



For many governments and international organizations, promoting entrepreneurship seems to address the issue of youth unemployment, especially in Africa. **Introducing youths early on to the entrepreneurial culture is fundamental so that business creation can become a real opportunity for their socio-economic integration.**

## PROMOTING AN ALTERNATIVE FOR YOUTHS

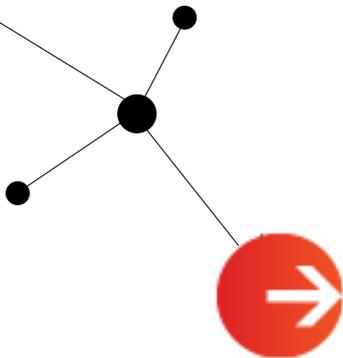
### **RAISING AWARENESS ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP**



In Cameroon, about one third of the population is between 15 and 34 years old. According to a report from the National Institute of Statistics in Cameroon, **youth unemployment rate is three times higher than unemployment for people aged 35 to 64 years and amounts to 11% in urban areas.** Moreover, a great majority of youths, as much as 92%, work in the informal sector because of the lack of job opportunities. Many of them find a job in small family's businesses or become self-employed.

Even though the informal sector absorbs a great share of the available workforce, enterprises are often vulnerable. The education system does not prepare students well enough to enter the job market: thus, those who decide to launch their own activity face financial, administrative or personal barriers, leading to discontinuance of their business, either by abandonment or failure.

10 million African enter the job market each year and this becomes a great challenge for governments as **youth unemployment becomes a rising issue and jobs need to be created to fill this gap.** In this context, entrepreneurship is becoming a strategic issue over



the whole continent. It is essential to encourage young people to view entrepreneurship as a voluntary decision and a viable option for their future, whereas a last resort, and to give them the elements to succeed.

**With this perspective in mind, Cameroon Entreprises Développement (CED) has put youth awareness to entrepreneurship among its priorities.** In addition to training and supporting young entrepreneurs in launching their business, the CED team is working up-front in order to trigger a change of attitudes towards entrepreneurship. In a country where young graduates are looking for stability and security, thus mainly seeking jobs in the administration or state-owned companies – however saturated this sector is, initiating teenagers to entrepreneurship offers them the chance to consider it as a career choice.

Since September 2014, trainers from the Management and Training Service in Bafoussam organize workshops on business management once or twice a week for high-school senior students. They study basic accounting, management and finance, but in particular they become aware of the skills required from a manager and an entrepreneur.

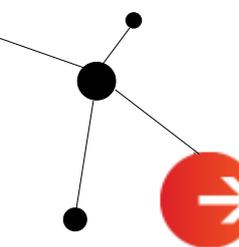
Training session of the Mini-Enterprise Club with high-school students



Furthermore, the CED team organizes **Mini-Enterprise Club** sessions every Wednesday in which students learn how to draft a business plan and start simple income-generating activities. They regularly organize field trips for students to visit companies; those visits allow them to face the reality of small businesses.

The highlight of this awareness program is the **Entrepreneurship Week**, which is held every year in March. Entrepreneurs formerly trained by CED can share their experience; Employment National Fund members run careers workshops and the Mini-Enterprise Club students present their products to visitors.

This program is useful to youths as it gives them the opportunity to decide whether entrepreneurship is right for them and they can evaluate their abilities, as well as it gets them accustomed to corporate culture. Over 100 students already participated to this program. Two of them already launched their own business; they make their own products and sell them in Douala city market. ■



## A QUICK LOOK AT...



**Ivory Coast** According to a report from the Agence Emploi Jeune, 3 out of 4 unemployed people are aged between 14 and 35 years. Companies established in the country cannot offer enough job positions for the many students who graduate each year from state and private universities. In order to develop youths' entrepreneurial spirit, CIED organizes, like CED, entrepreneurship awareness sessions in schools.



**Congo** In Congo, the situation is similar to the one in Cameroon, where entrepreneurship is often seen as a default option because of the lack of job offers in the public and formal private sectors. In order to promote entrepreneurship amongst youths, CGED is a member of the Skills for Employment and Productivity (STEP) World Bank program. In 2016, 34 young entrepreneurs were trained in basic management.



**DRC** In November and December 2016, RDCED helped 120 homeless young people to receive training in masonry, carpentry, welding or sewing. In addition to the technical training, they were trained to self-employment and entrepreneurship, and supported in the creation of their small business.



**Madagascar** Because of the complex economic context, young people in Madagascar tend to prefer to be formally employed whether working for themselves. Entrepreneurship is an economic necessity for those less qualified. To counter this trend and in order to stimulate business creation, MED schedules its Start Your Business Training start dates along with the High School Certification results and academic holidays.

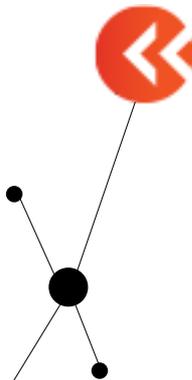
**397** entrepreneurs trained in basic management in the CED centers in 2016

**DECEMBER 8TH 2016**  
THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN CAMEROON VISITED THE MTC OF BAFOUSSAM

**57%** of beneficiaries in 2016 are under 35 years old

## TESTIMONY PORTRAIT

**Rachel Ingrid** (left), senior student at the Collège Polyvalent l'Assomption and member of the Mini-Entreprise Club



Before participating to the Mini-Entreprise Club, I didn't have a clear idea of what entrepreneurship meant. Thanks to the club and the trainer, I am now the Executive Director of Océan Mixte, a mini-enterprise that my friends and I created. We sell water, fruits and even clothing items during recess and at the Entrepreneurship Week, which is organized in March in our high school. Besides school, I make and sell my own products which enables me to contribute to my brothers and I's school fees.

Students who register to the Club activities can choose to join the project they like the most and they become one of its shareholders. The enterprise's directors are then elected during a general assembly and we decide altogether the amount of the resources to be cleared to launch the activity. Raising funds for our mini-enterprise was not an easy task, but we succeeded by putting some of our personal money in and by selling share vouchers.

We registered for the Club out of curiosity, but in the end it enabled us to gain autonomy and to have a better understanding of the entrepreneurial process. We could launch a profitable activity starting from scratch. Other aspects of the corporate culture that we talked about during the program and the company visits helped us to grasp some of the challenges entrepreneurs in our region, in the Western part of Cameroon, face every day." ■