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SYNTHESIS REPORT

OF THE ACTION RESEARCH ON OBSTACLES, BLOCKAGES AND BARRIERS TO CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE BAMBOUTOS DIVISION

September 2025

Collection

The Right to know, the duty to act

As part of the Civil Service for Peace (SCP) – Cameroon

**Brot
für die Welt**
Pain pour le Monde
Service protestant
de développement

zfd Ziviler Friedensdienst
Civil Peace Service
We don't turn our backs on conflict.



Developing a Culture of Participation

We are driven by an ambition to develop a culture of participation. This means creating an environment where individuals actively engage in the creation, sharing, and debate of ideas, rather than simply passively consuming ideas produced by others. We believe that every individual has the capacity and ability to contribute to discussions that shape and evolve their living environment, and to ensure that community members feel connected to one another and proud to interact in order to grow collective projects and shared ambitions together.



1 Bias and Interest in the Participatory Approach

Participatory approach is a working method that primarily seeks to actively involve those concerned by an initiative or project in its identification, definition, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. It is based on the idea that each member of a community is a resource endowed with capacities and skills useful for the progress and development of that community, with a view to improving the overall well being of all its members.

This is referred to as collective or community intelligence, used to guide community members in collaboratively developing the solutions they need to address their problems. When this approach is implemented, the solutions adopted are better understood and readily accepted by community members, thus ensuring the sustainability of the results achieved.

The participatory approach is a process that requires a clear framework, diverse actors (traditional authorities, religious leaders, opinion leaders, partners, experts, target audience...), appropriate tools and supportive guidance.

2 Usefulness and application of the document

This document is a communication tool that summarizes the results of action research on the obstacles, barriers, and impediments to citizen participation in the Bamboutos region. It aims to address the issue of youth civic participation in Bamboutos. The research report provides a basis for discussion to encourage internal reflection on both the problem itself and the strategies formulated in the

recommendations. This will allow users, primarily young people, to adopt the most relevant, effective, and potentially efficient strategies and adapt them to the local context, taking into account existing or potential mechanisms. It also offers decision-makers a framework or lens through which they can examine their institutions' practices regarding community involvement in carrying out their missions and fostering participatory processes.

3 Context and justification

The study is situated within a socio-political environment marked by a national desire to strengthen citizen participation and the inclusion of young people in local governance, in accordance with decentralization reforms in Cameroon.

In Cameroon, the legal and institutional framework enshrines citizen participation as a key pillar of local governance, particularly since Law No. 2004/017 of July 22, 2004, which guided decentralization, and up to the General Code of Decentralized Local Authorities (Law No. 2019/024 of December 24, 2019) and Decree No. 00000147/A/-MINDDEVEL of July 19, 2023, which establishes the procedures for creating, organizing, and operating neighborhood or village committees as part of citizen participation in council action in Cameroon. In a context marked by the increasing power of decentralized local authorities, citizen participation and especially that of young people is now considered a lever for improving the transparency, accountability, and quality of public policies. However, this participation remains

largely limited in practice, particularly in rural areas, where participatory mechanisms are little known, not easily accessible, or poorly representative of vulnerable groups.

In **Bamboutos** Division (**West** region), the municipalities of **Batcham**, **Mbouda**, and **Galim** have community dialogue bodies but still struggle to sustainably engage young people in the planning, consultation, and monitoring of public actions. This situation is particularly concerning given that young people represent the majority of the local population but are often relegated to the sidelines in decision-making.

3.1 Justification of the research

This study is justified by the need to **gain a thorough understanding of the obstacles to youth civic participation** in a context where formal mechanisms exist but struggle to produce the desired effects in terms of inclusion, dialogue, and accountability. How does this issue manifest itself in Bamboutos from the perspective of the stakeholders? What are the limiting factors that dominate this context? What can be done to overcome them? Beyond institutional frameworks, it is essential to document the **concrete barriers—economic, institutional, and cultural**—that affect young people's ability to engage in local public affairs. A better understanding of these dynamics would allow for the **formulation of recommendations tailored** to local realities and strengthen democratic engagement at the territorial level.

3.2 Institutional support

The study was conducted within the framework of the project "Developing a Culture of Participation," aligned with the objectives of the Civil Service for Peace program and implemented by **DMJ**

Cameroon (World Dynamics of Young People), as the project owner, in partnership with

- **ARAC SARL** (Advanced Research & Advising Company), as a technical service provider specializing in participatory evaluation, local governance and youth inclusion,

- **The decentralized services of the MINJEC - Ministry of Youth and Civic Education (DDJEC and DAJEC)**

- And the **Councils of Batcham, Babajou, Mbouda and Galim**, territorial partners in the action research.

This multi-stakeholder institutional support guarantees the local anchoring of the study, while ensuring its methodological rigor and its alignment with the priorities of young people and communities.

