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Vocational Training in the Informal Sector Report on the Cameroon Field Survey

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1. Introduction: Cameroon – an excellent example of the informal economy

Cameroon was originally chosen as one of the five sample countries for the field survey on vocational training in the informal sector because it stands out among the sub-Saharan African countries. On one hand, it has a very specific colonial history, given that it was first colonised by Germany and then became a dual Anglo-French protectorate. Among other things, this led to the development of a bilingual and bicultural society that is unique in the region. According to several experts on the situation in Africa, the country also constitutes an interesting mix: multiple local initiatives exist, particularly in vocational training, yet there is an obvious lack of any overall formalisation or organisation of such initiatives. It could therefore be said that the country offered an opportunity to observe how isolated initiatives can be integrated into collective efforts and historical developments.

The field survey, carried out from 16 to 24 April 2006, confirmed the accuracy of these initial observations and insights. It also raised various other issues that this report will discuss and examine in detail. These can be summarised as follows:

- Cameroon almost certainly has one of the highest levels of informal sector employment in sub-Saharan Africa, although the reasons for this are not entirely clear;
- this substantial “informalisation” of Cameroon’s economy is coupled with high average workforce education levels compared to the other countries in the region. There is therefore a Cameroon paradox that, at first glance, would seem to exclude any direct interrelationship between the types of jobs occupied and training levels;

- the various meetings clearly highlighted the specific nature of Cameroon’s institutional framework in comparison with neighbouring countries. There are almost no business organisations at national level, and social dialogue practices are of an unusual nature. The financing of vocational training, outside the established public system, is left to private initiative or international funding providers, and available funds are not pooled in any way whatsoever. There are no vocational training levies on employee wages, nor any formal system for collecting or allocating resources which might somehow resemble a vocational training fund;
- while the survey brought to light the shortcomings of formal vocational training in terms of resources and quality, it did reveal a profusion of innovative initiatives and projects for both young people and people in work. The various stakeholders interviewed also said that they were planning major reforms aimed at boosting training for apprentices, craftworkers and master craftsmen and, more broadly, informal sector workers.

This study focuses on all of these observations as well as those that emerged during detailed examination of the data collected. It will verify them as far as possible using quantitative and qualitative examples gathered during the survey, and will try to set them within the context of the strategic and operational developments that have been announced or are being implemented by the various stakeholders encountered.

2. The country's economic and social challenges

Prior to examining the labour market and informal economy trends, it is important to analyse the country's economic, social and demographic situation.

2.1. Growth combined with uncertain development

Having enjoyed relative prosperity until 1984, which was underpinned by the rise in raw materials prices, Cameroon had to cope with a period of deep recession from the end of the 1980s, with growth rates varying between -7.82% and -1.82% between 1987 and 1994.¹ There has, however, been a sustained recovery in Cameroon's GDP since 1994 (an average annual growth rate of about 4.6%), which has made Cameroon the driving force for growth in the Economic and Monetary Union of Central Africa (CEMAC). Its contribution to sub-regional GDP varies at around 45%. This dynamism is chiefly due to the country's abundant mineral, agricultural and forest resources. Thus, in 2002 real GDP growth was 4.2% and reached 4.5% in 2003.²

Wealth creation is divided more or less equally between the primary and tertiary sectors, which respectively contributed 43.9% and 40.4% to GDP in 2004, as opposed to 15.6% for the secondary (manufacturing) sector.³

The value-added of the primary sector, which is mostly divided between basic food crops and cash crops (coffee, cocoa, cotton, bananas, wood, etc.), is highly sensitive to rainfall levels and fluctuations in world prices. Although the high rainfall levels over recent years have given producers good harvests, the gradual decrease in world prices, especially for cash crops, has led to a reorganisation of the

agricultural sector and notably to a shift of employment from agricultural to the non-agricultural informal sector.

Oil production also makes a large contribution to national GDP. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF),⁴ the country produced as many as 90,000 barrels a day in 2004, contributing as much as 10% to GDP and 40% of exports. In spite of the progressive depletion of oil wells—production has been halved over the last twenty years and output is decreasing at an ever faster pace, with a 5% drop over the last five years—Cameroon's oil revenues have broadly remained stable, basically due to progressive increases in world oil prices. Nevertheless, the considerable decline of Cameroon crude oil prices (\$5 per barrel in the last quarter of 2004 as opposed to an average of \$20 for previous periods) and the progressive depletion of oil reserves should push Cameroon to diversify its economy. According to the IMF report, although a fall in production is expected in the medium and long term, the country has now decided to undertake a vast exploration programme, which should enable it to step up and maintain its production over the next decade.

Lastly, it is worth noting the dynamism of the tertiary sector, which is primarily due to the performance of transport and telecommunications.

1. World Bank (2005), *African Development Indicators*.

2. World Bank.

3. World Bank.

4. International Monetary Fund (2005), IMF Country Report No. 05/164, Cameroon: 2005 Article IV Consultation and Staff-Monitored Program—Staff Report; Staff Statement; Public Information Notice on the Executive Board Discussion; and Statement by the Executive Director for Cameroon.

Table 1. GDP growth at constant 2000 prices

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
GDP growth (in %)	3.3	5	5.1	5	4.4	4.2	5.3	4.2	4.5

Source: World Bank, 2005, *African Development Indicators*.

Cameroon has just completed the process for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. This step, initially planned for 2004 but postponed to 2006, is important for the country because it will permit the start of the multilateral debt cancellation process. The resources thus made available will be used to support government-led poverty reduction strategies.⁵

According to a report on macroeconomic forecasts for CFA Franc Zone countries (the Jumbo Report),⁶ there seems to have been a slight economic slowdown since the beginning of 2004. This intensified in 2005, with the growth rate falling from 4.5% in 2003 to 3.8% in 2004 and 2.6% in 2005, which is the lowest rate recorded since 1995.⁷ This downturn is mainly linked to a slowdown in private consumption, price increases (chiefly energy and certain consumer goods), tax increases, and the decrease in public consumption, which has led to reduced purchasing power. However, the report also forecasts an upturn in 2006 and 2007, with anticipated growth rates of 3.9% and 3.7% respectively. Such improvements would be driven by the increased financial leeway created by the HIPC completion point, to higher levels of consumption (primarily public consumption with spending on major industrial projects), and to a temporary improvement in oil revenues resulting from the discovery of new wells.

Cameroon faces some major challenges in terms of its human development indicators. It was ranked 148th out of 177 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2003, with poverty affecting about 17.1% of the country's population. In development terms, the HDI rating has progressed somewhat unevenly in recent years, moving from 0.514 in 1990 to 0.481 in 1995 to reach 0.497 in 2003.

When Cameroon is compared with its CEMAC partners, it can be seen that, despite the country's substantial contribution to the Community's economic growth, three of its partners are performing better in development terms (in 2003, Equatorial Guinea was ranked 121st, Gabon 123rd and the Republic of the Congo 142nd). Cameroon's situation is nonetheless somewhat better than those of the Central African Republic (171st) and Chad (173rd).

That said, although Cameroon's per capita GDP based on purchasing power parity (PPP)⁸ has grown at varying rates over the last decade (chiefly due to inflation rate increases, which largely explain the 4.6 point fall in the PPP GDP growth rate between 2001 and 2002), it has nevertheless increased constantly, from \$1,669 in 1995 to \$2,001 in 2003. This represents an average annual increase of 2.3%. It should nevertheless be emphasised that this increase may conceal considerable social and regional disparities, notably between urban and rural areas.

Table 2. GDP per capita based on PPP

Cameroon	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
GDP per capita. PPP at constant 2000 prices (in \$)	1,669	1,706	1,753	1,773	1,803	1,869	1,957	1,960	2,001
Annual growth rate (in %)		2.2	2.8	1.2	1.7	3.7	4.7	0.1	2.1

Source: World Bank, 2005, *World Development Indicators*.

5. For further information, see the World Bank's website.

6. Amprou, J. *et al.* (2006), *Rapport de conjoncture et prévisions des pays de la zone franc*, AFD Working Paper.

7. These figures are drawn from the above-mentioned report. The figures presented in this report may differ slightly from those of the World Bank, provided further above. However, the two sources suggest the same general trend.

8. INSEE (the French statistics agency) has defined purchasing parity power (PPP) as a monetary exchange rate that uses a single common unit to express the purchasing power of different currencies. This type of indicator makes it easier to take account of real trends in local populations' purchasing power. Conversely, indicators at constant prices make it possible to measure national wealth creation by disregarding the effects of fluctuations in inflation rates.

2.2. The quest for improvements in the education system

Cameroon had a population of 15.7 million in 2003. Its demographic growth rate is gradually declining, reaching 2.03% in 2003. The population is predominantly young—those under the age of 15 account for 41.9% of the overall and urban population—with 51.4% of the population living in urban areas.⁹

Promoting literacy in Cameroon is an immense and complex task as two national languages (French and English) and over 270 local languages are spoken. There has been a general upward trend in the net enrolment ratio over the last decade, with the gross enrolment ratio in primary education increasing from 87.5% in 1998 to 107.6% in 2002 (the

percentage over 100% can be explained by repeaters and early or late entry of certain children), and from 26.5% to 31.2% in secondary education over the same period. The trend in the literacy rate is less clear: it rose from 64.9% in 1995 to 71.3% in 2000, and then dropped back to 67.9% in 2001. Cameroon's major difficulties in the education area are linked to several factors. Sometimes, school is perceived negatively, with agro-pastoral activities being a preferred option. There is also the cost of schooling, which can constitute a major obstacle for the most underprivileged families, as well as social factors, such as early marriage especially as far as the education of girls is concerned.

Table 3. Literacy rates (% of the population aged 15 and over)

Cameroon	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Literacy rate (% of the population aged 15 and over)	64.9	66.2	67.5	68.7	70	71.3	67.9
Female literacy rate (% of women aged 15 and over)	55.9	57.5	59.1	60.6	62.2	63.7	59.8
Male literacy rate (% of men aged 15 and over)	74.2	75.2	76.1	77.1	78.1	79.1	77

Source: World Bank, 2005, *World Development Indicators*.

Despite these difficulties, Cameroon has made significant efforts to achieve improved educational performance, which was moreover one of the prerequisites that the country had to meet in order to qualify for the HIPC Initiative. According to the reports by France's Economic Mission in Yaoundé on Cameroon's budget policy,¹⁰ secondary education is the largest category of public spending for 2006 (150 billion CFA francs [XAF], or nearly €230 million).¹¹ Elementary education is the third largest category of public spending, with a budget

of XAF 103.6 billion (about €157.9 million). These budgets have been increasing and, in 2005, amounted respectively to XAF 140 billion (€213.4 million) and XAF 80 billion (€122 million). Furthermore, several programmes have been launched to improve the education system: notably the National Literacy Programme (Programme national d'alphabétisation - PNA) financed by HIPC funds, and the Cameroon education system support programme mostly financed by the World Bank.

Table 4. Gross enrolment ratio

Cameroon	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Primary school gross enrolment ratio (in %)	87.5	89.9	106.2	106.7	107.6
Secondary school gross enrolment ratio (in %)	26.5	32.6	31.2

Source: World Bank, 2005, *World Development Indicators*.

Note: This indicator may be over 100% as a result of repeaters and early or late entry of some children.

9. UNDP (2005), *Human Development Report*.

10. French Economic Mission in Yaoundé (2006), *Cameroon: Budget 2006 et politique budgétaire; Cameroon: Budget 2005 et politique budgétaire*.

11. €1 = XAF 655.957.

2.3. Low skills levels and underemployment in the labour market

In order to halt the recession of the early 1990s, the country turned to international donors, which imposed a structural adjustment programme (SAP). By aiming to make considerable cuts in public spending, these policies phased out ongoing investment projects, brought about major civil service staff reductions, and encouraged a shift towards privatisation. They had a major impact on employment, forcing the country to move from a situation where the State was the main provider of jobs, to one where the private sector had to take on this responsibility. According to a report by the ILO's Employment Strategy Department in Geneva,¹² downsizing of the civil service led to 60,000 government employees being made redundant between 1989 and 1997, as well as to a drastic fall in the number of salaried employees, from 63.9% to 22.1% between 1983 and 1993 in industry, and from 20.6% to 12.6% in the trade sector.

Given that the private sector is insufficiently developed to absorb the influx of workers coming onto the labour market, the informal sector has grown and employment has become more insecure.

2.3.1. General labour market characteristics

Cameroon's labour market structure clearly shows that the primary sector continues to employ the majority of Cameroonians (55.7%), ahead of services (31.2%) and manufacturing (14.1%).¹³ Labour market trends have shown

a constant decline in the number of public sector jobs and an urbanisation of employment since the beginning of the 1980s.

Moreover, agriculture sector activities are undergoing progressive changes: until 2003, most job creation took place in the informal agricultural sector, but since then more jobs are being created in the non-agricultural informal sector. This development is primarily due to the growing instability of revenues resulting from the decrease in world prices.

The labour force participation rate is 71.5% for people aged 10 and over. This rate illustrates the worrying phenomenon of child labour (39.9% of children aged between 10 and 14 have been identified as being employed), particularly in rural areas, where over one in two children work (as opposed to 12.3% in urban areas). If this phenomenon is disregarded, the participation rate is 79.1% for adults between the ages of 15 and 64. There is little difference between the rates for men and women owing to the high number of women working in rural areas.

