TVET Director, Yaounde</i></p> <p>2) Training opportunities exist through vocational centers, apprenticeships, and private initiatives, but coverage is limited and often concentrated in cities.</p> <p>3) Private sector employers (hairdressing, health, agribusiness) provide informal on-the-job training but without certification or standard quality.</p> <p>4) Lack of incentives for employers to host interns or apprentices hinders skill transfer.</p>
Employability/ Empowerment	<p>1) Youth employability is hampered by a combination of skill deficits, lack of experience, poor work readiness, and limited networks.</p> <p><i>“Young people come for interviews without knowing how to present themselves.” – Employer, Douala</i></p> <p>2) Soft skills and entrepreneurial mindsets are missing among many job seekers.</p> <p>3) Limited job creation by both public and private sectors means that even employable youth face underemployment.</p> <p>4) Programs like the National Employment Fund (NEF) and Ministry of Youth initiatives exist but have low visibility and outreach for most youth.</p>
Existing Gaps	<p>1) Policy Coordination: Weak synergy between education, training, and employment sectors.</p>



2) **Counselling Services:** Absence of professional orientation structures
 3) **Private Sector Involvement:** Few structured apprenticeships or incentives for youth employment.
 4) **Awareness of Opportunities:** Youth unaware of programs like NEF, or local programs for youth employment.

Findings from FGDs and KIIs using these thematic together show that youth unemployment and underemployment are not solely caused by lack of jobs, but by a systemic disconnection between:

- What youth are taught (education),
- How they are guided (counselling),
- How they are trained (TVET and private sector),
- How they are linked to opportunities (employability support), and
- How gaps are addressed (policy coherence).

3.3.3 Main thematic of Youth unemployment and underemployment: Causes, Consequences, and Coping mechanisms.

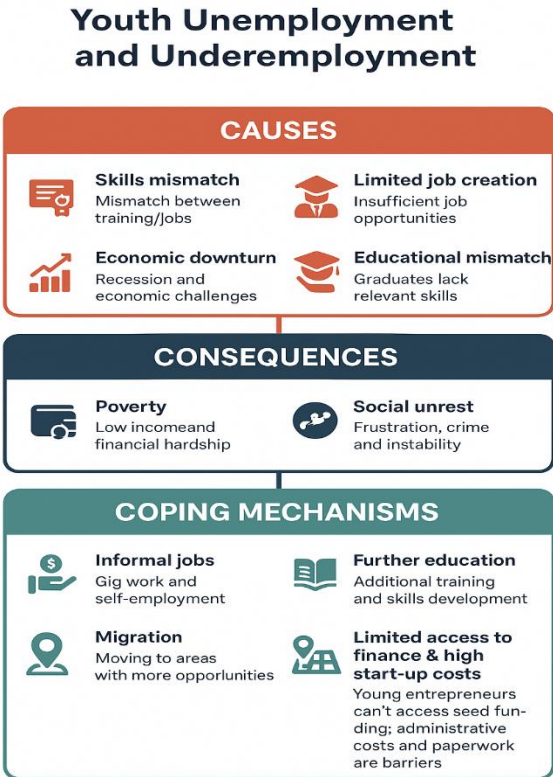


Figure 3: A infographic showing the link between the causes, consequences, and coping mechanisms of youth unemployment & underemployment in Cameroon

Causes of Youth Unemployment and Underemployment

The study revealed that youth unemployment and underemployment in Yaoundé, Douala, and Garoua are influenced by a combination of structural, institutional, and individual factors.

- **Structural factors** include limited economic opportunities, poor private sector growth, and high competition for the few available jobs. These challenges were

consistently reported across all three cities, although Douala, being an economic hub, had slightly more informal trade opportunities. A key informant in Douala stated that: “Even



with a degree, finding a formal job is very hard; most young people rely on small businesses or street trade.”

- **Institutional factors** include weak youth policies, inadequate program implementation, and insufficient vocational training facilities. In Garoua, participants noted a particular scarcity of training centers and limited access to government programs: *“The government offers programs, but they are mostly in (other) bigger cities; here, we don’t even know how to apply.”*- KII Garoua
- **Individual factors** involve lack of skills, reliance on informal trade, and low adaptability. Across all cities, youths expressed that the quality of education was a major barrier: *“Some teachers are not qualified... we need practical knowledge, learn with laboratories.”*- FGD Yaounde.

These causes intersect with Education and Training, emphasizing the role of formal and vocational education in enhancing youth employability in all three urban contexts.