3.3 Problematic

While decentralization reforms are creating spaces for citizen participation, **young people remain marginalized** in local decision-making processes. The mechanisms intended to promote their involvement (Youth Councils, Youth and Civic Education Departments, development committees, neighborhood or village committees, departmental monitoring committees for the Public Investment Budget, etc.) are often ineffective or disconnected from their actual needs. Many young people express a feeling that their opinions are not being taken into account, a lack of information about opportunities for participation, and material obstacles (time, transportation, means of subsistence) that prevent them from getting involved. This results in a democratic divide between local institutions and a significant segment of the population. Hence the following

research questions:

- What are the main obstacles to youth civic participation in the targeted municipalities?
- To what extent do these obstacles vary according to gender, vulnerability, or geographical origin?
- What courses of action can be co-developed with local stakeholders to improve this participation?

4 Study objectives

4.1 General objective

Identify, analyze and document the obstacles to youth civic participation in the communes of Batcham, Babajou, Mbouda and Galim, with a view to co-constructing concrete and appropriate recommendations with local stakeholders.

4.2 Specificity of the approach

- Map the types of participatory mechanisms that exist in the municipalities studied;
- Identify the economic, institutional and socio-cultural barriers affecting youth participation;
- Analyze young people's perception of their inclusion in municipal decisions;
- Develop localized recommendations to strengthen the effective involvement of young people in local governance.

5 Methodology

5.1 Specificity of the approach

The study is distinguished by its **participatory, territorially based nature**

and its grounding in an action-research approach :

- **Participatory** , because it gives a voice to young people themselves, through co-constructed tools, focus groups, and open feedback spaces;
- **Territorialized** , because it starts from the specific realities of each municipality (Batcham, Babajou, Mbouda, Galim), taking into account their cultural, geographical and institutional diversity.
- **Action research** , because it closely links **diagnosis and transformation** , mobilizing stakeholders to collectively develop solutions tailored to their contexts.

5.2 General approach

The study was conducted using a participatory action research approach, employing a multi stakeholder approach rooted in local dynamics. This approach actively involved young people, women, representatives of municipal authorities, and community leaders, not only as sources of information but also as co-creators of solutions. The objective was both diagnostic (identifying obstacles to citizen participation) and prospective (fostering the emergence of concrete and shared recommendations).

5.3 Study area

The study was conducted in the **Bamboutos Division** (West Region, Cameroon), and more specifically in the municipalities of **Batcham, Babajou, Mbouda and Galim**. These councils have a **great demographic diversity** ; the **presence of young people from vulnerable groups** (IDPs, young women, people with disabilities, non-indigenous people, etc.) and the **variety of existing participatory mechanisms** (CCJ, DAJEC, etc.).

5.4 Target population

i. Sample size by age group

The study targeted young people aged 20 to 35 , divided into three sub-age groups: 20-24, 25-29, and 30-35. The sampling plan allowed for the interviewing of 421 young people, distributed as follows:

Table 1: Sample size by age group, sex and municipality

Slice	Babadjou		Batcham		Galim		Mbouda		Together
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	
20-24 years	14	31	36	19	27	19	16	20	182
25-29 years	24	24	17	21	14	7	19	19	145
30-35 years	09	09	08	06	21	15	16	10	94
Total	47	64	61	46	62	41	51	49	421

ii. Proportion of internally displaced youth

The proportion of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is highest among 20-24 year olds, averaging 15.7% for men and 9.7% for women, reaching as high as 45% in Mbouda. This age group appears particularly vulnerable, likely due to their greater mobility or limited access to protection services. IDP proportions gradually decrease with age: 11.3% of men and 12.2% of women for 25-29 year olds, then 10% and 7.4% respectively for 30-35 year olds. The Mbouda Commune has the highest proportions in almost all age groups, which can be explained by urban appeal combined with challenges related to resettlement or local integration. In general, women are less represented among IDPs than men, except in some isolated cases (e.g. Galim 25-29 F), which invites further investigation into the gendered dynamics of displacement and access to support.

Table 2: The proportion of internally displaced youth

20-24 years old	Mbouda		Babadjou		Galim		Batcham		Together	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Non-PDI	55	75	93.5	92.9	84.2	88.9	100	97.2	84.3	90.3
PDI	45	25	6.5	7.1	15.8	11.1	00	2.8	15.7	9.7
25-29 years old	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Non-PDI	68.4	78.9	100	95.8	85.7	78.6	95.2	94.1	88.7	87.8
PDI	31.6	21.1	00	4.2	14.3	21.4	4.8	5.9	11.3	12.2
30-35 years old	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Non-PDI	90	93.8	100	100	80	85.7	100	100	90	92.6
PDI	10	6.2	00	00	20	14.3	00	00	10	7.4

iii. Social group according to ethnic group

The survey reveals an overwhelming majority of young people from the Bamileke ethnic group, who represent more than 90% of respondents in each commune. Across the entire sample, 379 young people are Bamileke compared to only 42 non-Bamileke, illustrating a high degree of cultural homogeneity in the areas covered. The Mbouda council has the highest number of non-Bamileke young people (20), which may reflect greater openness or a stronger migratory dynamic. Conversely, Babadjou and Galim have the lowest rates of ethnic diversity, with only 4 non-Bamileke individuals recorded in each. This situation raises important questions regarding the representation and inclusion of ethnic minorities in local participatory and governance mechanisms.