The two main groups outside the active population are "young people in education and women homemakers. Seven non-working people out of ten have chosen this status because they consider that they are not of working age or do not need to work in order to earn a living".¹⁴

Table 5. Gross enrolment ratio

Participation rate as per ILO definition (in %)	Urban	Rural	Cameroon
Aged 10 and older	58.9	78.8	71.5
Aged 15 to 64 years	68	86.2	79.1
Men	66.1	80.2	74.8
Women	51.6	77.4	68.3

Source: INS, *Enquête sur l'emploi et le secteur informel au Cameroun 2005, Phase 1* (Phase 1 of the National Institute of Statistics' Survey on Employment and the Informal Sector in Cameroon).

12. Njikam, G.B.N., R.M. Lontchi Tchhoffo and V.F. Mwaffo, (2005), *Caractéristiques et déterminants de l'emploi des jeunes au Cameroun*, Employment Strategy Papers, ILO Employment Sector, Employment Strategy Department, Geneva.

13. Labour market data are drawn from the National Institute of Statistics' Survey on Employment and the Informal Sector in the Cameroon, Institut national de la statistique (2005), *Enquête sur l'emploi et le secteur informel au Cameroun en 2005, Phase 1 : Enquête sur l'emploi*, Main Report.

14. Institut national de la statistique (2005), *Enquête sur l'emploi et le secteur informel au Cameroun en 2005, Phase 1 : Enquête sur l'emploi*, Main Report.

Participation rates for people aged 15 to 64 have been on the increase, from 69.4% in 1996 to 72.2% in 2001. In parallel, there is a relatively low unemployment rate in the ILO sense of the term, given that it is 4.2% for men and 4.6% for women. This increases to 5.2% and 7.3% respectively if the wider notion of unemployment is used, in other words, if it includes “people who have not worked, even for one hour, in the seven days preceding the survey and who are seeking employment and prepared to start work immediately”, as well as “people who have not sought employment during the reference period, but would nonetheless be available if asked”.¹⁵

The unemployment rate is inversely proportional to the number of years of education completed. It is 3.1% for those who have reached the end of primary education, 10.7% for those leaving secondary education and 13.4% for those who have been to university. The Cameroon National Institute of Statistics (Institut national de la statistique – INS) survey also mentions discouraged jobseekers, a category that accounts for 4.9% of people not working in Cameroon and who generally have “a level of education higher than other jobless, with an average of nearly three extra years of study”. All these figures clearly show that employment structure is heavily weighted towards low levels of qualification.

At first glance, these data seem to reflect a full-employment situation across all types of activity. Yet, closer analysis makes it necessary to qualify these results and point out that these participation levels designate more the extent to

which people are occupied, rather than levels of access to real jobs in terms of wages and length of work.

2.3.2. High underemployment levels among workers

According to the survey results, visible underemployment, which concerns people working involuntarily for less than 35 hours per week, affects 12.1% of the economically active population, primarily in urban areas. However, invisible underemployment, which describes “workers whose wages are lower than the guaranteed hourly minimum”¹⁶ (XAF 23,500 per month for 40 hours’ work, which is about €35.83), affects 69.3% of the economically active population, with a proportion of 78.6% in rural areas and 45.7% in urban areas.

Overall, underemployment affects 75.8% of the economically active population, with the proportion being 16.7% of people employed in the public sector and 23.7% for people employed in the formal private sector. It is less prevalent among educated people than among uneducated people, and is heavily present among people working in the informal sector (70.6% of people working in the non-agricultural informal sector and 86.8% of people working in the informal agricultural sector are affected by this phenomenon).

The extent of underemployment is pressing Cameroonians to develop strategies to increase their income. Thus multiple jobholding rates reach up to 37%, and are particularly high in rural areas, where underemployment affects 83.6% of workers as opposed to 68.3% in urban areas.

Table 6. Underemployment levels by institutional sector and gender according to area of residence

	Visible			Invisible			Overall		
	Urban	Rural	Cameroon	Urban	Rural	Cameroon	Urban	Rural	Cameroon
Institutional sector									
Public	7.3	10.1	8.4	3.1	17.4	8.6	10.3	26.8	16.7
Formal private	6.4	5.6	6.2	13.6	31.8	19.0	19.3	34.2	23.7
Non-agricultural informal	17.1	23.1	19.9	54.4	66.8	60.1	64.8	77.5	70.6
Agricultural informal	15.6	7.6	8.0	70.2	85.7	84.8	75.1	87.5	86.8
Gender									
Men	12.1	11.8	11.9	37.8	71.5	60.7	50.9	77.2	68.3
Women	18.2	10.5	12.4	56.6	85.2	78.2	70.9	88.3	83.6
Together	14.7	11.1	12.1	45.7	78.6	69.3	68.3	83.6	75.8

Source: INS, *Enquête sur l'emploi et le secteur informel 2005, Phase 1*.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*

2.3.3. The informal sector's dominance of the labour market

Analysis of the breakdown of jobs per institutional sector highlights the predominant position of the informal sector: it employs over 90% of the economically active population. This labour market structure can mainly be explained by the role played by informal agricultural jobs, which alone account for 55.2% of total employment, whereas non-agricultural informal jobs account for 35.2%. The 10% of jobs in the formal sector are equally divided between the public and private sectors.

Table 7. Employment structure by institutional sector and area of residence

	Urban	Rural	Cameroon
Institutional sector			
Public	10.5	2.6	4.9
Formal private	11.8	2.0	4.7
Non-agricultural informal	67.4	22.5	35.2
Agricultural informal	10.3	72.9	55.2
Total	100	100	100

Source: INS, *Enquête sur l'emploi et le secteur informel 2005, Phase 1*.

Closer analysis of the real situation in the non-agricultural informal sector reveals the importance of micro-businesses (fewer than six employees) and self-employment. These two categories alone account for nearly 90% of informal jobs, and they each account for about half this total. Services account for 66% of these jobs, and the proportion is 28% for trade. Furthermore, 21.3% work in real professional premises, and 23% are street vendors and market traders.

Analysis of the working conditions of the non-agricultural informal sector workers who are dependent on their employers shows that there is a 3.2% likelihood of their having a pay slip and a 10.8% likelihood of their having an employment contract (of fixed or open duration). This proportion falls to 0.7% and 2.6% for people working in the agricultural informal sector. Decent working conditions are therefore a largely inaccessible goal for such workers. As far as average incomes are concerned, non-agricultural informal workers earn an hourly wage that is three times lower than

formal sector workers, and agricultural informal workers earn eleven times less.

2.3.4. The great lack of social and occupational mobility in the workforce

The INS's analysis gives a deeper insight into intergenerational trends, areas of inflexibility and changes in the labour market, and hence into this market's "informal" reality¹⁷. It notably highlights that job and occupational opportunities are more important than educational and professional achievements when it comes to entering into the labour market.

A high degree of immobility in the primary sector

The survey carried out revealed that out of 100 children whose fathers worked in the primary sector, 55.5% still work in the same sector. The proportion is as high as 77.6% for children raised in rural areas. The survey also highlighted that a significant proportion (between 25% and 31.5%) of children whose parents worked in manufacturing, trade or services, found work in the agricultural sector by farming inherited land. In spite of the price decreases that have made agriculture less profitable, this sector remains attractive given that it offers opportunities for subsistence activities. During the field survey, it was possible to meet public and voluntary sector officials who were working to halt the rural exodus and help young people become established in farming. Their work is underpinned by the observation that keeping young people in the primary sector is the only way of helping them to meet their needs.

A high degree of urban mobility

Owing to the recent growth of trade and manufacturing, these sectors show a high degree of occupational mobility. Overall, a quarter of children working in urban areas do the same work as their fathers. Services have a higher level of non-mobility (over 50%), which may indicate that work that is based locally and changes little generates greater occupational repetition. These levels of mobility would need to be examined in more detail in order to ascertain whether they reflect the instability of work in sales and manufacturing

17. Institut national de la statistique (2005), *Enquête sur l'emploi et le secteur informel au Cameroun en 2005, Phase 1 : Enquête sur l'emploi*, Main Report.

or whether they are a sign of real business creation, particularly with regards to self-employment.

Obstacles to social mobility

The survey's analysis of trends among socio-professional categories highlights the shift towards "informalisation" in Cameroon's labour market. It shows that there has been a decrease in the number of employees (28% of the fathers, as opposed to 21.2% for the children), a decrease in the number of managers, employees and skilled workers (21.9% of the fathers as opposed to 13.1% for the children) and

extensive replication of informal occupational statuses (84.3% of children whose fathers were non-waged remain non-waged).

The survey reached a conclusion that explains the feelings about social immobility expressed by all of the young people met during the week-long visit: "having a qualification equal to or higher than one's father does not guarantee access to an equal or better social position. This is more likely to occur as a result of job opportunities on the labour market".

2.4. Dynamic but unstructured representation of social and business interests

A wide range of social and business representatives from the formal and informal sectors were interviewed during the field survey. The various meetings with employers, trade unions, the chamber of commerce and the various crafts and producers associations all helped to shed light on a situation in which stakeholders' dynamic efforts are hampered and even handicapped by a lack of coordination and organisation at sectoral, trade and above all national level.

2.4.1. The absence of any effective or regulated social dialogue

Meetings with the Cameroon employers' association, the GICAM (*Groupement inter-patronal du Cameroun*), the CGT-Liberté trade union and the Union of Free Trade Unions of Cameroon (*Union camerounaise des syndicats libres – UCSL*), revealed the highly specific nature of the country's approach to social partnership.

A first characteristic concerns the very notion of social dialogue. Both the GICAM and CGT-Liberté spontaneously described it as a bilateral relationship between employers and the public authorities on the one hand, and between trade unions and public authorities on the other, which in itself implied that Cameroon's social dialogue had not yet acquired a dimension entailing bipartite negotiation between social partners. However, the meetings did give an indication that this sort of dialogue is starting to emerge. The GICAM seems to be becoming aware of the importance of establishing a platform for meeting the trade unions, and CGT-Liberté,

along with other trade unions, has created the Association for the Defence of Trade Union Freedom and Independence (*Association pour la défense de la liberté et de l'indépendance syndicale – ADELIS*). The two partners stressed their belief in the importance of developing direct bargaining with each other.

A second characteristic of this partnership concerns the very notion of collective agreements. Whereas these are usually defined as entailing collective bargaining between bodies representing employers and employees in order to regulate employees' employment and working conditions in given sectors by improving the provisions of labour legislation, collective agreements in Cameroon are primarily state-led initiatives in which the central government brings the social partners together and invites them to comply with pre-established agreements. Once these agreements have been accepted by the employers and trade unions, they are signed by the public authorities and co-signed by the social partners. Rather than sponsoring collective agreements, the central government is therefore both the instigator and final decision-maker.

To paint an objective picture of the social landscape, it should be added that those trade unions that are critical of the authorities have been experiencing conflictual relations with these latter. The ILO has, on several occasions, reported the violation of trade union rights and the non-application of the tripartism described in official documents.

2.4.2. The absence of any national coordination of voluntary sector initiatives

Several representatives of voluntary associations were met during the survey, including:

- a dozen members of the Intersectoral Craftworkers Association (*Groupement interprofessionnel des artisans - GIPA*), which works across the whole of Cameroon and more specifically in Central Province. One of its goals is to organise and coordinate craftworkers in their different occupational areas, because the crafts sector lacks a specific recognised national organisation. The GIPA was one of the main players working closely with the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Mines (CCIM) in view of setting up a crafts section with the consular chamber;
- the director and several members of the Federation of Unions and Joint Venture Groups of the Associated Producers and Consumers of Cameroon (*Fédération des unions et des groupes d'initiatives communes des producteurs et consommateurs associés du Cameroun – FUGICPROCA*). This federation, which was set up as a national association many years ago, was formally launched in July 2005 in order to represent the country's various farmers' organisations. While it is clearly very useful for the development of the agricultural sector, notably through its work in training, it is more of a political organisation than a sectoral federation, for which it lacks the means and organisational capacity;
- the team of managers of the National Association for Street Children (*Association nationale des enfants de la rue – ANER*). Although this association works exclusively in Douala, it acts as a national advocate on social integration and employment issues concerning children for whom the streets offer the only means of meeting their basic needs, including food and a minimum of social life and networks;
- the director of the Green Youth Association (*Association Jeunesse verte*), who also acts as a spokesperson for African youth, and the whole team responsible for running the association. The association, founded in 2000, works to ensure that young people's opinions on all sustainable development and general public interest issues are taken into account. During the meeting, the young people stressed that they found it very hard to enter the labour market. They pointed out that the highly informal situation of the Cameroon economy prevented them from

occupying social and professional positions that matched their real skills levels, social rights and desire to be full citizens. The association aims to create a National Youth Council in order to influence decisions taken concerning young people's futures and more particularly their access to the labour market.

All of these meetings shed light on a two-edged situation: on one hand, there are voluntary efforts based on project initiatives seeking to deal with urgent issues and short- and medium-term improvement of socioeconomic and employment prospects; on the other hand, a lack of resources and representative authority prevents them from having a wide field of intervention and national influence that would enable them to effectively impact on future developments. All of the people met were unanimous in stressing both the symbolic acknowledgement of their action by the public authorities and their difficulty and even impotence when it came to influencing on-going decisions.