Consequences of Unemployment and Underemployment

Participants highlighted that the consequences of unemployment are economic, psychological, and social, with some city-specific variations:

- **Economic hardship** was universal. Youths in Garoua and Yaoundé reported struggles meeting basic needs, while in Douala some had slightly better opportunities through informal businesses: *“I have a diploma, but I still cannot pay my rent or support my family.”*-FGD Yaounde.
- **Psychological and social effects** included frustration, low self-esteem, and engagement in risky behaviors. These effects were especially pronounced in Yaoundé and Garoua: *“Many youths feel hopeless, and some turn to drugs or petty crime.”*- FGD Yaounde.
- **Migration and brain drain** were common coping responses. In Garoua, many youths expressed the desire to move to Douala or Yaoundé for better opportunities: *“Some of my friends (have) left for Douala or Europe because there’s nothing here.”*-FGD Garoua

These findings underline the importance of Youth Counseling across all cities to address psychological and social challenges.

Coping Mechanisms

Youths adopted several strategies to navigate unemployment, closely linked to training and empowerment:



- **Entrepreneurship and small business:** Common in all three cities, but more prevalent in Douala due to market opportunities: *“I sell food online and at the market to survive.”*-FGD Douala
- **Further training and skills acquisition:** Participants in Yaoundé and Douala accessed vocational programs, while Garoua youths had limited options: *“I joined a welding training center while looking for a job.”*-FGD Douala.
- **Networking and informal connections:** Youth associations and family networks were leveraged across cities: *“I joined a youth association which helped me find contacts for jobs.”*-FGD Douala
- **Migration and alternative income sources:** Especially relevant in Garoua, where youths sought temporary work or relocation to larger cities: *“Some youths go to other cities to do construction work.”*-FGD Garoua.



4. DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

4.1 Discussion

The findings of this baseline study on youth unemployment and underemployment in Cameroon highlight a complex interaction of educational, structural, economic, and socio-cultural factors shaping the employment landscape. Insights from the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) reveal that youth unemployment is not merely a result of individual limitations but stems from systemic challenges such as weak linkages between education and the labor market, limited vocational training opportunities, lack of access to capital, and inadequate institutional coordination.

1. Causes of Youth Unemployment and Underemployment

The study found that most young people face significant barriers to employment due to skill mismatches between formal education and the needs of the labor market. Respondents in Yaoundé, Garoua, and Douala emphasized that the current school curriculum remains overly theoretical and poorly adapted to evolving job market realities. This mirrors findings from other African contexts — for instance, the African Development Bank (Morsy, 2019) notes that over 60% of unemployed African youth are educated but lack market-relevant skills. Similarly, ILO (2021) reports that only a small fraction of youth in Sub-Saharan Africa benefit from vocational or technical training aligned with industry demand, which is a similar finding of this baseline study where it was found only about 7% of all certification examinations of the ministry of secondary education were TVET.

Additionally, the lack of entrepreneurial financing and bureaucratic bottlenecks discourage self-employment. Participants pointed to limited access to credit facilities and inadequate support for start-ups. This aligns with findings from Ghana (Boateng et al, 2024), where young entrepreneurs cite financial exclusion and policy inconsistency as leading obstacles to sustainable youth-led enterprises.

2. Consequences of Youth Unemployment and Underemployment

The consequences identified are both economic and psychosocial. Youth unemployment was linked to frustration, migration intentions, engagement in informal or precarious work, and social deviance. Participants in Yaoundé and Douala described unemployment as a “source of hopelessness” and “a breeding ground for delinquency,” echoing findings from South Africa (Nyalungo et al, 2025) that link joblessness to increased youth vulnerability and urban crime.

At a community level, chronic unemployment reduces local productivity and perpetuates poverty cycles. Similar trends have been observed in Kenya and South Africa, where underemployment contributes to dependency on family or social networks (Stats SA, 2021). The baseline study’s findings also suggest that gender plays a role — young women, particularly those with caregiving responsibilities, face higher barriers to formal employment. This is consistent with global evidence from the World Bank (2023) indicating that gender disparities in labor participation remain a persistent feature of youth employment crises in Africa.



3. Coping Mechanisms Among Youth and Communities

Young people employ adaptive coping strategies, including petty trading, motorbike riding (“ben sikin”), and informal apprenticeships. Community support systems — such as faith-based organizations and family networks — provide social and financial cushions. However, these mechanisms are largely temporary and insufficient to achieve sustainable livelihoods. This aligns with Uganda’s National Youth Study (2021), which found that informal sector engagement serves more as a survival strategy than a long-term economic plan.

The data also revealed that many young people still believe in “waiting for government jobs,” suggesting a lingering public-sector employment culture. In contrast, evidence from Rwanda and Mauritius demonstrates that deliberate national youth entrepreneurship programs and technical training schemes can gradually shift these perceptions and improve employment outcomes (ADB, 2020).

