

53rd Youth Day in Cameroon: the major challenges

Cameroon celebrated its 53rd Youth Day on 11 February 2019. An important day for most of the Cameroonians because the country has a large population of young people, 70% are under the age of 30 according to the National Employment Fund (NEF).

The purpose of this commemoration is to promote the role of young people as key partners in the processes of political and socio-economic and environmental change on one hand and to raise awareness of the challenges and problems they face.

Today, young people are facing pressing national challenges, such as: unemployment, vulnerable working conditions and marginalisation in decision-making processes.

In fact, unemployment remains the major problem for young people in Cameroon, despite the high rate of education, most of them have difficulties to find a long term and rentable job. Thus promoting immigration. While migration can contribute to the development of communities and societies, it can also present risks and lead to unacceptable situations for many young migrants, such as discrimination and exploitation.

As the journal economist has stated: “Africans will represent a growing share of the world’s youth population: in 2100, 48% of that population will be under the age of 14 years old”. ¹The young people are considered actors of tomorrow, the integration of this layer of society into the running of the state is imperative. Integrating young people into decision-making would mean integrating the majority of Cameroonians into the smooth running of their country. A participatory approach, which promotes democracy, would contribute to fostering the dynamic development that this country aspires to.

In addition to national challenges, globalisation imposes a guideline that accelerates the process of adaptation and development. Continuing developing but in a sustainable way, that’s why the Konrad Adenauer Foundation based in Cameroon, through its programme on climate change and

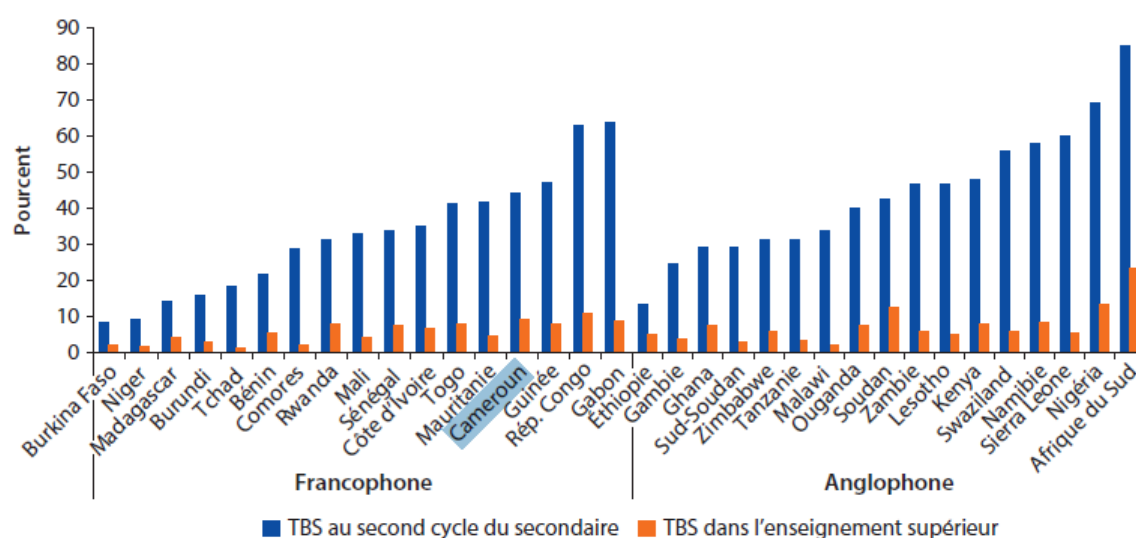
¹ Making Africa work, Greg Mills, Jeffrey Herbst, Olusegun Obasanjo, Dickie Davis Co-publish July 2017 by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, The Brenthurst Foundation and the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library, page 9

energy security for sub-Saharan Africa, encourages young people's actions towards green entrepreneurship, especially in the energy sector.

Energy is a factor that initiates and accelerates development. It has been shown that Cameroon's renewable energy potential is enormous: hydroelectricity or solar to name just a few. The implementation of policies that regulate this sector would facilitate access.

Another important part of this fight against the precarious situation of Cameroonian youth is education. Cameroon is one of the country in Africa with the highest rate of graduates in various fields, 4th in French-speaking Africa (see figure 1). The literacy index has shown impressive growth in the 2000s and since then it has continually grow (see Figure 2).

Figure 1 : Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) at upper secondary and tertiary levels

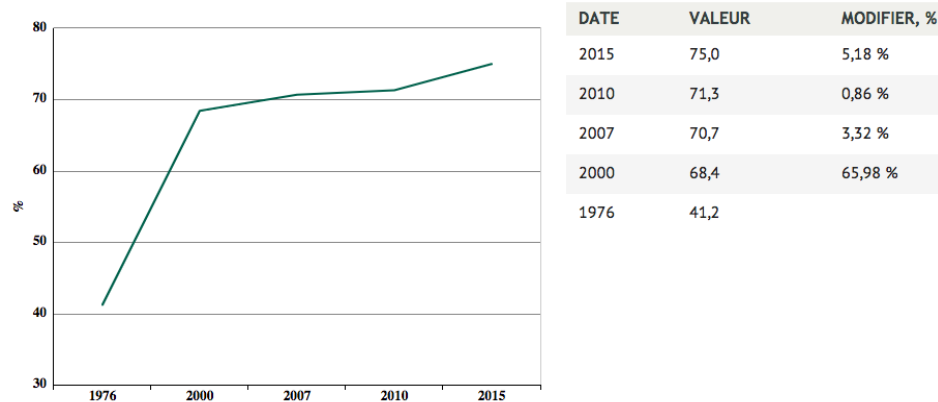


Source : Les calculs sont basés sur les dernières enquêtes auprès des ménages.

Note : TBS = taux brut de scolarisation.

Source : page 26 World Bank Report: Higher Education and Equity in Sub-Saharan Africa <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/27617/9781464812668.pdf?sequence=4>

Figure 2 : Evolution of the literacy rate of Cameroon from 1976 to 2015



Source : <https://knoema.fr/atlas/Cameroun/topics/%C3%89ducation/Alphab%C3%A9tisation/Taux-dalphab%C3%A9tisation-des-adultes>, date of the research 10 February 2019

However, green jobs are not well known. Entrepreneurship in general, green in particular, remains an important element for the creation and the economic monitoring of countries, and young people are the main drivers.

In regard to the above mentioned, we are facing a growing society, with increasingly pressing environmental challenges, with a dynamic workforce that is exposed more and more to various cultures and external influences. To bet and invest on this active force would be a winning bet for the Cameroonian society. Developing is good, but in a sustainable manner is better.