By the end of the survey, it became clear that Cameroon suffers from a severe lack of national federations, organisations and associations that could effectively voice the opinions of those they represented. In reality, the country has dynamic local initiatives, but civil society is poorly organised. The predominance of the non-structured economy seems to go hand in hand with a lack of social organisation. Although these two phenomena affect each other, there is little understanding of how they interact.

There is absolutely no doubt that Cameroon faces huge challenges. These concern its ability to make progress in the economic and social areas, and, just as importantly, to give relatively well-educated workers and citizens the ways and means to take on responsibility in all areas of their working, civic, individual and collective lives.

A detailed analysis of the informal sector (which employs 90% of the labour force and produces 50% of national wealth) and its ability to combine job market access, wealth production and professional success will make it easier to identify the conditions it needs to meet in order to progress from being a survival and subsistence-based economy to one based on growth and development.

3. The weaknesses and strengths of Cameroon's informal sector

The data presented here are drawn from Cameroon's first national survey on the informal sector, carried out by the National Institute of Statistics (INS).

3.1. Initial assumptions

The Survey on Employment and the Informal Sector in Cameroon (*Enquête sur l'emploi et le secteur informel au Cameroun – EESI*) was conducted in 2005. Like the survey on Morocco's informal sector (1999-2000) and that on seven capitals of West Africa (2001-2002), it defines the informal sector as “all production units without a tax number and/or which do not keep formal written sets of accounts”.¹⁸ As with the other surveys, it also excludes agricultural activities, except for those in the wood production and forestry sector, which it lists in the “other industries” category. Phase 1 of the survey identified the main characteristics of informal sector employment in the overall employment context.

The survey was carried out in two phases, with the first aiming to assess the employment situation, and the second

aiming to analyse the economic activities of households in the informal sector. “This second phase is a ‘business-type’ survey among informal concerns, which are called ‘informal production units’ (IPUs), given that many of them do not have their own premises (workshop, shop, etc.), which is something usually associated with the notion of a concern”.¹⁹ Phase 1 identified about 6,000 units across the twelve regions covered by the survey. When the number of IPUs identified per region was higher than the estimated number of IPUs per household, a representative sample was selected from among people working for themselves in the two to four most common areas of activity. 4,815 IPUs were ultimately selected for the analysis.

18. Institut National de la Statistique (2006), *Enquête sur l'emploi et le secteur informel au Cameroun en 2005, Phase 2, Enquête sur le secteur informel*, Main Report.

19. *Ibid.*

3.2. The main characteristics of Cameroon's informal sector

The main Phase 1 results of the employment survey outlined above have already shown that the informal sector as a whole accounts for a little over 90% of employment in Cameroon. If a distinction is made between rural/urban areas, the agricultural informal sector is seen to be preponderant, since it accounts for 55.2% of overall jobs and

72.9% of rural jobs, whereas the non-agricultural informal sector accounts for 35.2% of overall jobs and 67.4% of urban jobs. When these results are broken down by sector of activity, they reveal a high concentration of IPU's in industry (45.8%), in trade (28%) and lastly in services (26.2%).

Table 8. Non-agricultural employment structure by branch of economic sector and according to institutional sector (%)

Economic sector	Institutional sector		All	
	Public	Formal private		Informal non-agricultural
Industry	10.5	39.6	35.4	33.1
Agri-food	0.2	16.3	18	15.9
Clothes production	2.2	1	6.3	5.3
Construction	0.3	7.7	4.8	4.6
Other industries	7.8	14.6	6.3	7.3
Trade	-	10.9	28	23.3
Wholesale	-	5.8	2.1	2.3
Retail	-	5.1	25.9	21.1
Services	89.5	49.5	36.6	43.5
Transport	1.9	9	7.1	6.7
Food service industry	0.2	2.8	9.6	7.9
Repair	-	1.8	4.6	3.8
Other services	87.4	35.9	15.3	25.1
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: INS, EESI 2005, Phase 1.

Data on Phase 2 of the survey, which are currently being published, give a more detailed overall picture. They highlights four major characteristics: the precarity of informal workers; the sector's increasing focus on job creation, especially self-employment as opposed to entrepreneurship; the under-appreciation of skills levels in relation to educational potential and, finally, the sector's strong resistance to any formalisation of its activities.

3.2.1. The precarious nature of the informal sector

According to the survey, informal sector precarity is fundamentally linked to the very poor quality of working conditions. Thus "only 17.2% of IPU's have specific premises (workshops, shops, offices or fixed stalls in marketplaces), 44.9% operate from home and 37.9% have no premises at all".²⁰ Moreover, over half of IPU's in the trade sector operate using makeshift facilities (mobile, fixed or improvised street

stalls, etc.). Overall, under 20% of units work from real business premises and, when they operate from home, they rarely have any facilities specific to the business and lack access to the main public services: 95% have no water, 51% have no electricity, and 85.3% have no telephone.

This precarity is exacerbated by poor working conditions. Most people in Cameroon's informal sector work for themselves (63.3% of total employment), a low number of employees receive regular wages (6.6%) and very few employees have any sort of contractual arrangement. Only 2.5% of employees have a written contract with their employer. The others have no written contract with their employer (68%) or simply a verbal agreement with their employer (29.2%). Only half of employees have permanent work and hardly any workers have any sort of social protection.

20. INS, EESI 2005, Phase 2.

Table 9. Demographic characteristics of informal workers according to status and sector of activity

	Breakdown (in %)	% of women	% of young people aged under 25	Average age (years)	Level of education (years)	Average seniority (years)
Status						
Owner	3.3	23.5	13	36.1	8.7	5.7
Sole trader	63.3	61.3	18.1	36.8	5.1	7.2
Employee	6.6	14.3	39.5	26.9	7.1	2.3
Paid apprentice	1.3	20.6	62.2	23.6	6.1	1.7
Non-paid apprentice	3.4	37	83.6	20.7	6.7	1.2
Family helper	21.3	59.2	74.6	20.3	5.6	3.1
Associate	0.8	6.5	14.5	36.1	5	6.4
Sector of activity						
Manufacturing	48.6	57.3	35	31.9	5	6.8
Trade	25.2	54.2	30	33.2	5.3	4.7
Services	26.2	50.4	36	30.7	6.6	4.5
All	100	54.7	34.1	31.9	5.5	5.7

Source: INS, EESI 2005, Phase 2.

This precarity is reflected in the above-mentioned levels of underemployment and invisible employment, which affect over 70% of the non-agricultural informal sector and over 85% of the agricultural informal sector.

3.2.2. The sector's increasing focus on occupation and employment to the detriment of entrepreneurship

A cross-analysis of the survey's results shows that the informal sector displays "more of a trend towards job creation than towards entrepreneurship".²¹ This trend—which could also be described as an effort to help the economically active population into work and occupy them so that they have a minimum income on which they can live and survive—may be explained as follows.

IPU production and services are primarily targeted at meeting household requirements

The agri-food industry accounts for three-fifths of industrial activities and primarily serves as a means of providing food for the sector's population. The same applies for the clothing and construction sectors, which respectively account for 10.9% and 8.7% of industrial activity, as they are mainly focused on production designed to meet the needs of this population. The trade sector responds to the same sort of demand, given that it is dominated by retail, which accounts

for 94% of trade activities. It primarily concerns agri-food products (56%), clothing and accessories (22%) and other day-to-day household consumer products. Furthermore, as the analysis of informal sector customers shows, "nearly 90% of IPU owners say that their main customers are households, and this applies whatever their place of residence".²² This is therefore an economy that primarily aims to organise the market for essential goods and, in return, to get as many people as possible into production, sales and services, who would in turn become viable customers.

Informal sector employment is primarily focused on income-generating activities (IGAs)

The survey underlines that the informal sector is a fragmented one, in which entrepreneurial dynamics are of a family-based and limited nature. The demographic characteristics of informal workers clearly show that micro-firms, which represent the most economically structured form of sectoral business, account for a very small proportion of IPUs (3.3%) and employ a tiny percentage of employees and apprentices, whereas the self-employed (people who work for themselves) and family helpers account for between eight and nine out of ten workers.

21. *Ibid.*

22. INS, EESI 2005, Phase 2.

This lack of entrepreneurial structure is explained by two other data sets in the survey. On one hand, "IPUs are usually run by one person, and are therefore unorganised: only 3% of them belong to an organisation of producers or traders".²³ They are therefore based more on individual efforts to get by and generate an immediately disposable income than on the notion of medium-term capitalisation and development. On the other hand, observation of IPU creation in recent years shows that the services and trade sectors have developed to the detriment of manufacturing sectors. As a result, during this difficult period of employment restructuring,

the fast growing informal sector primarily corresponds to the need to get young people and adults into work and the subsistence economy rather than to the need for business and wealth creation. The informal sector's emphasis on IGAs is confirmed by the analysis of IPUs' performance according to type of employment. This clearly shows that self-employment and non-waged employment generate subsistence incomes, whereas the few IPUs that do have employees and apprentices achieve results which bring them closer to the formal sector's level of business and value creation.

Table 10. Comparative performance of IPUs by type of employment and area (Monthly values, in millions of XAF)

	Turnover		Production		Added value		Gross operating surplus	
	Average	Median	Average	Median	Average	Median	Average	Median
Type of employment								
Self-employment	133.8	47	77	36	43.7	19	43	19
Non-waged	173	65	110.9	46	58.2	22	54.7	21
Waged	704.3	300	529.9	200	328.3	122	254.3	85
Mixed	650.6	255	601.9	255	304.8	171	226.7	112
All	173.8	57	110.2	41	62.4	21	57	21
Area								
Urban								
Self-employment	206.5	90	112.3	56	66.9	34	65.6	32
Non-waged	289.3	117	187.2	84	96.5	44	89.9	38
Waged	897.1	301	625	280	360.7	172	274.1	112
Mixed	689.7	311	643.7	311	326.9	197	241.1	120
All	275.2	105	168.3	69	95.5	41	86.5	37
Rural								
Self-employment	83.2	31	52.4	26	27.6	12	27.2	12
Non-waged	109.1	45	68.9	37	37.2	16	35.3	15
Waged	463.5	200	411.2	150	287.8	100	229.5	61
Mixed	504.3	113	445.9	113	222.5	69	172.7	41
All	104.6	37	70.5	30	39.8	14	36.9	13

Source: INS, EESI 2005, Phase 2.

3.2.3. A sector combining high education levels and unstructured vocational training

In comparison with other countries, Cameroon's informal sector is characterised by the fact that it has a relatively high potential. "Thus, informal workers in Douala and Yaoundé have an average educational level which is two and a half times higher than that in WAEMU countries (8.2 years of education compared with 3.5 years).²⁴ This figure is

hardly surprising, given that the educational attainment levels in Cameroon are much higher than those in other WAEMU capitals".²⁵ A comparison with data on Morocco is much trickier, given that Morocco's survey on the informal sector uses the "no qualification" category (meaning no qualification at the end of elementary education or at the end of training lasting two consecutive years at elementary school), although the results observed (67.1% of the economically active

23. *Ibid.*

24. This level is 5.5 years if the whole of Cameroon is taken into account, including rural areas, and it is still relatively high compared to other Sub-Saharan African countries.

25. INS, EESI 2005, Phase 2.

population have no qualification) make it possible to say that Cameroon's educational performance is no worse than Morocco's.

This educational potential in Cameroon has some effects on the informal sector because, as the survey states, "the proportion of business owners increases with the level of education/studie. Higher educational levels thus seem to offer an advantage for informal workers because it helps them to obtain a better status".²⁶ In the same vein, analysis of the relationship between educational levels and incomes reveals that there is a cause and effect relationship between the degree of accumulated human capital and remuneration obtained. "Wage level is an increasing function of educational level, which shows that even in the absence of formal wage charts, education is valued in the informal sector. The average income of individuals who have at least completed secondary education is three times higher than for those who have not been to school".²⁷

Regarding vocational training, Cameroon's informal sector benefits little, if at all, from the established vocational training system. The survey states that 1.1% of informal workers have learnt their trade in a large company, 6% have been to a technical college, 63.8% are self-taught, and 28.9% have had an on-the-job apprenticeship. This means that, for more than nine out of ten workers, the informal sector is the only place where they acquire vocational skills.

In the light of these data, it has to be noted that the informal sector offers almost the only place where those working in it can obtain skills, and that these are the combined result of the number of years of education coupled with average seniority in a job (six years on average). The data also call for a debate on how much could be achieved if good educational levels were to be combined with more structured and didactic vocational apprenticeship. This combination, which is already used by certain craftworkers (see the description of the GIPA's experience below), would undoubtedly help to

increase the performance levels mentioned above, chiefly with respect to the self-employed and dependent employees.

3.2.4. The informal sector's great reluctance to join the formal sector

During the field survey, the various stakeholders expressed great reluctance to make their activities more formal. This attitude was basically motivated by the real or imagined impact of taxation, and also by two other recurring factors: the lack of confidence in a public administration that is generally considered to be corrupt and the fears among IPU owners and the self-employed that they would lose their freedom of action as a result of burdensome and restrictive administrative regulations.

The statistical survey provides further qualitative information on this point, as well as some objective explanations for this reluctance.