4. Local Leadership and Institutional Role

Across KIIs, local councils, mayors’ offices, and decentralized authorities were acknowledged for limited yet emerging roles in supporting youth employment. However, most of these efforts are underfunded or not properly institutionalized. Respondents mentioned isolated initiatives such as short-term trainings, but no coordinated national or regional youth employment strategies. This observation parallels findings from Ghana’s Decentralization and Employment Study (2021) which emphasizes weak synergy between national programs and local implementation.

Faith-based institutions and NGOs appear to fill some gaps through mentorship and vocational training. Yet, as noted by GICAM and TVET actors, such interventions remain fragmented without clear monitoring or alignment with national employment policies.

5. Implications for Policy and Practice

The alignment of findings with regional and global evidence underscores that Cameroon’s youth employment challenges are systemic rather than isolated. Like many African economies, Cameroon’s labor market suffers from structural underemployment, where education expansion has not been matched by industrial diversification or private sector growth. To bridge this gap, coordinated action is needed in three areas:

Education and training reform: Redesign curricula to include technical, digital, and entrepreneurial skills, in collaboration with industry.

Strengthened local governance: Equip councils and regional bodies to design context-specific youth employment plans.

Private sector incentives: Encourage firms to offer apprenticeships and early-career pathways, possibly through tax incentives or public-private partnerships.

The findings of the baseline study were interpreted by mirror the findings with the most important theoretical frameworks for youth unemployment and underemployment. The baseline study findings can



be comfortably discussed with at least three of the theoretical; frameworks including human capital, social exclusion, entrepreneurship and innovation, and Keynesian theories as discussed in the introduction of this report.

4.2 Recommendations

The results of this baseline study reveal a complex web of factors contributing to youth unemployment and underemployment in Cameroon. These challenges are not only structural and institutional but also behavioral, social, and psychological. To address them effectively, a comprehensive and integrated approach is required—one that aligns youth counselling, education, vocational training, employability support, and local leadership initiatives within a coherent national framework.

First and foremost, the study highlights the importance of youth counselling and guidance as a foundation for employability. Across all focus group discussions and key informant interviews, young people expressed confusion and frustration about career choices and job pathways. Many admitted to enrolling in academic programs without clear information about labor market prospects, while parents and educators often guided them based on prestige rather than employability. This suggests a need to rejuvenate (or institutionalized in areas where the services were absent) structured youth counselling services in all schools, training centers, and community-based youth centers. Such services should help young people identify their skills, aspirations, and potential career paths while offering psychosocial support to those struggling with unemployment-related stress and hopelessness.

In countries like Kenya and Rwanda, similar challenges have been met through national youth empowerment schemes such as the Ajira Digital Program and YouthConnekt Initiative, which combine mentorship, digital skills training, and career guidance. Cameroon could draw lessons from these programs to establish decentralized youth career and information centers managed by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education in collaboration with local councils, NGOs, and faith-based organizations.

A second recommendation relates to education and curriculum alignment. The baseline data confirmed what many studies across Africa have long emphasized: the mismatch between the content of education and the realities of the labor market. Young people graduate from secondary and higher institutions with limited practical or entrepreneurial skills. The *Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle (CAP)* and the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems remain relevant mechanisms for bridging this gap, but they require modernization. Curricula should be reoriented toward practical learning, innovation, and digital literacy, ensuring that graduates are equipped with marketable skills. Regular consultation between educational authorities, the private sector, and local employers would ensure that training remains relevant to industry needs.



Education reform must also promote entrepreneurship as a core component of learning. Integrating entrepreneurship courses at secondary and tertiary levels—with opportunities for learners to design, test, and operate small business ideas—would nurture a culture of self-employment. Successful examples include Nigeria’s YouWiN program and South Africa’s NYDA Entrepreneurship Finance Scheme, both of which combined business training with financial and mentorship support.

Equally important is the strengthening of vocational training and technical skills development. Many young people in the study expressed a desire for hands-on training, but they faced barriers such as limited training centers, outdated equipment, and inadequate links to industries. To make TVET more attractive and impactful, investment should focus on modernizing facilities, equipping centers with contemporary tools, and establishing structured apprenticeship or internship systems. Councils and private enterprises should collaborate to create community-based training hubs that offer short, targeted courses in trades such as agro-processing, renewable energy, catering, and ICT maintenance. These hubs could mirror models from Ghana and Ethiopia, where community job centers have successfully trained and placed thousands of youth in decent jobs.