Table 3: Social group according to ethnic group

Groups	Babadjou	Batcham	Galim	Mbouda	Together
Major ethnic groups (Bamileke)	107	93	99	80	379
Minority ethnic groups (Non-Bamileke)	04	14	04	20	42

iv. Proportion of native/non-native residents

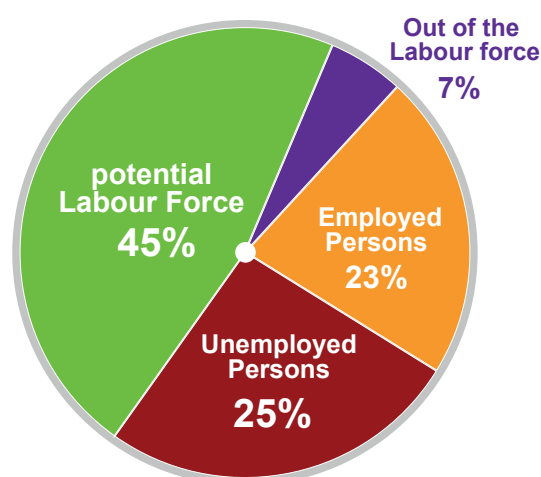
The survey reveals the presence of young people from cultural or ethnic minorities (Bororo, Hausa, and other non-Bamileke groups), as well as non-native residents (young people living in the municipalities but not originally from there). The majority of young people surveyed are native residents, meaning they originate from the councils where they reside, with a particularly high proportion among 30–35-year-olds (80% of men and 57.4% of women). Conversely, 20–24-year-olds exhibit greater mobility, especially among women (47.3% are not originally from the council), which can be explained by migration related to studies, work, or marriage. The municipalities of Babadjou and Mbouda have the highest rates of non-native residents among young men (93.5% and only 45% native residents, respectively), while Batcham remains relatively homogeneous in its residential composition. A higher rate of non-native residents is also observed among women in almost all age groups, reflecting lower rates of female sedentary lifestyles. Overall, these figures underscore the importance of considering youth mobility and their local roots in local inclusion and participation policies.

Table 4: Proportion of native/non-native residents

20-24 years old	Mbouda		Babadjou		Galim		Batcham		Ensemble	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Person originating from the Commune	45	50	93.5	85.7	68.4	55.6	63.2	38.9	70.8	52.7
A person not originally from the Commune	55	50	06.5	14.3	31.6	44.4	36.8	61.1	29.2	47.3
25-29 years old	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Person originating from the Commune	36.8	50	100	91.7	71.4	57.1	76.2	47.1	73.2	64.4
A person not originally from the Commune	63.2	50	00	8.3	28.6	42.9	23.8	52.9	26.8	35.6
30-35 years old	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Person originating from the Commune	80	68.8	88.9	100	42.9	83.3	84.3	25	80	57.4
A person not originally from the Commune	20	31.2	11.1	00	26.7	57.1	16.7	75	20	42.6

v. Surveyed proportions of young people according to their employment status

This graph highlights a labor market structure characterized by a high proportion of potential workers (45%) , reflecting a large pool of young people waiting for employment or experiencing discouragement. Only 23% are employed , compared to 25% who are unemployed , indicating a worrying imbalance between labor supply and demand. Finally, the non-labor force (7%) remains marginal, underscoring that the majority of inactive individuals still have a potential connection to the labor market.



Targeted group discussions were organized with young people, both members and non-members of local organizations. Each focus group was guided by a thematic framework and facilitated by a moderator-rapporteur team.

In addition, **institutional and community stakeholders** were mobilized for interviews: Town Hall General Secretaries, youth officials, CCJ (Youth Council), DAJEC (Department of Youth and Civic Education), traditional chiefs, and association leaders. In-depth interviews were conducted with **key resource persons** : Town Hall General Secretaries; DAJEC or Youth Service Managers; and association leaders.

5.5 Collection tools and devices

The study used several tools:

- **Digital questionnaire** via **KoboToolbox** (collection on tablets and smartphones, with geolocation and anonymization);
- **Focus group guides** structured around 4 thematic areas;

- **Semi-structured interview guides** adapted according to the profiles of actors (institutional, community, associative);
- **Consent forms and identification grid** to ensure ethical monitoring of the collection.
- Prior training was provided to the investigators on the Kobo tool, conducting interviews, and the principles of confidentiality.

5.6 Limitations and potential biases

Like any investigative approach, the study has certain limitations:

- **Social desirability bias**, particularly during interviews with local authorities;
- **Unequal mobilization** of young women and IDPs in certain rural areas;
- **Limited understanding** of certain technical terms by poorly educated young people (need for reformulation);
- **Initial mistrust** in some neighborhoods, quickly lifted thanks to community relays.

Triangulation mechanisms (cross-referencing sources and methods) were implemented to reduce these biases and improve the reliability of the results.

6 Key findings

6.1 Economic Obstacles

One of the primary obstacles identified to citizen participation is economic. Many residents, especially young people, are absorbed by subsistence activities that leave them little time to get involved in public affairs. The president of an association emphasizes this point:

"There are those who ride motorcycles or sell at the market; they say that the meetings prevent them from earning their daily wage."

This situation creates a form of unintentional selection: only those who can afford to "lose a day" without financial compensation participate in the meetings. Young working adults, on the other hand, prioritize daily survival.