- the statistics show that, contrary to received wisdom, entry into the informal sector is generally voluntary. "30% of operators first mention the possibility of obtaining a better income in comparison to a waged job, with nearly a quarter of IPU operators considering the informal sector as the best way of being independent".²⁸ Furthermore, 5% of people entering the sector do so because technical equipment or skills have been passed on to them. Nevertheless, "35% of IPU owners say that they decided to set up their production unit because they could not find a waged job".²⁹ These data clearly reflect the informal sector's potential to become an entrepreneurial one, on various conditions which need to be determined;
- the data available indicate that the upper range of urban informal sector incomes match income levels in the formal sector. If incomes are considered in average terms, the average remuneration of an informal sector worker exceeds the official monthly minimum of XAF 23,500 (or about €36) by XAF 6,000 (or about €9). If they are considered in median terms, IPU owners earn about four times the minimum wage and informal employees earn

26. *Ibid.*

27. The data published in the main Phase 2 report do not include the comparability tables, which will certainly be published in the documents appended to the main report.

28. INS, *EESI 2005, Phase 2*.

29. *Ibid.*

about 30% more. However, people who work for themselves (over 60% of the informal working population) earn about 20% less than the official level. These data show that informal employment status generates discrimination. They also highlight the divide between the small proportion of IPU that have similar economic data

to the formal sector and the majority of the self-employed whose activities generate income between the survival and subsistence levels. When used to assess the situation in the informal agricultural sector, the data highlight the major differences between urban incomes (analysed in detail by the survey) and rural incomes.

Table 11. Incomes by area

	Douala	Yaoundé	Other cities	Urban	Rural	Cameroon
Average monthly income (in millions of XAF)	43.2	63.4	30.4	41.9	21	29.6
Median monthly income (in millions of XAF)	26	43	14	22	7	11
Average hourly income (in XAF)	226.3	302.2	179.6	226.3	178.6	203.5

Source: INS, EESI 2005, Phase 2.

The survey pinpoints the difficulties that IPUs have in making their activities more formal. It shows that the informal sector accounts for over 90% of the domestic market, both for product supply (over 90% of IPU directors say they buy their raw materials from other informal businesses) and for sale of goods (only 5.6% of turnover is generated with formal enterprises). It also shows that over 90% of IPU capital is financed by accumulated personal savings. Lastly, the survey reveals the low level of declarations in the informal sector: for a tax number, for the trade register, individual professional registration and/or registration of employees with National Social Security Fund (*Caisse nationale de protection sociale* – CNPS). The most frequent registrations are for tax numbers, with less than 7% of informal units being registered. As far as taxes are concerned, 23.9% of urban IPUs say they have paid local taxes, professional tax or the business tax (*impôt libératoire*), but, according to the information gathered during the field survey, this figure can be explained by the tax collectors' regular visits to town markets in order to collect

the business tax at least. When asked about their willingness to contribute to the nation's tax effort, less than half of IPUs plan to register their activities and only 15.8% would be prepared to pay such a tax formally. Reluctance in the face of formalisation is therefore a reality and poses a problem that is difficult to resolve as things currently stand.³⁰

If one had to briefly sum up the specific characteristics of Cameroon's informal sector, it should firstly be emphasised that it is an essential factor of the country's economy. This reflects statements made by the Cameroon Employers' Association (*Groupement inter-patronal du Cameroun* – GICAM) and the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Crafts (*Chambre de commerce, d'industrie, des mines et de l'artisanat* – CCIMA). The sector's weight is felt both in its role in regulating the labour market (90% of available jobs) and in its vital contribution to national wealth creation (50% according to INS data given verbally). As far as the aim of this study is concerned (i.e. to analyse the role of

30. An informal sector tax system entailing a business tax (*impôt libératoire*) solely aimed at informal sector activities was introduced further to the adoption of the 1995/1996 Finance Act, which was supplemented by the 1996/1997 Finance Act. Owing to the almost total absence of formal accounts in the majority of IPUs, the business tax was introduced on a fixed rate basis for the purpose of simplification. The tax band thus depends on the category under which the business comes, and is set according to actual or anticipated turnover. This tax excludes payment of the professional tax, personal income tax, and tax on turnover, hence the term "*libératoire*", i.e., it frees the payer from other obligations. Those concerned by this business tax system are traders with an annual turnover under XAF 15 million (or about €22,870) and service providers with an annual turnover under XAF 5 million (or about €7,620). Above these amounts, it is either the simplified taxation system or taxation on actual profits that is applied. The collection of this tax is hampered by the fact that tax officials are free to determine which band to apply, and they can opt for the highest band. Hence there is a certain reluctance among informal sector businesses to pay the tax as it is felt to be unfair, with some of them believing that they largely contribute to national taxes through the gratuities they have to pay in order to be able to exercise their activity.

For more details, see: *La fiscalisation du secteur informel urbain au Cameroun: une étude menée auprès des communes d'arrondissement de la ville de Douala, "Villes et économie informelle"*, International conference held in Bamako, 16 and 17 March 2002.

vocational training in making the informal sector more dynamic), it must be pointed out that Cameroon is in a very specific situation. It is clearly the sub-Saharan African country in which interesting results can be obtained thanks to the interrelationship between good educational levels among

informal workers and a strong desire on their part—as repeatedly mentioned throughout the whole field survey—to take responsibility for their own training and skills development. This would be beneficial for the country and could be replicable in other contexts and situations.

4. Current training and reform initiatives in the informal sector

The statistical survey explains little about the training and skills trends in the informal sector. When asked about the type of support they would wish for, informal entrepreneurs say their top priority is to have better market access, particularly to big contracts (52.4%), and better access to credit (41%) in order to cope with cash flow problems and ensure raw materials and equipment supplies. However, “traditional SME support programme activities (technical training, business management training and accounting) are rarely mentioned by informal operators”.³¹

The field survey went beyond the quantitative approach and identified that public employment and training officials as well as informal sector voluntary body managers have a constant concern to increase skills and qualifications in the sector

as a means of improving production, profitability and employment potential.

The various stakeholders met all felt that established employment, production and training schemes should not continue as they are without being reformed. However, they differ in that they all act independently from one another and are unable, or do not necessarily want to work as part of a coordinated strategy for tackling and reforming existing arrangements. The profusion of initiatives undertaken by stakeholders outside the established political or strategic framework is undoubtedly one of the most significant characteristics of current reform trends in Cameroon’s informal sector.

4.1. The quest for effectiveness in the public training system

The current Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training (MINEFOP), created in December 2004, is faced with a conflicting situation. On the one hand, it is aware that its training system and structures are limited and inefficient and, on the other hand, it knows it must implement an ambitious action programme to help meet young people’s employment and skills needs.

4.1.1. The current training system

The MINEFOP is currently directly responsible for two types of establishment that should enable it to deliver a pro-active vocational training policy in order to promote youth employment:³²

- Vocational Training Centres (*Centres de formation professionnelle* – CFP). There are six of these. They are located in urban areas and notably suffer from “rundown, insufficient and sometimes unsuitable facilities”.³³ Until now, young people trained in these centres have received diplomas at the end of two years of training. Although, as the Ministry says, young people are now supposed to be trained for modern occupations, in practice, CFP trainers have insufficient knowledge of the relevant sets of skills. Cooperation developed with the CCIMA and the Vocational Training and Occupations Observatory (*Observatoire des métiers et de la formation professionnelle* – ONEFOP) should increasingly help to reduce this mismatch between

31. INS, *EESI 2005, Phase 2*.

32. Ministère de l’Emploi et de la Formation Professionnelle, (2005), *Document-Cadre pour la coopération dans le secteur de la formation professionnelle au Cameroun* (Framework Paper for Cooperation in Cameroon’s Vocational Training Sector).

33. *Ibid.*

training and employment. Aside from public CFPs, there are also about 200 private training centres. The whole initial (and, in part, continuing) training system trained about 2,000 people in 2005.

- Craft and Rural Sections (*Sections artisanales et rurales* – SAR) and Domestic Science Sections (*Sections ménagères* – SM). There are about 180 of these. They were established in 1955, and initially aimed to provide training for crafts and domestic trades in order to halt the rural exodus. The Ministry says that these sections have not issued any training diplomas for over fifteen years, and they suffer from a severe lack of resources. SARs and SMs currently train about 13,000 young people annually.

The National Employment and Vocational Training Conference organised by the MINEFOP in Yaoundé in November 2005 placed great emphasis on the informal sector's role in promoting youth employment. It emphasised that the rural sector had the greatest job-growth potential, and that the informal sector in general, and self-employment in particular offered the best opportunities for helping school-leavers into employment, including those who had followed a technical or vocational training course. This conference also identified the reforms to be implemented by the Ministry, and emphasised the importance of updating vocational training courses to match skills needs in the various employment sectors open to young people. Following the recent meeting of the Prime Minister's Cabinet on the Government's youth employment policy (30 March 2006), the MINEFOP was asked to "organise an extensive and coordinated debate with all of the government departments concerned in order to improve the quality of training provision, notably in the SARs and SMs, whose network should be developed and programmes diversified".³⁴

4.1.2. Schemes organised as part of the current reform

The meeting with various MINEFOP officials revealed that the Ministry had already launched two major reforms: the first concerning the development of a real dual training policy; and the second entitled the Integrated Support Project for

Informal Sector Actors (*Projet intégré d'appui aux acteurs du secteur informel* – PIAASI).

4.1.2.1. Dual training

The above-mentioned Framework Paper (see footnote 32) notes that Cameroon's current apprenticeship system is based on on-the-job learning in the informal sector. These practices, which are very similar to mentoring, "are not covered by any institutional regulations, and entail families organising placements with a view to acquiring basic know-how for an occupation or job and to receiving extra income as rapidly as possible in order to increase the family unit's resources". The paper underlines that, faced with this traditional sort of apprenticeship, some business associations (including the GICAM) and NGOs (including some religious associations, which are well developed in Cameroon) are developing skills development schemes tailored to the needs of the production system. In parallel, the central government, which does not currently have any real dual training schemes, should make them the centrepiece of its national support system. The meeting with the Ministry's main officials revealed that the Ministry is preparing a strategy to develop a close partnership with firms (through employers' organisations such as the GICAM and the CCIMA), with a view to creating the necessary conditions for a dual-type apprenticeship scheme. Launching the scheme, which entails alternate periods of work placements and college-based training, will require the redrafting of the 1965 Act governing college-based vocational training programmes.

4.1.2.2. The PIAASI Project

The MINEFOP launched the PIAASI Project in 2005, further to its approval by the Government in 2003. It is based on the idea that "the Cameroon economy's dynamism and competitiveness largely depend on the hidden jobs market",³⁵ namely the non-structured or informal sector. It is financed by HIPC loans (XAF 200 million or about €305,000 in total, with XAF 40 million or about €61,500 for 2005) and has been organised into the following phases:

- creation of a neighbourhood committee (*Comité de proximité*), whose mission is to contact the various

34. Cameroon Tribune, *Emploi des jeunes, point d'achèvement, grippe aviaire: le gouvernement mobilisé*, Friday, 31 March 2006.

35. MINEFOP (2006), *Rapport d'exécution du projet intégré d'appui aux acteurs du secteur informel (PIAASI)*.

organisations representing the informal sector. After several working sessions, this committee decided to recognise the Cameroon National Street Vendors' Association (*Association nationale des sauveteurs du Cameroun – ANESCAM*) as a partner. Meetings organised in Yaoundé and Douala brought together over 300 street vendors during a first phase;

- production of a directory of street vendors. The various meetings made it possible to identify and list about 800 young informal sector operators;
- selection of training projects and financial support for operators. The training, which entailed “focal point seminars”, targeted the most basic management and information tools in order to help young operators to develop their businesses effectively and profitably. In 2005, 132 young people received financial support for total amounts of between XAF 100,000 and XAF 500,000 (or about €150 and €760 respectively).

An induction seminar on project finance management is planned for 2006. It is primarily targeted at individuals who

are believed to qualify for financial support. Networking between focal point seminar organisers is also planned so that they can be trained to assume responsibility for monitoring and auditing funds granted to project operators.

This description of these two reforms being introduced by MINEFOP raises two questions about their future effectiveness. It would seem difficult to develop dual training tailored to Cameroon's labour market needs without involving the most dynamic informal sector IPU operators as partners. This would clearly require training such operators so as to enable them to better structure the way they pass on their trade. It also seems surprising that MINEFOP is intervening through the PIAASI Project without considering how to coordinate its work with NGO and voluntary sector initiatives in management and development training for various categories of informal sector entrepreneurs. It thus appears as though the Ministry is acting like one provider among others, rather than looking at how to make the different existing training schemes consistent with one another, how to make them dynamic and how to support them.

4.2. Multiple plans for training schemes targeted at the informal sector

The field survey identified and gathered information on the most important public and private schemes in the field of training and skills for informal sector workers. Three of the schemes identified deal with training in rural areas. Three others share the goal of the MINEFOP initiative, which is to develop dual-based apprenticeship. Lastly, several schemes developed with support from international donors are aimed both at strengthening IPU managers' business management and development capacities, and at promoting social integration and employment for young people.

4.2.1. Support schemes for rural jobs

These schemes include the creation of the Rural Jobs Support and Development Programme (*Programme d'appui au développement des emplois ruraux – PADER*), promoted by the National Employment Fund (*Fonds national d'emploi – FNE*), and the development of the Jobs in Rural Areas Project (*Emploi en milieu rural*) devised by FUGICPROCA (see paragraph 2.4.2), which is supported by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER) and financed

by the UNDP under its sub-programme for local poverty reduction (managed by UNOPS).

