

# TOPIC

## **CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR PhD- RETURNEES SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: THE SPECIFIC CASE OF CAMEROON**

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# PRELIMINARY REMARKS

- Cameroonian students represent the biggest African student community in German universities.
- 40 per cent of the highly qualified workers from Cameroon work abroad.
- 12, 000 Cameroonian engineers work in Germany, but most of engineering diploma holders cannot easily have a job in Germany.
- The chances for a PhD-holder to be recruited in a German university or research institution are very tiny, so the return to the home country is an option for socio-professional integration.

# PLAN OF THE PRESENTATION

1. Profile of the returnees
2. Ways for finding a job in Cameroon
3. Socio-professional integration of qualified returnees: the case of the G.I.Z.-Cameroon
4. Difficulties faced by qualified returnees
5. Strategies set up to overcome the difficulties faced
6. Difficulties faced by the researcher during his investigations

# 1. PROFILE OF THE RETURNEES

- Among the cameroonian returnees, PhD-holders represent less than 5 % of the holders of a qualification
- Approximately 6 % are holder of a bachelor / master degree
- Around 90 % have an engineering diploma
- The PhD-returnees had their doctorates in areas such as arts subjects and human sciences, law, natural sciences, exact sciences (maths, physics, chemistry)
- Engineers' competence areas are mechanical engineering, car mechanics, environmental studies, computer science, communication technologies, agricultural conversion, agronomics, architecture, renewable energies, management, building trade...

## 2. WAYS FOR FINDING A JOB IN CAMEROON

- through coaching of some NGOs such as G.I.Z. (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit ), Brot für die Welt, O.F.I.I. (Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Insertion), and the international branch of the N.E.F. (National Employment Fund).
- by applying oneself for a job in a research institution such as I.A.R.D. (Institute of Agricultural Research for Development), M.R.I.M.P. (Medical Research Institute for Medicinal Plants), R.I.A.D. (Research Institute for Agronomic Development), I.G.M.R. (Institute for Geological and Mining Research) or in an university or in a multinational company
- through the network A.N.S.A. (see Charbel Gauthe's presentation)

### 3. SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION OF QUALIFIED RETURNEES: THE CASE OF THE G.I.Z.-CAMEROON

- The regional branch of G.I.Z. in Cameroon operating for more than 45 years now with four PhD-returnees recruited is engaged in 7 priority areas of cooperation with Cameroon (rural development; governance and democracy; environment and climate change; sustainable infrastructure; security, reconstruction and peace; social development; employment for sustainable development).
- In the area „employment for sustainable development (E4D), they have set up the C.I.M. (the Centre of International Migration and Development) and work jointly with the German Federal Employment Agency on these three focused points:
  - coaching of skilled returnees
  - cooperation with the diaspora
  - organising workshops on enterprises creation

### 3. SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION OF QUALIFIED RETURNEES: THE CASE OF THE G.I.Z.-CAMEROON

- Concerning the coaching of skilled returnees, the C.I.M.-programme
  - provides advice and information to them on the differences between germany and cameroon that they will face; on the business climate in cameroon; on potential job opportunities available in the country according to their areas of competence
  - puts them in touch with enterprises, organizations or research institutions needing a specific qualification
  - provides financial support to these returnees for two years once they have found a job in order to balance out the difference of living standard between Germany and Cameroon
  - since 2012, the C.I.M.-programme has helped about 80 returnees to get a job in cameroon (source: a GIZ-project manager)

### 3. SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION OF QUALIFIED RETURNEES: THE CASE OF THE GIZ-CAMEROON

- Concerning the organisation of workshops on enterprises creation, the C.I.M.-programme
  - provides advice and information on the creation of enterprises during the yearly forum named „Meet Africa“ in partnership with French partners. Returnees from Mali and Senegal are also involved
  - finances projects drafted by returnees in their home country up to 15,000 Euro
  - is coaching seven returnees involved in the cim-socio-professional integration programme in the current year (source: a GIZ-project manager)



## 4. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY QUALIFIED RETURNEES ON THE JOB MARKET IN CAMEROON

- derisory salaries offered compared with their qualifications
- the high-level research in Germany contrasts with the poor quality of research resources in Cameroon: so some returnees feel uncomfortable while working in such conditions
- Highly qualified returned engineers have to work with instruments and machines of lower quality in Cameroon
- the job market in Cameroon is not so diversified that some returnees can find a job which corresponds to the qualifications they acquired (for instance technical subjects such as mechanical engineering, agricultural conversion, architecture, renewable energies)
- all the Cameroonian universities and research institutions are short-staffed, but they don't recruit supposedly for financial purposes. So, most of the PhD-returnees of the ten last years work there as part-time lecturers/ researchers.

## 5. STRATEGIES SET UP TO OVERCOME THE DIFFICULTIES FACED

- since they cannot hold a position in the university, few of these PhD-returnees (who have previously worked as civil servants before financing themselves or holding a scholarship to carry on with their studies) simply return to their former job, mostly high school teachers
- most of PhD-returnees who cannot pursue a career in Cameroon for the reasons above leave the country and go to Canada, the USA or go back to Europe for better job opportunities
- (as you can see in the handout #1) for instance, since 2008, 13 PhD-returnees in the domain of German studies went back to Cameroon: among them, only 03 has been recruited at the universities, 01 is still working as a part-time lecturer; because of a lack of recruitment, 04 returned to their former high school posts, 02 returned back to Germany and 03 went to Canada (according to an investigation made by me in the four Cameroonian universities where German Studies are taught)
- because of a lack of jobs in their skilled areas, some other returnees see in this gap an opportunity to serve as pioneer in a given area in the country by creating start-ups (see handout #2). By creating these start-ups, the returning engineers are no more job seekers, but more job providers.

## 6. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY THE RESEARCHER DURING HIS INVESTIGATIONS

- Locking of information: many people feared to deliver me some information about my topic, especially statistics about unemployment in cameroon, documents relating to strategies set up to fight against poverty and information about universities and their recruitment methods
- Interviewees' refusal to be recorded: they were fearing that I could misuse the records because they estimated that some information given are confidential.
- I sometimes appeared as suspicious when I went in some offices to collect data. Even the letter of recommendation delivered by the Welcome Centre to undertake this research was not convincing enough according to some persons in charge of the civil service
- It was not always easy to make an appointment with some persons. On top of that, I had to wait for hours before being welcomed in some offices

**THANKS FOR LISTENING!**