"The young man who rides a motorcycle or sells drugs... if he loses his day, he won't have anything to eat in the evening."

Furthermore, the lack of incentives or logistical support (meals, transport, symbolic allowance) reinforces this disengagement.

■ A majority of young people do not participate in the meetings due to a lack of means of transportation.

This observation underlines the urgent need for suitable local mobility solutions, particularly for women and young adults involved in community life.

■ A majority of young people do not participate in the meetings due to lack of time.

The results reveal a conflict of availability, particularly related to family or professional responsibilities, calling for adjustments in the organization of meetings (flexible schedules, online or rotating meetings) to promote the active inclusion of young people.

■ A majority of young people do not participate in the meetings due to a lack of food.

Lack of meals is a gender-dependent and localized factor of food insecurity that severely affects younger women, especially in contexts like Galim and Batcham, requiring targeted measures to strengthen food inclusion in spaces of participation.

■ **The cost of transport as a barrier to the participation of young people who are not members of an organization**

■ **Subsistence activities prevent participation in meetings**

This observation reveals the significant economic pressure on young people.

6.2 Institutional Obstacles

Despite the clear commitment of local authorities to implementing participatory mechanisms, several institutional limitations weaken their impact. While municipalities in the Bamboutos Division do implement participatory budgeting, it remains the only formally recognized framework for citizen involvement. As a municipal secretary-general stated, *"We encourage them through programs like participatory budgeting."*

However, no municipal resolution mandates participation, no quotas are in place to ensure the inclusion of young people or women, and no consultation framework is used systematically. *"It's true that we don't yet have quotas... but we try to involve everyone when we can."*

The Bamboutos division is experiencing a gradual decline in participation and increasing disengagement, especially among young people and women. A representative from the mayor's office stated, *"Yes, we're seeing a decrease. Even when we call to schedule a meeting, we have to insist several times."*

The reasons for this disinterest are numerous: lack of concrete results, lack of feedback, perception that "everything is already decided" at City Hall. *"Young people often say they are busy, or that it doesn't change anything even if they come... Some say that everything is already decided at City Hall, that the meetings are just for show."*

This participatory fatigue is exacerbated by the lack of feedback mechanisms and recognition of contributions. One association member states, *"Even a small report that we could post to say 'here's what we learned'... that's missing."*

■ **Lack of understanding of citizen participation mechanisms in the municipality**

The widespread lack of knowledge about participation mechanisms poses a real challenge for local governance, particularly in a context where youth inclusion is supposed to be a pillar of decentralization and participatory local development.

■ **Failure to consult a public document (municipal budget, deliberations, activity report) during the last 12 months**

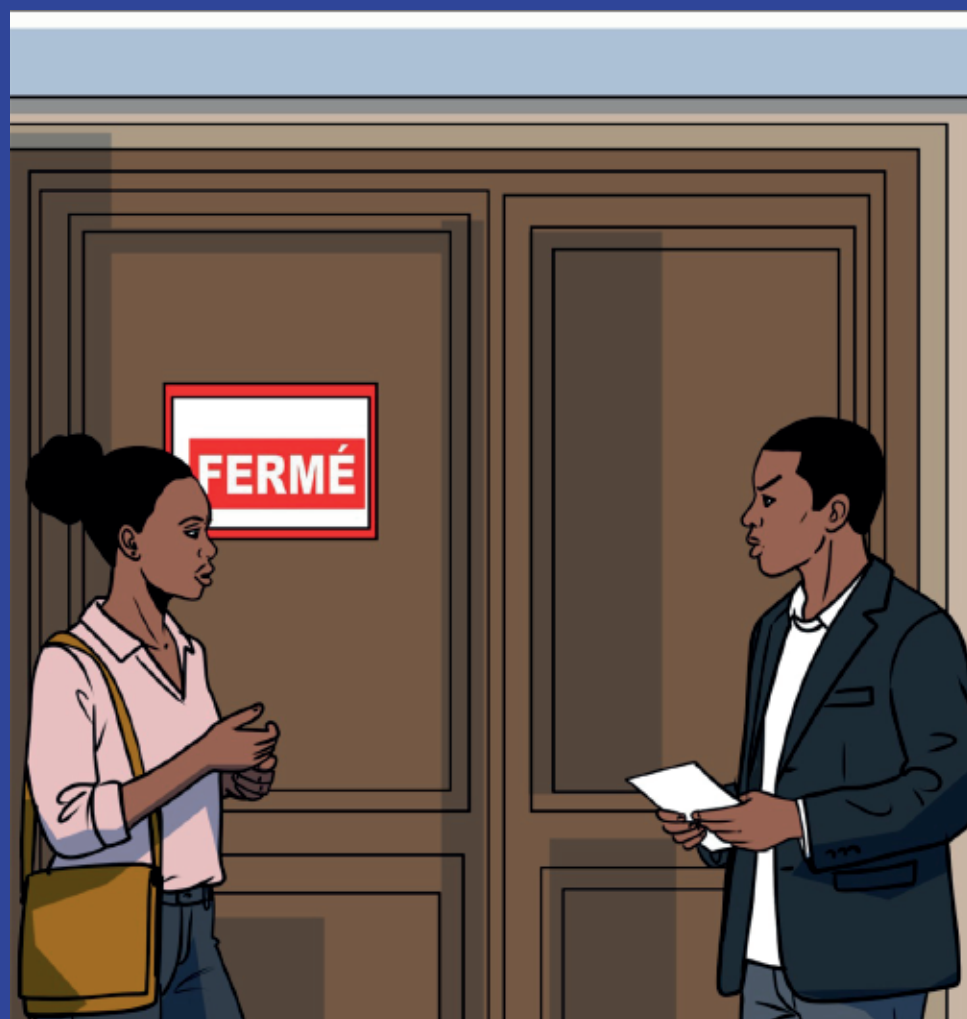
Very few young people consulted a public document, highlighting a lack of civic education and awareness. This situation suggests a serious deficiency in local transparency and in young people's effective access to public information, calling into question their ability to exercise informed civic control over local governance.