The Rural Jobs Support and Development Programme (PADER)

PADER, launched in May 1993, has as its main objective to promote rural employment and alleviate poverty. It is targeted at organised groups and unoccupied or underemployed young people in rural or periurban areas. It aims to help participants improve their standard of living and organise themselves into recognised groups, by identifying and selecting a programme and an area of activity that respond to the needs of the local people concerned, market needs and strategic development policies. Potential beneficiaries must demonstrate real interest in working on the land, have a proven right to two year ownership of a plot of land, and make a personal contribution in the form of preparing the land. If these conditions are met, the candidates accepted receive technical training in the relevant sector of activity. The FNE finances the project by contributing 80% of the farmer's

needs at a rate of 8%, with the latter being responsible for all preparatory, maintenance and harvesting work.

PADER has had many positive results including:

- boosting rice production in certain regions;
- creating and strengthening farmers' organisations, such as Joint Venture Groupings (*Groupement d'initiative commune* – GIC) or Economic Interest Groupings (*Groupement d'intérêt économique* – GIE);
- launching the Dry Bean (*Haricot sec*) Programme, which required an investment of XAF 27 million for a turnover of XAF 190 million (or €41,250 and €289,360 respectively);
- training (2003 figures) 8,286 rural women, improving their rural production methods and obtaining the finance requested;
- financing 8,714 production units for an average cost per unit of XAF 112,458 (or €171.45) and personal grants of XAF 195,958 (or nearly €300); to date, PADER has helped to launch 16,634 production units.

Evaluations of this programme draw attention to the need to correctly identify representative partners before launching a project (to ensure people take responsibility) and to put a single provider in charge of training, follow-up and support activities. The aim is to ensure that all local partners and experts are capable of integrating training into overall project management.

The Agricultural Skills and Institutional Development Project (PARI)

This project, known by its French acronym PARI (*Professionnalisation agricole et renforcement institutionnel*), was launched and is run by the MINADER. It aims to help increase and develop secure incomes in rural areas. The project primarily purports to boost incomes by developing agricultural business organisations. It acts in two ways: creating a formal operational framework at provincial and national level (Strand 1) and providing support for the development of staffing capacity (Strand 2).

Strand 2 of the project entails two types of activity:

- occasional training or information activities (with 15 to 20 participants). The project coordinators centralise information on the training needs of farmers' organisations.

They identify farmers, in given regions, who have found relevant solutions to these needs. The project then organises an information meeting between those farmers who have asked for training and other farmers who might be able to provide answers to the requests. The meetings are prepared in advance and include visits to the farms of those who are transferring their know-how. The two groups receive a preparatory briefing so that the exchange can be as useful as possible (knowledge exchange). After the meetings, participants who have requested the training are invited to draw conclusions from the exchanges and, for example, change their method of production. They then draw up an action plan. It should be stressed that the training/exchange does not merely entail the vertical transmission of solutions. It is beneficial for all participants. Discussions on the reasons for given practices enable all of the participants to think about their own work methods and how to improve on them;

- specific training to provide project support (for example management training). Here again, prior preparation is organised in order to identify which problems need to be addressed and which people are concerned. The training courses are contracted out to NGOs, which are given detailed terms of reference for the project. An evaluation takes place at the end of the training to assess what skills the NGOs have transferred and what changes have been effected. The results are not necessarily immediate: sometimes these are only visible once the project is finished and the individuals are left to their own devices. Nevertheless, these results are only effective if the trainer provides follow-up. Otherwise, about 60% of training activities have no effect.

Although these exchanges and training courses are open to individuals from all provinces, the beneficiaries of specific training activities are mostly from the same region. Certainly, sharing the same language, environment and experiences facilitates the exchanges. The training takes place in villages, which helps to reinforce the transfer of training content to all the local population through information and discussion.

To participate in the PARI project, it is necessary to belong to some sort of grouping, which has to underwrite and

support the individual's request in the form of an "individual project in the collective interest". These groupings are required to organise an internal consultation meeting in order to examine means of exploiting and developing the project of the person who has followed the training. The aim is thus to ensure that the training is beneficial both to the trainee and the overall organisation of the agricultural trade. At the present time, only 30% of farmers belong to networks (aside from traditional tontine-type networks).

The PARI project would like to create a multi-purpose skills development centre in the North, with a documentation centre accessible via the Internet, which would serve as a means of matching training supply and demand.

The project is financed by the Ministry with an AFD grant, and affects 1,000 people directly, and 25,000 to 30,000 people indirectly. It is the third programme of its kind. The first ran from 1995 to 1998 and the second from 1999 to 2001. The third programme began in 2005 and will end in 2007. Another is planned in the framework of the ODA debt cancellation agreement (C2D).

The Jobs in Rural Areas Project (devised by FUGICPROCA)

This project, which is approved by MINADER, starts with a needs analysis: the aim is to identify what farmers need (fertiliser use, lack of skills regarding certain techniques, etc.) in order to increase their production and improve their standard of living. After the analysis, the project then runs a three-day training course organised on the following model:

- Day 1: livestock and poultry breeding, etc.
- Day 2: bookkeeping, the role of management advice, etc.
- Day 3: fruit trees, other crops, etc.

Each training course entails follow-up support from a technician. An agricultural engineer is responsible for overseeing all organisational aspects.

Observation of project results indicates that agricultural production has improved and that young people are remaining in their rural areas and setting up their own farms.

Although the project and FUGICPROCA are extensively known and recognised, the Federation is nevertheless facing financial difficulties. This is also the case for the project, even though it is supported by various international development agencies, including the UNPD and the US and Canadian development agencies.

4.2.2. Projects and schemes aimed at developing traditional apprenticeship

These projects and schemes are implemented by the FNE, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the GIPA, although there is no coordination between them.

FNE Enterprise Training

Information was found on two company training schemes:

- Training for Jobseekers is a training programme enabling 1,000 young people per year to acquire skills through apprenticeship via a network of small companies. According to the FNE, company directors really do train the apprentices. The GIPA, however, says that the young people selected are sent into firms without any real job training taking place;
- the Job Qualification Programme (*Programme emploi diplôme – PED*) is for young graduates with no work experience. They are placed in companies in order to gain practical skills and taken on permanently when possible. They receive a wage, half of which is paid by the company and half by the FNE. The FNE says that 60 to 70% of these young people on work placement are taken on by the host company.

The FNE is also developing a project to support self-employment and micro-firms. It is based on the same principles as the PADER projects and uses a list of 100 project ideas for independent jobs. It acts at several levels: it assesses young people's ability to set up a business, helps them develop projects, finances 80% of the project costs, provides management training and supports them during the start-up phase. As part of the initiative to finance self-employment, the FNE has developed a XAF 7 billion funding programme, of which 1 billion has been made available by the President of the Republic. It aims to establish a long-term, concessional and probably revolving credit facility.

The FNE is aware that real dual training can only be developed if there is precise understanding of the targeted occupations. In partnership with the French national employment and adult vocational training agencies (ANPE and AFPA), and in the framework of the intended production of a Directory of Jobs, Activities and Skills (*Répertoire d'emplois, d'activités et de compétences* – REAC), it has therefore started developing joint training portfolios based on the identification of model work practices.

Structuring of traditional apprenticeship by the members of the GIPA

The GIPA was created in 1999 in Yaoundé at the initiative of nine company directors representing various crafts occupations. It is keen to strengthen the technical and managerial skills of crafts enterprise directors, and to develop and establish apprenticeship training standards. The GIPA currently brings together nearly 100 crafts enterprises from Yaoundé, which on average employ three workers and two apprentices, across eleven different occupations (carpentry, clothes-making, hairdressing, basketry, screen printing, dyeing, ceramics, interior design, electrical engineering, construction and sculpture).

The company directors met during the field survey run training activities for the various occupations. Some take on young disadvantaged people as apprentices and train them using a methodology similar to the functional literacy approach, while others take on qualified apprentices and guide them to craftsmanship and sometimes expertise levels in the skills development field. Overall, the GIPA is trying to develop a harmonised approach, which can be summarised as follows:

- organisation of a joint finishing exam and delivery of a joint certificate;
- decision to organise the final exam at a single location, and using joint methods for making an object, which is then assessed by a panel;
- proposal for final tests after evaluation by a coordination committee;
- development of a method for monitoring apprentices, which would entail continuous assessment of their ability to progress;

- shift from individual assessment to overall assessment of the improvements to be made to the training;
- addition of management training on top of technical training, to be provided by master craftsmen themselves;
- introduction of methods for positioning young people according to their level of entry and achievement of specific objectives;
- variation of the length of training depending not just on entry levels, but also regular assessment of their professional skills;
- development of a joint diploma at the end of the training in partnership with the ministry in charge.

The qualifications obtained at the end of the apprenticeship (about 10% of apprentices entering training reach this stage) are awarded in the presence of the MINEFOP.

The GIPA's budget comes primarily from its members' dues (XAF 12,000 per year). The German Development Service (*Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst* - DED) finances 10% of the annual budget and 20% comes from contributions from other external partners. The master craftsmen cover the costs of training the apprentices from their own funds.

There is no doubt that the GIPA's experience in apprenticeship training is one of the foremost initiatives for developing traditional apprenticeship. This is due to both the active involvement of master craftsmen as trainers/mentors, and the use of training methodologies that are adapted to the educational levels and learning cycles of the young people being trained. As an example of good practice, it would deserve priority attention from the public authorities within their drive to introduce dual-type training in Cameroon.

The Technical Education and Vocational Training Reform Project (PARETFOP)

This project, known by its French acronym PARETFOP (*Projet d'appui à la réforme de l'enseignement technique et de la formation professionnelle*), was launched by the AfDB. It is based on the assumption that a serious mismatch between training and employment exists in Cameroon, and that a human resources development scheme is needed to create a more suitable training system that would be more effective in helping people into the labour market.

The project has opted to work at secondary education and vocational college level, which comes under the authority of the Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC). It has conducted a very accurate assessment of the current situation: obsolete training programmes which are unsuitable and have not been updated for twenty years; insufficient practical training in courses; lack of practical work experience among teachers; lack of management and planning of technical and vocational education and very little success in helping students into jobs.

On the basis of these assumptions, the ten-year project, which began in 2005, has chosen to intervene in eleven technical colleges and to develop the following activities in each of them:

- support for the organisation of dual training in the selected colleges: for this they will be equipped with suitable equipment and facilities;
- training and retraining of teaching and management staff;
- development of technological and managerial skills among participating master craftsmen in order to increase their productivity and help them prepare to host students on work placement;
- support for vocational training for girls and women.

The whole project will entail the development of mini-incubators in the model colleges. This means setting up training workshops within the colleges, which will be equipped with technical and human training resources, and designed to host and support micro-business start-up entrepreneurs for a period of five years. The workshops will aim to give these start-up entrepreneurs support through training, advice, logistics and finance, and to provide them with premises until they can operate independently. They will also be designed to serve as a place for supporting the transition from school to work by offering work placement opportunities for young people and adults in training.

These mini-incubators will be developed in seven market and employment niche areas: agriculture, livestock breeding and fisheries, wood trades, tourism and the hotel trade, building construction and maintenance, clothing trades, mechanical maintenance and metal trades.

The project will use a dual-type approach to training, which is currently being devised and which could entail young people spending up to 50% of their time doing work placements and 50% following classroom-based learning (as opposed to 70% work experience and 30% classroom-based learning for master craftsmen). External technical assistance is planned to help finalise the development of the training programmes and dual training approach. The selection of participants has been made jointly with donors on the basis of 1,000 master craftsmen and 1,500 young people per year.

The total cost of the project is \$17 million, which will be covered as follows: \$14 million from African Development Fund (ADF) loans, \$2 million from the Cameroon Government and \$1 million from an ADF grant.

The mini-incubator approach will clearly need to be monitored closely in order to assess the extent to which model colleges are capable of adapting to their economic environment and creating dynamic relationships between the training centres and businesses. Such interaction will be the only way of ensuring that there is a real and effective mix of skills development and helping get people into work.

The CCIMA Dual Training Project

Further to Decree No. 2001/380 of 27 November 2001, Cameroon's Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Mines (CCIM) was given the task of organising and supporting the crafts sector, and it has thus become the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Crafts (CCIMA). Accordingly, it has published a White Paper on a Proposed Policy for Cameroon's Crafts Industry for 2005-2010, which is currently being validated, and in which it proposes to promote apprenticeship. Drawing on the experience of the GIPA, which occupies the vice-presidency of the crafts section, and further to direct negotiations with the MINEFOP, the CCIMA says that the efforts to promote apprenticeship must be accomplished through four types of action:

- defining a legal and administrative framework;
- designing and implementing a learning strategy suited to dual training schemes;

- training staff who will be responsible for organising, managing, running, evaluating and auditing training schemes;
- creating or refurbishing business training centres based on the French apprentice training centre (*Centre de formation pour apprentis* - CFA) model.

Similarly to what has been achieved in the PARETFOP project, the CCIMA would like these training centres to tailor their training courses to local requirements, i.e., to the occupations and activities exercised by craftworkers in the areas where the CFAs will be located.

While the CCIMA's apprenticeship initiative is still at the planning stage, it reflects both a recognised desire and need on the part of all public and private stakeholders met during the field survey. This involves gradually developing traditional apprenticeship through a dual training approach that is tailored to the needs of informal sector businesses and stakeholders. It is clear that the progressive development of this new form of apprenticeship will entail training master craftsmen and, more widely, defining the craftworkers' status, which is also part of the CCIMA's plans.