The issue of employability and labor market integration also emerged strongly from the findings. While young people remain eager to work, many employers cited low technical competence, limited exposure to professional settings, and weak work ethics as barriers to recruitment. Addressing this requires stronger collaboration between the private sector and training institutions. Apprenticeships, mentorship schemes, and internship programs should be formalized through public–private partnerships, with tax incentives provided to companies that hire or train young workers. Furthermore, given the financial constraints that hinder many young entrepreneurs, the government and its partners should expand access to youth-friendly financing. Establishing small grant and loan schemes—similar to Rwanda’s Youth Empowerment Fund or Senegal’s DER/FJ Program—could help young people start or scale small businesses while receiving guidance from experienced mentors.

Digital employment represents a new frontier that cannot be ignored. Cameroon’s youthful population, coupled with growing internet access, offers opportunities for remote work, freelancing, and innovation in the gig economy. Targeted digital skills training and incubation programs could help young people transition into emerging online professions, reducing dependence on the limited formal job market.

Another key dimension of this strategy concerns local leadership and decentralized governance. The decentralization policy in Cameroon provides a framework for councils and regional governments to play a greater role in youth employment promotion. However, the study found that most local councils have not yet integrated youth development into their local economic plans.



Empowering them to do so—with financial resources, technical expertise, and accountability mechanisms—could significantly enhance youth engagement. Councils can facilitate partnerships between community groups, training institutions, and the private sector to design employment projects that reflect local needs and opportunities, such as community infrastructure, green jobs, or agro-industrial initiatives.

Local faith-based and community organizations should also be recognized as essential partners in this effort. Many already provide informal counselling, skills training, and social support to young people. Formal collaboration with these organizations could extend the reach of government programs, particularly in rural or marginalized areas.

Finally, cross-cutting issues such as gender inclusion, monitoring and evaluation, and policy coherence require deliberate attention. Young women remain disproportionately affected by unemployment due to social expectations, early marriage, and limited access to technical fields. Programs must therefore be gender-responsive, ensuring equitable access to training and finance. Moreover, to ensure accountability, a national and regional youth employment monitoring system should be established to track progress, document success stories, and inform continuous policy learning.

In conclusion, addressing youth unemployment and underemployment in Cameroon demands an integrated and sustained national effort grounded in both local realities and global best practices. By strengthening youth counselling, reforming education and training systems, fostering employability partnerships, and empowering local leadership, Cameroon can transform its youthful population into a dynamic engine for economic growth and social progress.

These recommendations should target the following cadre of institutions:

Government Ministries and Public Institutions

- Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education (MINJEC)
- Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training (MINEFOP)
- Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC)
- Ministry of Higher Education (MINESUP)
- Ministry of Finance (MINFI)
- Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development (MINDDEVEL)

Local Governments and Councils

- Regional and Municipal Councils
- Divisional and Sub-Divisional Delegations of Youth Affairs and Employment

Private Sector and Employer Organizations



- Employers' associations (e.g., GICAM, ECAM)
- Chambers of Commerce and Industry
- Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
- Corporate foundations

Educational and Training Institutions

- Secondary schools, universities, and professional institutes
- TVET centers
- Youth multipurpose centers
- Non-formal training providers

Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

- Youth-led NGOs
- Development NGOs (e.g., No Limit for Women Project, RENATA, Plan International, etc.)
- Faith-based organizations

Development Partners and Donors

- UN agencies (ILO, UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO)
- African Development Bank (AfDB)
- World Bank, EU, bilateral donors (e.g., GIZ, USAID, AFD)

Youth and Community Groups

- National Youth Council
- Community youth associations
- Informal youth groups and cooperatives

4.3 Relevance of the Study and the Findings

Divine Treasures Network (DTN) has contributed through this baseline study, to provide critical insights into the dynamics of youth unemployment and underemployment in Cameroon, highlighting both the structural and individual-level factors that hinder youth employment. By identifying the gaps in the education system, including limited vocational training, inadequate guidance counseling, and misalignment with labor market demands, the study offers a concrete understanding of the barriers that prevent young people from accessing meaningful employment.

The findings are particularly relevant for policymakers, development partners, and youth-focused organizations, as they reveal actionable entry points for intervention. For example, strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), improving career guidance, enhancing



access to finance, and fostering stakeholder collaboration are all evidence-based strategies that can improve youth employability.

Moreover, the study underscores the importance of integrating both economic and social dimensions in addressing youth unemployment, recognizing that entrepreneurship, mentorship, and informed career decision-making are as crucial as skills acquisition. These insights provide a foundation for designing targeted programs, shaping policies, and mobilizing resources to reduce youth unemployment and underemployment in Cameroon, ultimately contributing to sustainable socio-economic development.



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