■ **Failure to consult the municipal budget during the last 12 months,**

The results reveal low levels of consultation of the municipal budget by young people, with an average of less than 20% across all age groups, both male and female. This finding highlights the continued marginalization of young people in local budget transparency processes, which limits their ability to advocate for participatory and equitable local development.

■ **Failure to consult the municipal activity report for the last 12 months**

**Availability
of officials**



The data reveals a weak culture of transparency and consultation regarding municipal activity reports among young people, with significant differences depending on age, gender, and municipality. These disparities illustrate a differentiated exclusion based on gender and age, hindering young people's effective civic participation and their access to information on local governance.

■ **Information on community meetings over the past 12 months is unavailable.**

Lack of information is a major obstacle that results in low overall community participation. The findings highlight the need to adapt meeting times, information channels, and formats to foster more inclusive participation. To strengthen youth community participation, it is crucial to remove barriers related to information, time, and social responsibilities, while valuing their involvement through more flexible, accessible, and representative formats.

■ **Mixed perceptions of neighborhood leaders**

Analysis of young people's trust in neighborhood leaders reveals only partial trust. Overall, the figure of the neighborhood leader inspires mixed respect, oscillating between institutional loyalty, personal experience, and a perception of proximity or effectiveness in decision-making.

■ **Perceptions of Village Chiefs' Leadership**

Analysis of young people's trust in village chiefs shows a generally more favorable perception than that of neighborhood chiefs. While village chiefs retain a perceived more legitimate symbolic authority, this trust is far from uniform, revealing generational, gender, and territorial differences in local perceptions of traditional leadership.

■ **Partial trust among young people towards the town hall for decision-making**

Analysis of young people's levels of trust in the local council for decision-making reveals a significant fragmentation of opinions, both according to age group and gender, as well as the municipality. The results show that the institutional credibility of the local council remains fragile and inconsistent, with a tendency towards increasing distrust among women with age, and a more nuanced perception among older men, fluctuating between partial and complete trust.

■ **Low level of trust in the Municipal Youth Council**

Analysis of data on trust in the Municipal Youth Council (CCJ) reveals an overall low level of trust, marked by significant disparities based on gender, age, and municipality. This reflects limited visibility of the CCJ, its often-misunderstood functions, and a need to strengthen its legitimacy among young people, particularly in rural areas and among young women.

■ **Controversial perception of the city council's consideration of young people's proposals**

The results concerning the consideration of youth proposals by the local council reveal a highly fragmented and contrasting perception depending on age group, municipality, and gender. Trust remains weak and dispersed, with a high rate of critical or uncertain responses. Overall, the data suggest a crisis of confidence regarding the actual impact of young people on local governance, with significant disparities based on gender and region, calling for a strengthening of participation and accountability

Taking young
people's views
into account
in participatory
processes



mechanisms at the municipal level. The emergence of neighborhood and village committees, still relatively unknown, could be an opportunity to change this situation. Unfortunately, very few citizens are aware of their existence.

■ **Overall, there is a low perception that the opinions of young members of organizations are taken into account by municipal authorities.**

The results reveal an overall low perception that the opinions of young members of organizations are taken into account by municipal authorities. These results reflect a gap between young people's participatory intentions and the actual recognition of their voices, necessitating increased efforts to institutionalize youth participation in municipal decision-making processes.

■ **Contrasting perceptions of how village chiefs take opinions into account**

The data reveal highly variable perceptions, depending on age, gender, and municipality, regarding the consideration given to opinions by village chiefs. The situation worsens in the 30–35 age group, where trust levels are strongly polarized. Overall, these results demonstrate a growing trust deficit with age, particularly among men, and weak territorial consistency in the perception of local governance.

■ **Fragmented perception among young people regarding the consideration of their opinions by neighborhood leaders**

Young people's perceptions of how their opinions are taken into account by neighborhood leaders vary considerably according to age, gender, and municipality. Overall, the responses reveal persistent distrust, particularly among older men, and

significant local heterogeneity in the perceived quality of citizen engagement by neighborhood leaders.

■ **Insufficient citizen engagement with young people by the Municipal Youth Council**

Analysis of perceptions regarding citizen engagement by the Municipal Youth Council (CCJ) reveals significant variability across age groups, genders, and municipalities. The perception that the CCJ effectively considers citizens' opinions remains a minority view and is uneven, suggesting a particularly acute communication or representation deficit among young women.