4.2.3. Voluntary sector training and job-start projects

These projects are specific in that they are either launched or supported through international development aid. There are two main types: those that develop coaching-type training designed to help children and young people to integrate society and obtain work; and those that provide management and business training in order to help IPU directors organise and develop their business.

4.2.3.1. Integration projects for children and young people

The field survey identified three major initiatives.

The National Association of Street Children (ANER)

The ANER (*Association nationale des enfants de la rue*) is an NGO created by street children in 1994. Its goals are to:

- identify abandoned street children;
- organise activities bringing children together in order to reduce vagrancy, and to train and occupy them;

- help children integrate by providing mediation between families and social services;
- fight against theft, inactivity and AIDS.

In the training area, the association has a specific approach. It first makes contact with the children and tries to identify their wishes, skills and abilities. It then uses their interests as a basis for training them in simple activities (moving cars, cleaning them, cleaning shop windows, etc.). It has thus set up sections for car-washing, training workshops for men's and women's hairdressers, market bag-carrying activities, etc.

The ANER also draws on the support capacities of voluntary adults in order to train children in areas such as construction and market cleaning. When possible, it helps the activities launched to become independent (for example mobile car-washing). The association currently has plans to create an activity centre in order to develop crafts training. The centre would also help to found an orchestra and organise conferences. The association would now like to transform its currently marginal profile to achieve a level of visibility that would give it greater impact and means for action.

The association was initially supported by the European Union and French development aid. It currently has no financial or political support from Douala municipal council.

The Cameroon Green Youth Association (AJVC)

The AJVC (*Association Jeunesse verte du Cameroun*) was established in 2000 to ensure that the opinions of young people are heard within Cameroon's political, economic and social system. Its role is also to mobilise young people at international level, in order to help them participate in discussions of general interest concerning their integration and role in society.

The meeting with the coordination team and its chairwoman, who also acts as the spokesperson for African youth, provided a useful insight into societies dominated by the informal economy. It revealed to what extent this kind of society effectively excludes young people due to its incapacity to get them into decent jobs corresponding to their level of training and skills.

When discussing the problems of social and professional integration, the coordination team said that the training they had developed is generally linked to the quest for alternative and experimental activities in the face of a labour market that remains closed to young qualified people.

The meeting raised the specific issue of graduate employment, which poses a real challenge given that the energy and skills of generally well-trained young people are being lost. Concerning the role of training as a means of boosting the informal sector, this group of young people also hoped that the AFD study would include the following suggestions:

- to support the creation of a resource centre for young entrepreneurs,
- to emphasise the recognition of experience,
- to put forward the idea that civil society must have central government support,
- to combine efforts to enhance the informal sector with solutions to provide young people with employment and civic opportunities,
- to support project operators (through training and also support for accessing finance),
- to lobby for an approach entailing fiscal incentives for starting businesses,
- to provide resources for business development through self-employment,
- to emphasise the participation of young people and civil society in the management of funds,
- to promote training for young women,
- to ensure that young uneducated people are not forgotten,
- to target part of HIPC support at help for getting young people into work.

When the association was launched, it was supported by the GTZ and then by UNESCO. It is currently seeking both political and financial support in order to create a National Youth Council for Cameroon.

The Youth and Voluntary Sector Social Integration Project (JEVAIS)

JEVAIS (*Jeunesse et vie associative pour l'insertion sociale*) is a Franco-Cameroon project that has been running in

Yaoundé and Douala since October 2003. It is organised in close cooperation between the French Service for Cooperation and Cultural Action (*Service de coopération et d'action culturelle - SCAC*) and the Ministry of Youth, and has two main lines of action: integration of young people through voluntary schemes (sports, culture, environment, health, etc.) and support for income-generating activities (IGAs).

The project involves 1,000 to 1,200 youths in voluntary schemes and about 30 young people in the IGA activities.

In the IGA area, young people grouped together into associations receive support from JEVAIS for projects that they have devised themselves. The approach is as follows:

- during a first phase, the young people set up their own projects without any training. They establish a logical framework setting out the objectives and the ways of developing the resources necessary for the success of their initiatives. Of the 30 to 40 requests made, a dozen are selected for funding;
- in the second phase, those people whose projects have been rejected are trained in project development and those whose projects have been accepted receive basic know-how in management, accounting, marketing, and so on (in cooperation with the European Institute for Cooperation and Development – IECD).

The idea of JEVAIS is not to offer training from the start but to let the young people mobilise their capabilities, with training being used to solve difficulties encountered during the first phase. The training includes follow-up measures: the trainer goes out locally to discuss any practical difficulties with the young people. It is currently being assessed whether young people have any technical training needs that could be met by working professionals (for example, by craftsmen).

The IGAs are grouped into micro-businesses and job-start workshops. The following activities have thus been launched: fish- and chicken-smoking, sanitation, chair hire, wood delivery, screen printing, oil sales, marketing of second-grade cardboard, an IT workshop, hairdressing, pig breeding, wood sculpture, a cafeteria, cold storage and air conditioning, sales of wood chippings, clothes design, soap production, etc.

The young people remain in the job-start workshops for between one and two years. They move on when their businesses have been approved by their respective associations. Regarding finance, the associations make a capital contribution and become “shareholders”. They mainly participate in the project management board, which meets once a month. The profits are divided up as follows: 60% for employees, 10% for reserve funds, 10% for the funds of the associations which have supported the project, and 10% for the project centre.

The problems encountered by JEVAIS can be summarised as follows:

- the young people display a lack of realism: the initiative’s managers have observed that many youth projects are based on interesting ideas, but there is a lack of market analysis and no account is taken of feasibility criteria;
- certain well functioning projects are subsequently taken over by young people who fail to redistribute the benefits. This is notably due to JEVAIS’ inability to continue monitoring the projects launched;
- the JEVAIS approach is more akin to pedagogical and social help than to real support for business start-up activities. While the allocation of grants in several instalments is fully justified, bearing in mind that the aim is to ensure that the young people are able to run their own businesses, the amounts allocated do not seem sufficient for the businesses to attain a critical size and ensure their viability.

4.2.3.2. Training projects for IPU entrepreneurs

The field survey identified several training schemes for craftworkers and small/micro-business entrepreneurs. They all have in common the fact that they are supported by international development aid and receive help from the IECD, which is a widely acknowledged provider in the informal sector.

The meetings organised in Yaoundé and Douala with training providers and beneficiaries helped to identify three internationally supported schemes.

The Local Initiative Promotion Programme (PIL)

The PIL (*Promotion des initiatives locales*) is a micro-credit and advisory programme supported by the DED. It is aimed at financing productive and profitable micro-projects in the city of Douala. Two visits to credit beneficiaries (one makes natural fruit juice and concentrates, and the other is launching a pastry-making business) showed how productive this programme is. The loans granted can be repaid or renewed depending on how well the project is developing and are accompanied by training provided by the IECD. This training is designed to give project operators an introduction to business management and accounting and entails on-site monitoring to support the operators and help them use management tools.

The Support Project for Craftworkers in Yaoundé’s Non-structured Sector (PAASSY)

The PAASSY project (*Projet d’appui aux artisans du secteur non structuré de la ville de Yaoundé*) is supported by the Italian aid agency (COOPI). It was instigated in 2001 and launched in 2005. Three major outcomes are expected: a new system for analysing the crafts sector, an organised network bringing together associations and organisations working in the sector, and a new documentation centre on crafts at the headquarters of the CEPAD Adult Education and Development Centre (*Centre d’éducation populaire d’animation et de développement*). The project aims to upgrade the technical skills of 450 craftworkers in the wood, clothes design, metals and construction trades, etc., and train 300 craftworkers in company production and financial management. The training, which is similar to that organised by the PIL in Douala, is also delivered by the IECD. COOPI is also working in partnership with the Ministry of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, Social Economy and Handicrafts (MINPMEESA), the GIPA and Yaoundé University in the framework of a preliminary study on crafts in the non-structured sector.

The Cameroon Occupations Programme (Métiers Cameroun)

This programme was launched in 2003 and is financed by the SCAC. It is based on an IECD scheme developed as early as 1995, which entails support for very small businesses

and IGAs. The IECED's approach to learning is focused on developing small entrepreneurs' understanding and use of management tools adapted to their needs, and it is aimed at craftworkers and IPU owners who fulfil the following conditions: they must be working and in a position to manage this activity, and able to read, write, count and grasp the benefits of the training. There are no pre-requisites in terms of educational achievements.

The training courses are organised in groups of 20 people every two months. The IECED thus trains nearly 300 small entrepreneurs annually. The courses are organised as follows:

- a theory strand: basic management concepts are taught in ten two-hour modules, which are run three times a week (evening classes) for six weeks;
- a practical strand: this comprises five two-hour practical sessions, which are designed to consolidate knowledge acquired in the theory modules. The sessions may take the form of role-playing, presentations, quizzes, etc.

Further support measures have recently been added to this training. They include the following elements.

- six on-site monitoring visits: these take place as early as the third week of training. Once the training module on bookkeeping has taken place, the trainers visit the seminar participants at their workplace in order to provide individual support in applying the knowledge acquired at business level;
- three support visits: these take place three months, six months and one year after the end of the training (although it is planned to organise them one, three and six months afterwards in order to ensure better follow-up). The purpose is to support the entrepreneur and measure the impact of the training.

The practical modules are run by the training managers. The theoretical classes may entail contributions by visiting trainers who have a perfect understanding of the situation in Cameroon's very small businesses (former seminar participants, tax inspectors, etc.), who are chosen on the basis of their training skills.

The results of the training speak for themselves: 90% of the trainees have a bookkeeping system at the end of the training (10% being individual project operators). This proportion goes down to 60% three months after the end of the training (hence the idea of having more regular support visits) and 50% six months after the end of the training. It is unfortunately not easy to obtain any figures on turnover increases, which would be an interesting indicator.

In practice, the introduction of bookkeeping systems constitutes a formalisation of informal units. Encouraging people to pay taxes (even though many entrepreneurs already pay them) represents another means of bringing these very small businesses into the formal sector.

There is a fee for the training courses: about XAF 12,000 / per person in urban areas and XAF 10,000 in rural areas (or about €18 and €15 respectively). The IECED's resources are therefore covered by participants' contributions to the order of €5,000 (which represents 10% of the total costs), as well as by French development aid grants, which are coming to an end in 2006, and the provision of various services. To safeguard the project's future finances, the association will try to apply to the European Commission and private funding providers (there is notably a possibility of finance from a Belgian NGO). Bearing in mind the nature of the work carried out, the IECED believes that it could also be a legitimate potential recipient of Cameroon public funds.

All of the schemes described above usually entail a meeting between their instigators, the trainers and beneficiaries.

The overall impression is that there is a large, even prolific number of local initiatives that affect both established entrepreneurs and adults or young people who are currently launching or planning to launch their activities. While this abundance of initiatives is furthered by international aid, it is also a result of the enthusiasm of the informal sector stakeholders themselves. Those met during the field survey visit all expressed their desire to act and become integrated. They also mentioned how difficult it was to succeed in the absence of support from the national and local authorities, and in the face of ever-present corruption.

4. Current training and reform initiatives in the informal sector

The meeting with national, political and industry officials revealed that they were also keen to act. They did not, however, link their strategic goals and means of action with grassroots efforts or promote coordination and synergy with

existing initiatives. It seems that they are aware how urgent the necessary reforms are, but they do not know how to accomplish them or with which partners to undertake them.

5. Prospects for change and action

This section on prospects for change and action attempts to identify the best ways and means of boosting Cameroon's informal sector by mobilising clearly identified training and reform initiatives.

The statistical analysis of the situation in Cameroon's informal sector and the qualitative investigation of the development of IGAs and micro-businesses highlight a very important fact: Cameroon's future economic and social prospects will largely depend on the way in which the country helps the informal sector to become a bigger stakeholder in efforts to combat widespread poverty, boost the national economy and steer the labour market towards more decent and stable employment, which would also be easier for young people to obtain.

By mid-2006, Cameroon has reached a halfway point. The HIPC Initiative is helping to reduce the country's external debt

by 27% compared to the amounts owed under traditional treatment, and has now reached the point where "new debt reductions will be agreed by bilateral donors, and mainly France, which will proceed towards total cancellation of all its ODA debts (C2D). This additional effort will be equivalent to about the total amount of the HIPC effort. The use of these funds will also be audited to ensure that they are allocated to anti-poverty projects".³⁶ In 2006, as a result of debt reduction, Cameroon will therefore have the means to combat poverty. It will be essential to include development of the informal sector in these efforts, bearing in mind the issues at stake. The field survey did however find that if these resources are approved and used, they will only be effective if they exploit ongoing schemes and initiatives and extend them using a strategy and resources that also give informal sector stakeholders the opportunity to participate in the reforms to be implemented.

5.1. National proposals for the informal sector

Various Cameroon public and private stakeholders are currently developing converging initiatives to try to improve the informal sector's present situation and future prospects. These initiatives are grounded on a number of basic proposals, the majority of which have been set out in the CCIMA's White Paper on a Proposed Policy for Cameroon's Crafts Industry for 2005-2010.³⁷ This involves defining a status for craftworkers, introducing incentive measures to encourage people to move from the informal to the formal sector, along with various proposals in the skills development and training area aimed at helping both young people and adults to acquire job skills and find work.