6.3 Sociocultural Obstacles

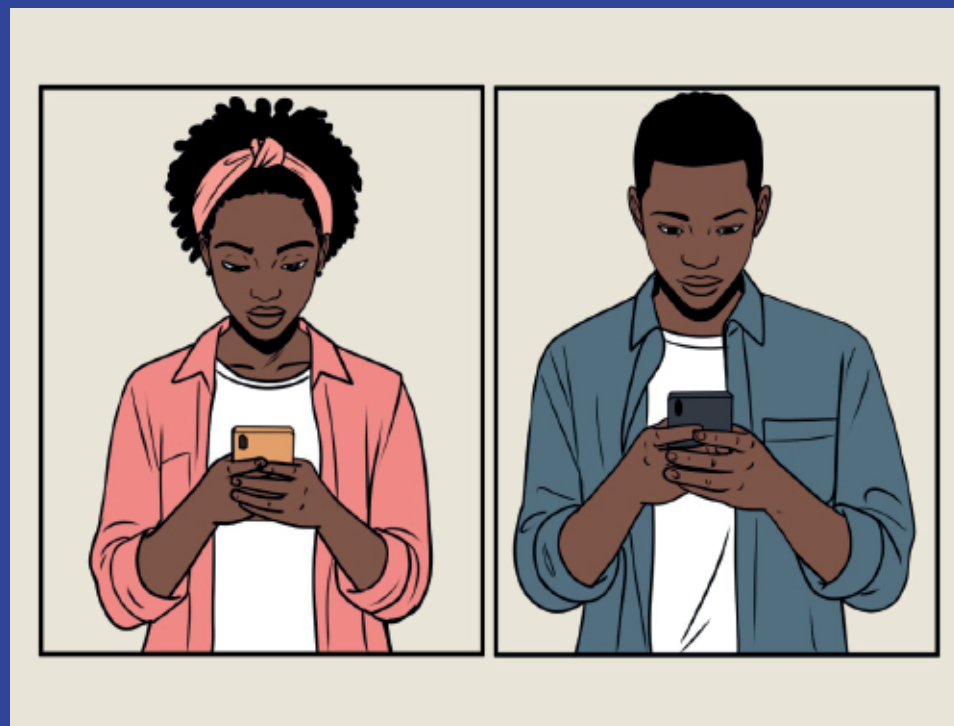
The weight of tradition reinforces self-censorship among women and young people. Discourse remains dominated by notables, chiefs, elders, and other prominent figures. The head of a youth association states, *"In our context, it's the elders who speak. Young people, especially girls, don't readily take the floor. Some women come, but they don't speak. They say it's not their place."*

Even when they are present, young people or women do not dare to intervene or are not listened to: *"If you are not a prominent figure or the President of a group, you are not listened to."*

■ **Free participation of girls/women in youth meetings**

The results reveal an overall positive but contrasting perception of girls' and women's free participation in youth meetings, with significant variations according to age, gender, and municipality. These disparities suggest a gendered perception of inclusion in youth dialogue

«Better»
we are happy
with our phone



Expand
communication
strategies to engage
young people



spaces, highlighting the need for gender-sensitive approaches to strengthen young women's engagement in local governance.

■ **Freedom of expression in the presence of authorities or elders (Members of youth organizations)**

The data shows that young people's sense of freedom of expression during meetings varies considerably depending on gender, age, and municipality. This situation highlights the persistence of a climate of restraint or self-censorship among young women, particularly in the presence of authorities, and calls for more inclusive, safe, and gender-sensitive spaces for dialogue within local governance mechanisms.

■ **Freedom of expression in public on municipal affairs (members of youth organizations)**

The results reveal significant variability in the perception of freedom of public expression depending on age, gender, and location. This climate reflects inequalities in access to civic expression and a potential fear of stigmatization or repression, which can hinder active participation in local governance, especially in areas with strong social or customary hierarchies.

■ **Overall, there is a low perception that the opinions of young members of organizations are taken into account by municipal authorities.**

The results reveal an overall low perception that the opinions of young members of organizations are taken into account by municipal authorities. These results reflect a gap between young people's participatory intentions and the actual recognition of their voices, necessitating increased efforts to institutionalize youth participation in municipal decision-making processes.

6.4 Commitment/Personal Motivation

■ **Membership in a youth organization**

The proportion of non-members of youth organizations remains the majority in all age groups, although the gap narrows with age. This trend suggests that engagement in youth organizations increases with age, but remains very limited overall, probably due to structural barriers, a lack of awareness, or a perceived disinterest in these structures among younger people.

■ **Current membership of young people in the Municipal Youth Council (CCJ)**

The analysis reveals very low current youth participation in the Municipal Youth Council (CCJ), across all age groups, with no active respondents at the time of the survey. These results call for reform or revitalization of the CCJ, by adapting its operational mechanisms and strengthening inclusive, active, and representative youth participation in local governance.

■ **Registration on the electoral lists**

Voter registration remains prevalent among young people of all age groups, particularly among 20- to 24-year-olds, where over 50% report not being registered, with figures reaching as high as 94.7% in Galim. These results raise questions about the effectiveness of civic education programs and young people's trust in the local democratic process, calling for targeted citizen mobilization and voter awareness campaigns.