5.1.1. Towards a recognised status for craftworkers

The CCIMA's proposals on the future of Cameroon's crafts sector and, more broadly, on the future of the informal sector are based on a very precise analysis of the sector (taken in the wide sense of the term as any manual production, mining, processing and service activity which is barely mechanised and carried out as a main occupation). It also identifies its major weaknesses: restricted access to credit, insufficient equipment and human resources, poor control of production costs, incompatibility of taxation with the emergence of activities, lack of knowledge about market conditions and potential, etc. Broadly speaking, "the crafts sector suffers

36. This information is taken directly from the website of the French Embassy in Cameroon <http://www.ambafrance-cm.org/html/camfra/debt.htm>

37. CCIMA (2005), *op.cit.*

from a severe lack of organisation and professionalism. Training provision and skills development hardly exist. Owing to the lack of resources, craftworkers, the directors of Cameroon's very small businesses and their employees are totally excluded from the social security system".³⁸

These observations have led the CCIMA to consider that Cameroon's crafts sector and, more generally, the informal sector can only have a promising future if their development is included as part of a pro-active public support policy grounded in the creation of a legal, fiscal and social status for craftworkers. This status, which has been devised in cooperation with crafts organisations from across the country, would include several structured and combined elements:

- the definition of what constitutes the crafts trade on the basis of types of activities exercised and categories of workers employed (apprentice craftworkers, craftworkers, master craftsman, etc.);
- the definition of occupational qualifications for different categories of workers and methods of recognising these qualifications through a collective agreement;
- the creation of a professional registration card system for craftworkers, which would acknowledge their status and protect them, thus facilitating the creation of a national register of craftworkers and crafts enterprises;
- a specific tax system for craftworkers, in particular the introduction of a business tax that would be a simple form of income tax for minor tax payers, with the right to tax exemptions related to equipment importation and product exportation;
- the development of technical vocational training schemes and measures tailored to the financial and organisational possibilities of informal sector workers, and placing apprentices and the business at the heart of the new system;
- easier access to public procurement contracts for craftworkers and micro-businesses on the condition that they belong to recognised sector bodies and that such contracts do not exceed an authorised limit.

All of these elements seem to meet with the approval of the MINEFOP, which has itself argued for the idea of better legal

³⁸. *Ibid.*

organisation of informal sector stakeholders. The same applies for the MINPMEESA, which talks about the need for regulation and registration in the crafts sector. The field survey found that it also seems to correspond to the aspirations of the people concerned. Nevertheless, they are still particularly wary about the public authorities' ability to adopt and implement measures that would not hamper their freedom of action, and thus the potential continued development of their activities.

5.1.2. Towards specific measures for formalising the informal sector

At the meeting with the MINPMEESA, it emerged that, further to Decree No. 2005/090 of 29 March 2005, the informal sector has become a fully-fledged part of the ministry's strategy and organisation. This decree has created a Sub-directorate for the Informal Sector within the Social Economy and Crafts Directorate. Its main tasks include identifying the needs of informal economy stakeholders and developing any necessary measures aimed at promoting information and training for informal economy stakeholders.

The MINPMEESA is currently developing potential policies. It was not possible to obtain the texts being prepared, although the verbal presentation of ongoing work seems to be in line with the CCIMA's White Paper and in favour of a twofold approach based on structured development of informal sector stakeholders and respect for their specific circumstances. The Director for Social Economy and Handicrafts laid particular emphasis on the following opinions:

- while central government needs to know who is doing what and how, its role is not to take on leadership of the sector's organisation, but rather to encourage coordination and consistency among the sector's currently disparate and dispersed stakeholders;
- the informal sector needs structuring and, more specifically, requires skilled occupations, managers skilled in accounts management, a minimum degree of social protection (health insurance and pensions schemes), and training schemes leading to recognised qualifications. All of these elements are also modernisation issues. However,

they need to lead to a specific regulatory framework for the informal economy. The aim is not to mix formal enterprises together with craftworkers, but to respect the specific nature of the informal sector;

- the central government is planning to formalise activities, and notably to register craftworkers. It is also planning to create management centres that would defend the craftworkers' interests vis-à-vis the authorities. More generally, it is planning to create a funding agency that will be flexible enough to intervene in the informal sector in keeping with its economic and social realities.

In view of these declarations, the ministry unquestionably shares the CCIMA's understanding that specific measures are needed in order to positively integrate the informal sector into the overall development of the Cameroon economy. However, the question remains as to whether these measures will be able to match the actual expectations of the sector's workers, turn their scepticism into support, and provide development resources tailored to the real needs of the informal economy.

5.1.3. Towards the development of an official directory of occupations and qualifications in the informal sector

Various people met emphasised that the informal sector should cease to be a "phantom sector", both in terms of business development and skills needs, thus permitting better knowledge of the related occupations and qualifications.

The MINEFOP is also keen to gain a better insight into the sector and improve the way it targets current occupations, so that it can reorganise training resources and schemes, which are still too focused on rural and domestic crafts training. It believes that the lack of occupational directories in the informal sector prevents trainers from adapting their courses to real demand.

The creation of such directories is also vital for the Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC), given that the mini-incubator concept (developed in the framework of the above-mentioned PARETFOP project) can only be effective if occupational market niche areas are correctly identified and described.

The CCIMA has itself identified five high-potential sectors for the crafts industry: leather, textiles, wood, tourism and the food industry. It says that these sectors, which overlap with the PARETFOP project niche areas, are at an economic standstill due to the absence of any sort of quality policy or appropriate supply and sales policy. Moreover, some of these sectors are experiencing product quality problems mainly due to a lack of professionalism and consequently to the inadequate organisation of skills development in the occupations producing the products.

The most ambitious and organised policy as far as occupation and skills are concerned is being developed by the National Employment Fund (FNE). The Fund is aware that effective dual training can only be implemented if there is detailed knowledge about the targeted occupations. Thus, in association with the ANPE and AFPA in France, and in the framework of the planned production of the REAC Directory of Jobs, Activities and Skills, it has started work on producing common training directories based on standard occupational practices. A study launched in 2002 identified fourteen sectors with job-creation potential, including metal work, electrical maintenance, hotel and catering, carpentry, car mechanics, etc. The REAC Project involves establishing job directories in each sector further to a survey of entrepreneurs and the people who do the jobs in question. It also entails breaking them down into activities and skills with a view to including these in the training directories. Once the latter have been drawn up, it will be possible to assess the situation of the people to be trained, and to accredit any past experience ahead of the training. A request has been submitted to MINEFOP concerning the accreditation of prior experience. To date, the FNE has applied the REAC method to just one sector, but intends to extend these structured portfolios to all of the fourteen pre-selected sectors.

The activity of identifying and structuring the occupations and qualifications of the various workers mentioned highlights a general heightened awareness of how important it is to adapt existing training schemes to the skills and qualifications required in the occupations really exercised by informal sector workers. Nevertheless, there is a remarkable lack of coordination and consistency between the approaches of the various bodies concerned: although the occupations targeted

are relatively similar, the field survey discovered that these bodies do not share their work, which means that they cannot jointly capitalise on their activities and results. The various efforts therefore run the danger of being dispersed and/or competitive, and failing to boost a sector that is greatly in need of greater coherence and concerted support.

5.1.4. Towards a dual-based approach to initial and continuing training

Analysis of the various ongoing projects (PIAASI, FNE, PARETFOP, PARI, PIL, JEVAIS and FUGICPROCA) shows they all share the goal of introducing the dual learning approach which, in contrast to the public system's technical education and vocational training, is underpinned by learning rooted in professional experience and evaluated in real work situations. The dual learning approach itself takes various forms and is based on three experiences that are interesting in the way they take the underlying effects of the training into consideration.

- the GIPA's initial training for apprentices. This is an evolving form of traditional apprenticeship that enables young people, whatever the particular nature of their work experience may be, to observe their occupation objectively. The training helps them to position themselves with regard to specific goals and to be regularly evaluated on the achievement of these goals. It thus introduces into the occupational path a learning curve that is noticeably different from the repetitive and accumulative nature of traditional apprenticeship. It thus turns the master craftsman into a mentor/assessor of the young person and enables him/her to make professional contributions that are a structured part of the occupational development process. It would be desirable that the GIPA's experience with craftworkers, which has been built on the training ability of professionals, serve as a source of inspiration for the introduction of the dual-type apprenticeship planned by MINEFOP and the CCIMA;
- continuing training for craftworkers. This is mainly organised by the IECD. Firstly, it consists in training

entrepreneurs or independent craftworkers on the basis of identified needs concerning their businesses' organisational management and accounts. Secondly, it entails providing them with quarterly support for the actual use of the content and tools taught, in order to ensure that the training is really effective. By basing the training firmly within the context of the occupational activity in two stages, both before and after the series of training sessions, it increasingly resembles coaching, which is essential for achieving the desired results. As with the GIPA's work, it would be a shame if this experience were not taken into account in the continuing training schemes currently being planned;

- the JEVAIS and PIL experiences make a specific contribution in that they introduce training as a feature of business creation and as a condition for accessing relevant finance. They thus determine an important aspect in informal sector training: the need to link training closely to income generation, thus making it a direct feature of anti-poverty campaigns through employment creation and business development. The fact that the two programmes open the door to a second grant and a second training course after evaluation of the first phase of business creation strengthens the economic dimension of this type of training aid.

The training organised in the PARI project and the locally based training provided by the PAASSY project could also be added to these three types of initiative. All of the experiences identified during the field survey demonstrate the abundance of good Cameroon practice in the dual training field. However, they are also at risk owing to inadequate resources and the limited extent to which they are being taken into consideration within those public schemes in the pipeline. While it is vital to develop these schemes in order to boost the informal sector, they can only be effective if the conclusive results and dynamic contribution of those involved in ongoing projects are taken into account.

5.2. Weaknesses and shortfalls to be addressed

The field survey helped to shed light on the ongoing changes in the informal sector. It also provided an opportunity to ascertain that people are now becoming aware of the initiatives needed in order to make these changes operational and effective in the medium and long terms. These initiatives mainly include developing national business organisations, creating a platform for social dialogue worthy of the name, and, lastly, setting up a long-term and partnership-based financing system for formal and informal sector training.

5.2.1. The unrepresentativeness of existing organisations

During the field survey, meetings were held with the various business organisations and voluntary bodies mentioned earlier. It appears that the CCIMA is the only countrywide organisation capable of taking in hand national coordination of economic stakeholders in the informal sector. However, it lacks the necessary resources for coordinating the whole of its network of representatives effectively. All of the other organisations represent specific categories (rural, urban, crafts, traders) and the trade unions that could represent them at national level are either absent from or very barely active in the informal sector (CGT Liberté is present among taxi drivers and the Cameroon Trade Union Confederation [*Confédération syndicale des travailleurs camerounais* – CSTC] is present among fishermen, second-hand dealers and farmers).

A lack of coordination exists due to the fact that structured advice to firms is mainly provided by international organisations such as the German (DED), Italian (COOPI), American (USAID), French (SCAC) and Dutch (SNV) development agencies.

As the CCIMA underlines in its White Paper, “forms of representation for the very small business and crafts sector are currently evolving”, even though there already exist some intersectoral associations such as the GIPA and the National Guild of Cameroon Craftworkers (*Corps national des artisans du Cameroun* – CNAC), which aim to provide training, most often of a technical nature, with a view to promoting apprenticeship and know-how transfer.

The MINPMEESA currently has plans to develop a national network of crafts guilds. The CCIMA however is reticent about the project, and the intersectoral bodies remain sceptical as to what they would contribute.

The upshot of this whole situation is that the sector continues to be fragmented and poorly known, lacking any effective and coordinated means for voicing its needs and with no real access to concrete, applicable solutions that would support its development. Only a pro-active effort from the public authorities can change this situation, on condition that this effort builds and capitalises on existing initiatives, which are dispersed but open to cooperation.

5.2.2. The lack of real social dialogue between employers and trade unions

The meetings with the GICAM on the one hand and CGT Liberté and the CSTC on the other revealed that no direct meetings or negotiations take place between the representatives of employers or trade unions. The whole social dialogue—in the incorrect sense of the term—is in reality bipartite discussion between each of the partners and the central government. It is tripartite at the behest of the public authorities, which propose and decide on the agreements to be signed.

More precisely, the Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights for 2005 by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) stresses that “the government has a reputation for favouring those workers' organisations it sees as easier to control and has used union registration requirements as a means to withhold, or delay indefinitely, recognition for trade unions that it considers to be too independent”. There is therefore no real trade union freedom in Cameroon in the sense that international organisations such as the ILO, the ICFTU or the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) understand it.

Further to the meeting with the GICAM and the two trade unions, it seems that there is a new awareness about the need to create a platform for discussion between the social partners, notably focusing on training issues and how to take

account of the informal sector's current situation. The employers' position on this platform is fundamental. Bearing in mind how hard it is to develop structured organisations which are representative of the crafts and very small business sector at national level, the introduction of real social dialogue between employers and trade unions offers a vital means of developing real national consultation on how to provide the informal sector with the boost it needs, notably through an effective training policy which is tailored to its requirements.

5.2.3. The absence of any system for financing and managing training

There is clearly no established form for financing vocational training in either the formal or informal sector. The field survey discovered that a vocational training levy had existed in the past, but it was impossible to identify the nature of this levy or find out when and why it was abolished.