■ **Youth participation in local public meetings**

The analysis shows that youth participation in local public meetings remains generally low across all

Citizen participation: an individual and collective responsibility. Every citizen has an active role to play in the well-being of their community, beyond simply having the right to vote.



Civic-mindedness and the collaborative development of public policy form the foundation of citizen participation as a means of fostering collective intelligence and strengthening social cohesion



age groups. This data reflects a form of civic disengagement or a lack of information opportunities about public meetings, particularly among women and in certain municipalities such as Babadjou.

■ **Withdrawal from participation after a bad experience**

These results show that current participatory mechanisms struggle to retain young people, especially older ones, in the long term, and are often associated with negative experiences. It is urgent to reinvest in the quality of relationships, inclusivity, and transparency of projects to prevent the erosion of local citizen engagement.

6.5 Inclusion

■ **Representation in local bodies or committees**

The data reveals that young boys are perceived as the least represented in local bodies or committees, followed by girls, women, and people with disabilities, reflecting a widespread perception of low inclusion of vulnerable groups. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are very rarely mentioned, which may indicate their invisibility in community dynamics or a low rate of presence in the neighborhoods concerned. This finding highlights the existence of marked disparities between municipalities and suggests an increased need for targeted inclusion initiatives in certain areas.

7 Cumulative impacts of obstacles on youth engagement

Type of obstacle	Concrete manifestation	Impact on engagement
Economic obstacles	Cost of transportation, lack of meals, subsistence activities	It prevents physical presence and affects the most vulnerable and young women.
Negative experiences	Disappointment, lack of follow-up, lack of recognition	Gradual abandonment, especially among 30–35 year olds
Information deficit	Lack of awareness of the mechanisms, meetings or public documents	Low engagement, minimal consultation, apparent disinterest
Weakness of local structures	Inactive youth councils, lack of youth support in the municipalities	Lack of a formal channel for sustainable participation
Gender inequalities	Limited freedom of expression, exposure to deprivation, lack of access to spaces	Underrepresentation of women in spaces of influence

8.1 Local governance and citizen participation

Despite the presence and potential of participatory mechanisms such as the DAJEC, PCD, and COGES in the four municipalities, their operation remains uneven and not very inclusive. The CCJs are weakly institutionalized, often dominated by men, and their influence is marginal. Youth participation in consultations is rare and symbolic. Added to this is a disengagement linked to economic insecurity: only 25.5% of the young people surveyed have a job, limiting their availability for volunteer work.

8.2 Youth, leadership and empowerment

Young people aspire to greater leadership roles but lack institutional support. MINJEC programs like the PCJC and SCPD are little known and not very operational locally. Young women are particularly disadvantaged: in Galim, only 3.8% of women aged 20–24 are employed, compared to 26.3% of men. This economic imbalance hinders their involvement in leadership dynamics.

8.3 Inclusion of vulnerable groups and diversity

Internally displaced youth represent up to 45% of men in Mbouda, yet remain largely invisible in participatory processes. Furthermore, 47.3% of young women aged 20–24 are not originally from their commune. Over 90% of the young people surveyed are Bamileke, with little

representation from minority groups. Young women face a double marginalization: in Batcham and Mbouda, 100% of women aged 20–24 missed a meeting due to a lack of transportation, and over 80% also cited a lack of food or other reasons for not having access to it.

8.4 Access to information and civic education

A lack of awareness of participatory mechanisms is widespread, especially among young women and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Traditional information channels are poorly suited to young people. In Galim, 83.3% of young women aged 20–24 missed a meeting due to a lack of food. The lack of information, civic education, and recognition hinders active citizenship among young people.

8.5 Decentralization and institutional strengthening

Despite a favorable legal framework (Code of Local Authorities, 2004 law), decentralization remains largely ineffective. Local structures are inactive or sporadic. Participatory budgeting is implemented irregularly. A lack of coordination among stakeholders, the absence of political will, and the limited training of elected officials restrict the impact of decentralization on youth governance.

8.6 Employment, economy and integration of young people

The unemployment rate is 52%, with an employment rate of 23.3% and an activity rate of 48.6%. In Galim, 84.6% of women aged 20–24 are employed, but 95.5% of them are unemployed. Employment is seen as a prerequisite for participation: 100% of young men in Mbouda (aged 20–24) and 100% of young women in Batcham (aged

25–29) missed meetings due to work. young men in Batcham and 60% of young
 Transportation is a barrier for 68.4% of women in Galim.

9 Recommendations

9.1 Recommendations for young people and civil society organizations (CSOs)

Proposed actions	Observation	Recommendations
structure and coordination of youth organizations	Low youth membership rates in local organizations and low representation in decision-making bodies. For example, only 7.9% of young men and 8.6% of young women (aged 20-24) are members of a youth organization. At least 55.1% of young people (aged 20-24) have never been members of a local body or committee.	Encourage young people to form structured associations, to register with the municipalities, and to create coalitions to defend their collective interests.