It is also clear that the absence of any established form of financing is, at least as far as the informal sector is concerned, compensated by the generally long-term contributions of international donors, which are mainly bilateral.

The survey identified that grants had been allocated for specific schemes:

- 17 million units of account (UA) for the PARETFOP project (of which 2 million come from the Government) for the multiannual development of mini-incubators in 11 upper secondary schools;
- XAF 40 million (about €61.000) in 2005 for the MINEFOP's PIAASI Project;

- a MINAGRI grant, through the PADER programme, for the creation of 8,714 production units for an average cost of XAF 112,500 (about €170) and an average amount per person of XAF 195,958 (about €300) (assessment made in 2003 after ten years of operations). PADER has helped create 16,634 production units to date;
- an XAF 1 billion fund (about €1.5 million) out of a total planned 7 billion (about €10 million) made available by the Presidency of the Republic for the FNE's self-employment support programme, which includes a strand for financing training organised for this purpose.

These data, which are incomplete and not fully consolidated, underpin the survey's findings on the current situation: financing of training is not based on an overall needs assessment linked to a national skills development strategy, which is itself linked to a policy in favour of youth employment and skills training for workers. Funding is provided on a piecemeal basis as and when sectoral projects are launched and depends on whether national or international resources are obtained. There is no permanent source for collecting funds that could support a general and sustainable policy for granting funds to either the formal or informal sector.

For all of these reasons, both the CCIMA and the GICAM are starting to look at the experience of countries that have introduced vocational training funds, thereby ensuring both a permanent source of financing and the involvement of the partners concerned in distributing and pooling the funds. Such funds make it possible to support skills development not only in modern enterprises but also among informal sector workers—the former cannot act in isolation from the latter, since companies frequently subcontract part of their business to the informal sector.

5.3. The necessary conditions for ensuring the effectiveness of existing initiatives

Further to the description of current positive trends and weaknesses in the field of informal sector training and skills development, a certain number of observations can be made regarding the conditions needed for upgrading the skills of workers in Cameroon's informal economy, which could well lead to improvements in the sector's productivity, quality and profitability.

5.3.1. Integrating existing initiatives into a coherent national strategy

The analysis of the situation in the informal sector has shown that a wide range of public and private initiatives exist alongside an absence of any coordinated overall strategy for 90% of workers in the informal sector.

This strategy is currently being devised by the MINPMEESA, and is set out in the CCIMA's White Paper. What is necessary for its design is not so much to devise, from scratch, a skills development plan for young people and adults in the urban and rural informal sector, but more to ensure the coherence of projects running in the same area. If possible, there should also be a minimum effort to align the assumptions on which these projects base their actions and methods of delivery. To achieve this, it will be necessary to mobilise new schemes and stakeholders, carry out a serious evaluation of the effectiveness and relevance of numerous initiatives already underway, and conduct an analysis of the possible conditions for rolling them out.

Bearing in mind that ministries each act in their particular area of responsibility and in ways specific to their departmental culture, it is important to stress the need for coordinated national management of innovative training schemes and approaches in the informal sector.

5.3.2. Delivery by a future public/private partnership

All of the stakeholders met stressed the lack of organisation among different schemes and stakeholders at national level, although they did not manage to explain all the ins and outs of this issue. The information gathered during the field survey highlights:

- the lack of material and moral support from the public authorities for existing associations, and the existence of a certain mistrust in the government vis-à-vis actors and actions that are too visible and well-established;
- the control of the social dialogue by the political authorities, both as far as the signature of collective agreements is concerned and regarding the appointment of social partner representatives to advisory boards and tripartite bodies;
- the absence of any platform for direct contacts and negotiations between employers and trade unions, or any joint positions adopted by them in their respective areas of economic and social responsibility;
- the lack of involvement of both the social partners and business organisations in debates, analysis and decision-making concerning vocational training.

The fact that the social partners are not really involved in the management of vocational training policies and schemes does not encourage them to organise themselves in such a way as to become dependable partners for the public authorities. This undermines the development of both a good understanding of training demand and the effective organisation of corresponding training supply.

5.3.3. Including informal sector training within an overall plan for structuring and developing the sector

As the statistical survey and field survey showed, informal sector entrepreneurs and independent workers place their skills needs within their overall plans for making significant improvements to their economic, social and fiscal situation. Efforts to boost the sector through training must therefore be conceived as an integral element within the overall review of its economic, social and democratic issues.

The CCIMA's White Paper constitutes an indispensable tool for identifying the changes needed in order to ensure that the crafts sector, and, more broadly, the informal sector as a whole becomes an asset for Cameroon. The CCIMA says that efforts to enhance the sector's potential should be made by a series of major steps. These have already mentioned: definition of a legal status for craftworkers to enhance the

status of their profession; development of a professional registration card system for recognition and protection purposes; the adoption of a tax system which is adapted to the real circumstances of informal sector workers and entails a simple and reasonable tax on their business; the introduction of simple conditions enabling micro-businesses to access public procurement contracts; and, lastly, the launch of an ambitious Cameroon crafts development programme.

If training is integrated within this overall framework, it can serve both as a means of training young people and craftworkers in previously identified occupations and of boosting various high-potential sectors by providing sufficient resources.

5.3.4. Introducing dual apprenticeship and training into the national training system

No training centres or organisations in Cameroon are currently developing dual-type initial or continuing training. All of the stakeholders met agree on the need to introduce a system that will help shift traditional apprenticeship towards dual-type training. For the moment, the ongoing initiatives described above are seeking to pilot new ways of training young people, while drawing on the occupational skills of master craftsmen and volunteer business people, who will become “master trainers”. It is clear that these experiences need to encourage the public authorities, and notably the MINEFOP, to enter into discussions and negotiations with the various stakeholders concerned in order to:

- decide on the introduction of apprenticeship and dual training as a national initial and continuing training system, thus facilitating young people’s entry into the labour market and enabling workers to upgrade their vocational and technical skills;
- determine the content of such training further to the identification of occupations really exercised in the informal sector, and to organise them in such a way as to ensure a positive pedagogical mix of classroom-based and in-company training.

5.3.5. Introducing specific financial mechanisms

The issue of financing training was discussed throughout the field survey. The lack of any stable and sustainable system for providing funds appeared to be one of the main obstacles to the development of training schemes adapted to the needs of young people wanting to become self-employed or entrepreneurs seeking improved business management and profitability. As the CCIMA says in its White Paper, the development of a stable and sustainable training system requires the deployment of specific financial mechanisms. These mechanisms should include voluntary contributions that informal sector craftworkers and entrepreneurs can make, according to their means, in order to contribute to their own skills development. They should also include the creation of a vocational training fund, which would be based on the principle of pooling national and international training resources and redistributing them through negotiated and partnership-based management.

6. Concluding remarks

Cameroon is a paradoxical country. On the one hand, it is one of the African countries in which the informal sector makes the biggest contribution to employing the economically active population (90% of jobs) and producing national wealth (50% of GDP). On the other hand, it has one of the highest education rates (5.5 years) among people working in the informal sector.

This paradox means that Cameroon is a country with great individual and collective potential, but it suffers from insufficient organisation at business community and institutional level. It is as though the centralisation of power, the marked pervasion of corruption and the absence of any structured, coordinated policy keep the lid on a wealth of potential, which is illustrated by innovative and sometimes exemplary projects. Unfortunately these projects are not able to develop to the point where they can be fully rolled out and exploited.

As a result, the medium- and long-run effectiveness of informal sector training schemes based on apprenticeship and in-company skills development will depend on how these schemes are used to help determine the main strands of any future vocational training reform.

This reform cannot just be technical in scope. To ensure the viability of future systems, it must redefine the relationship between the world of education and the world of business and give informal sector stakeholders a role as future partners in training. It will also mean developing dual and apprenticeship training to meet sectors' skills needs, introducing financing mechanisms designed to respond to the long-term strategic skills needs of small and micro-businesses and, finally, creating a multi-stakeholder management system to ensure that training helps the informal sector to become an acknowledged future asset for the country.

List of acronyms and abbreviations

ADELIS	<i>Association pour la défense de la liberté et de l'indépendance syndicale</i> Association for the Defence of Trade Union Freedom and Independence	CFA	<i>Centre de formation pour apprentis</i> Apprentice training centre
ADF	African Development Fund	CFP	<i>Centre de formation professionnelle</i> Vocational training centre
AFD	<i>Agence française de développement</i> The French Development Agency	CISL	<i>Confédération internationale des syndicats libres</i> International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
AfDB	The African Development Bank	CNAC	<i>Corps national des artisans du Cameroun</i> National Guild of Cameroon Craftworkers
AFPA	<i>Association formation professionnelle des adultes</i> French Adult Vocational Training Association	CNPS	<i>Caisse nationale de protection sociale</i> National Social Security Fund
AJVC	<i>Association Jeunesse verte du Cameroun</i> Cameroon Green Youth Association	COOPI	<i>Cooperazione Internazionale</i> The Italian Development Agency
ANER	<i>Association nationale des enfants de la rue</i> National Association for Street Children	CSTC	<i>Confédération syndicale des travailleurs camerounais</i> Cameroon Trade Union Confederation
ANESCAM	<i>Association nationale des sauveteurs du Cameroun</i> National Street Vendors' Association	C2D	ODA debt cancellation
ANPE	<i>Association nationale pour l'emploi</i> French National Employment Agency	DED	<i>Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst</i> The German Development Service
CCIM	<i>Chambre de commerce, d'industrie et des mines</i> Cameroon's Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Mines	EESI	<i>Enquête sur l'emploi et le secteur informel</i> Survey on Employment and the Informal Sector
CCIMA	<i>Chambre de commerce, d'industrie, des mines et de l'artisanat</i> Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Crafts	ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
CEMAC	<i>Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale</i> Economic and Monetary Union of Central Africa	FNE	<i>Fonds national de l'emploi</i> National Employment Fund
		FUGICPROCA	<i>Fédération des unions et des groupes d'initiatives communes des producteurs et consommateurs associés du Cameroun</i> Federation of Unions and Joint Venture Groupings of the Associated Producers and Consumers of Cameroon
		GDP	Gross domestic product

GIC	<i>Groupement d'initiative commune</i> Joint venture grouping	MINPMEESA	<i>Ministère des petites et moyennes entreprises, de l'économie sociale et de l'artisanat</i>
GICAM	<i>Groupement inter-patronal du Cameroun</i> The Cameroon Employers' Association		Ministry of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, Social Economy and Handicrafts
GIE	<i>Groupement d'intérêt économique</i> Economic interest grouping		
GIPA	<i>Groupement interprofessionnel des artisans</i> Intersectoral Craftworkers Association	ONEFOP	<i>Observatoire des métiers et de la formation professionnelle</i> Vocational Training and Occupations Observatory
HDI	Human development indicator		
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries	NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions	PAASSY	<i>Projet d'appui aux artisans du secteur non structuré de la ville de Yaoundé</i> Support Project for Craftworkers in Yaoundé's Non-structured Sector
IECD	<i>Institut européen de coopération et de développement</i> The European Institute for Cooperation and Development	PADER	<i>Programme d'appui au développement des emplois ruraux</i> Rural Jobs Support and Development Programme
IGAs	Income-generating activities		
ILO	International Labour Organization		
INS	<i>Institut national de la statistique</i> Cameroon National Institute of Statistics	PARETFOP	<i>Projet d'appui à la réforme de l'enseignement technique et de la formation professionnelle</i> Technical Education and Vocational Training Reform Project
INSEE	<i>Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques</i> The French national statistics agency		
IPU	Informal production unit	PARI	<i>Professionnalisation agricole et renforcement institutionnel</i> The Agricultural Skills and Institutional Development Project
JEVAIS	<i>Projet Jeunesse et vie associative pour l'insertion sociale</i> Youth and Voluntary Sector Social Integration Project		
MINADER	<i>Ministère de l'agriculture et du développement rural</i> Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	PED	<i>Programme emploi diplôme</i> Job Qualification Programme
MINEFOP	<i>Ministère de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle</i> Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training	PIAASI	<i>Projet intégré d'appui aux acteurs du secteur informel</i> Integrated Support Project for Informal Sector Actors
MINESEC	<i>Ministère des enseignements secondaires</i> Ministry of Secondary Education	PIL	<i>Promotion des initiatives locales</i> Local Initiative Promotion
		PNA	<i>Programme national d'alphabétisation</i> National Literacy Programme
		PPP	Purchasing power parity

REAC	<i>Répertoire d'emplois, d'activités et de compétences</i> Directory of Jobs, Activities and Skills	SNV	<i>Nederlandse ontwikkelingsorganisatie</i> The Netherlands Development Organisation
SAP	Structural adjustment policy	UA	Units of account
SAR	<i>Sections artisanales et rurales</i> Craft and Rural Sections	UCSL	<i>Union camerounaise des syndicats libres</i> Union of Free Trade Unions of Cameroon
SCAC	<i>Service de coopération et d'action culturelle</i> The French Service for Cooperation and Cultural Action	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
		UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
		USAID	United States Agency for International Development
SM	<i>Sections ménagères</i> Domestic Science Sections	WAEMU	West African Economic And Monetary Union
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises	XAF	West African CFA Francs

Translator's note: although English acronyms and abbreviations exist for some Cameroon organisations and initiatives, they are more generally known by their French names. For the sake of consistency, French acronyms and abbreviations have therefore been used throughout the text.

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