9.2 Recommendations for local authorities

Proposed actions	Observation	Recommendations
Reactivate the CCJs and make them operational	The CCJs appear to be non-operational.	Reactivate the CCJs with transparent elections, a clear mandate, a dedicated budget, and a monitored annual action plan.
		Plan for an annual activity report from the CCJ, to be discussed publicly with the City Council.
for intergenerational dialogue and territorial co construction	Despite a high proportion of young Indigenous people (up to 80% among 30-35 year olds), young people remain excluded from decision-making processes.	Organize an annual participatory intergenerational forum on the challenges of community development.
		Integrate young people into the participatory diagnosis of PCDs and into the development of annual investment plans (PIA).

Strengthen formal feedback mechanisms between young people and local elected officials.	Lack of trust in the authorities' genuine consideration of their opinions. A majority of young people (over 50%) indicate that their opinions are rarely or never taken into account in municipal decisions.	Strengthening accountability practices within the municipality
		Establish youth citizen observatories to document local needs, produce advocacy notes and challenge the authorities.
		Create frameworks for regular dialogue with local authorities to formulate and monitor youth recommendations

9.3 Recommendations for the attention of the Ministry of Youth and Civic Education (MINJEC)

Actions proposed	Findings from the report	Recommendations
Improve youth mobilization	Low rate of youth membership in youth organizations	Launch a national campaign to revive and increase the visibility of youth organizations (CNJC, CCJ, local associations) at the municipal level.
Promotes the adoption of participatory tools and mechanisms	Lack of awareness of existing resources (CCJ, CNJC, DAJEC, PIAASI, volunteering, etc.)	Deploy decentralized awareness programs through the DAJEC and CCJ, with the involvement of young peer educators.
Meeting the expectations expressed by young people	Disinterest expressed by some young people towards participation in local bodies	To make the CCJ more attractive, inclusive and representative, with concrete training and local projects to support it.
Align with the principles of equity, inclusion and social cohesion	Low representation of ethnic minorities and IDPs in decision making committees	Encourage an inclusive approach in the implementation of youth policies.
Strengthening institutional accountability	Lack of coordination between young people and the decentralized services of the MINJEC	Establish mechanisms for regular consultation between young people, the DAJEC (Department of Youth and Civic Education) and municipal structures.
Enabling the MINJEC to capitalize on the commitment	Need to promote volunteering and civic service	To further promote volunteering through a program of public recognition and integration of former volunteers

9.4 Key strategic priorities

Proposed actions	Recommendations
1. Support the implementation of pilot programs for youth civic participation.	Supporting pilot projects rooted in each municipality with a territorial approach, including training, local funding, intergenerational dialogue and participatory evaluation.
2. Fund the training of young community leaders	Establish training cycles in citizenship, local governance, leadership and social inclusion, targeting young leaders from rural areas and minority groups.
3. Strengthen the institutional capacities of municipalities in participatory governance	Providing technical support to municipalities for the development of local participation charters, the digitalization of citizen feedback mechanisms, and the inclusive monitoring of local policies.
	Funding the creation and structuring of accessible and inclusive local youth bodies to promote the integration of young people into local governance.
	Supporting the development of a dynamic associative fabric through funding to support youth initiatives (competitive funds, training, support).
	Funding specific support programs for young IDPs in municipalities with high concentration (e.g., Mbouda) for equitable participation.

DISCOVERING DMJ

WORLD DYNAMICS OF YOUNG PEOPLE



CREATION

December 1999

INSTITUTIONALISATION

December 2004

LEGALISATION

14 May 2007

VISION

A leading partner that strengthens young people's leadership in fostering responsible citizenship and their active participation in sustainable development processes.

MISSION

Empowering young people to realise their full potential and commit to peaceful and sustainable social change.

- Strengthening, supporting and promoting young people's skills
- Fostering young people's socio-political and moral leadership
- Facilitating volunteering and partnership-based interaction among young people

AREAS OF ACTION

1. Democracy and governance
2. Human rights and active citizenship
3. Human security and civil service for peace
4. Social cohesion

OUR STRATEGIES

- Action research
- Advocacy and lobbying
- Community facilitation, support and guidance
- Skills transfer through capacity building (Empowerment)

OBJECTIVES

- Encourage youth leadership in community mobilisation, volunteering and voluntary service
- Strengthen community dynamics aimed at social cohesion and participatory local development
- Strengthen human security and civil service for peace
- Promote approaches based on peacebuilding and development

KEY MESSAGES

Instead of letting young people dream every day of leaving – that is, of 'fleeing' their country because they believe they can find elsewhere what their country has not given them – we must encourage them to believe that they can obtain what they need from their leaders.

An educational organisation that prepares young people to acquire knowledge, understanding and the ability to carry out public responsibilities, with a view to citizen-led governance focused on the democratisation and decentralisation of society for greater inclusion.

DMJ bases its work on building communities of innovative solidarity founded on partnership, interdependence, rights and dignity. It encourages young people to come together to share what makes each of them unique. It sees its role within its environment as one of transferring leadership and social influence.



In collaboration with

the Bamboutos Departmental Delegation for Youth and Civic Education (**DDJEC**) And the District Youth and Civic Education Delegations (**DAJEC**)

- Babadjou
- Batcham
- Galim
- Mbouda

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