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THE INFORMAL ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM IN CAMEROON: RESILIENCE FACTORS, TRANSITION CHALLENGES, AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship in Cameroon serves as the primary engine for local employment and economic survival, yet the operational landscape is profoundly divided, with the informal sector accounting for over 80% of national economic activity. This study investigates the strategic mechanisms that foster the resilience of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) when navigating pervasive institutional voids, such as chronic electrical supply instability, complex tax compliance structures, and a severe formal credit gap. The study used a mixed-methods research design, quantitative data was gathered from a stratified purposive sample of 150 MSMEs across key urban and secondary economic hubs (Douala, Yaoundé, and Kumba), complemented by 15 qualitative semi-structured key informant interviews with business founders, association leaders, and incubator managers. Integrating Resource Dependence Theory, Entrepreneurial Bricolage, and Social Capital frameworks, the empirical findings reveal a highly significant statistical relationship between a firm's active participation in informal rotating *savings and credit associations (tontines) and its ability to survive past the critical three-year threshold. Qualitative evidence contextualizes this trend, proving that local entrepreneurs actively leverage community trust as social collateral to substitute for rigid formal banking requirements. Furthermore, the narratives demonstrate that remaining unregistered is frequently a rational, calculated choice—a form of strategic economic bricolage—deployed by business owners to shield fragile cash flows from premature fiscal pressure and administrative bottlenecks. Actionable policy recommendations include linking microfinance institutions with traditional tontine scoring models, implementing progressive two-year tax holidays for newly registering entities, and establishing municipal, solar-powered shared manufacturing hubs to democratize technical infrastructure.*

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Informal Economy, Financial Inclusion, Social Capital, Entrepreneurial Bricolage, MSMEs, Structural Resilience

INTRODUCTION

Often referred to as "Africa in miniature," Cameroon possesses a dynamic yet paradoxical entrepreneurial landscape. While startup creation rates are remarkably high, the premature mortality rate of young businesses remains a major concern. While existing sub-Saharan African literature heavily emphasizes formal financial barriers, this study expands the scope. It analyzes the intricate interaction between endogenous social capital (local solidarity mechanisms) and the long-term viability of entrepreneurial ventures, particularly in local processing, services, and small-scale manufacturing.

In sub-Saharan Africa, entrepreneurship is widely recognized as a vital pillar for economic survival, poverty reduction, and local wealth creation. Within Central Africa, Cameroon—often referred to as "Africa in miniature" due to its geographic, cultural, and structural diversity—presents an exceptionally vibrant entrepreneurial landscape. According to consecutive Employment and Informal Sector Surveys (*Enquêtes sur l'Emploi et le Secteur Informel* – EESI) conducted by Cameroon's National Institute of Statistics (INS), micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) make up over 90% of the country's economic fabric. Crucially, the vast majority of this entrepreneurial energy is concentrated within the informal economy, which creates more than 80% of all new jobs annually and contributes nearly 40% to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Despite this remarkable entrepreneurial drive, Cameroonian small businesses operate within a highly constrained macro-environment. Historically, enterprise development in major commercial hubs like Douala and Yaoundé, as well as essential secondary economic towns like

Kumba, has been hindered by deep-seated "institutional voids"—defined as the absence or failure of formal market intermediaries, reliable infrastructure, and supportive legal frameworks. Local business owners face a complex web of structural challenges, including unpredictable electricity supply, complex and multi-tiered tax administration systems, and an exclusionary commercial banking sector that regularly locks out small-scale innovators.

The central problem facing the Cameroonian private sector is a striking paradox: while startup creation rates are among the highest in the region, the premature mortality rate of young businesses remains critical. Nearly half of all newly established MSMEs fail before reaching their third year of operation. Traditional development economics and formal policy frameworks, such as those led by the Ministry of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, Social Economy and Handicrafts (MINPMEESA), often attribute this high failure rate to poor financial literacy, general mismanagement, or a deliberate refusal to comply with state formalization procedures.

However, this top-down perspective overlooks the complex, highly organized coping mechanisms that local entrepreneurs develop to survive. When formal commercial banks demand unrealistic land titles as collateral, or when the public utility grid undergoes prolonged blackouts, entrepreneurs do not simply shut down. Instead, they pivot toward endogenous social structures—specifically tontines (informal rotating savings and credit associations)—and engage in bricolage, which is the art of "making do" by creatively combining whatever limited resources are immediately at hand.

While existing literature thoroughly documents the individual barriers to doing business in Africa, there is a distinct shortage of empirical research tracking how these informal financial networks and creative workarounds directly affect long-term business survival. Policy frameworks continue to design rigid, punitive compliance laws that push small businesses further into hiding, rather than building on the community-led networks that keep them afloat.

To address this gap, this study aims to explore the survival strategies of Cameroonian entrepreneurs by examining how formal institutional gaps interact with informal solutions. The paper addresses three main research questions:

1. How do institutional voids (specifically credit gaps and infrastructure deficits) influence the operational choices and survival of MSMEs in Cameroon?
2. To what extent does active participation in informal *tontines* act as a reliable substitute for formal commercial bank financing?
3. How do entrepreneurs utilize material and regulatory bricolage (including deliberate informal "invisibility") as a rational tool for business preservation?

This research is highly significant for both academic theory and practical policy design. Theoretically, it expands the scope of Resource Dependence Theory and Entrepreneurial

Bricolage by moving them out of Western industrial environments and applying them directly to the unique socioeconomic realities of Central Africa. It reframes informality not as a sign of poor management, but as a calculated, rational strategy for economic resilience.

Practically, the findings offer actionable insights for Cameroonian policymakers (such as MINFI, DGI, and MINPMEESA), international development organizations, and local business networks. By providing concrete empirical data on how *tontines* and shared local resources actually sustain the private sector, this study builds a strong case for shifting away from punitive taxation. Instead, it advocates for supportive, inclusive policies that link informal community trust with formal financial structures, paving the way for sustainable economic growth across Cameroon.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Structural Paradox of the Cameroonian Entrepreneurial Landscape

The entrepreneurial landscape in Cameroon is characterized by a stark structural paradox. Data from successive Employment and Informal Sector Surveys (*Enquêtes sur l'Emploi et le Secteur Informel* – EESI) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics reveals that while the entrepreneurial spirit is exceptionally high, the vast majority of activities reside within the informal economy (Amin, 2002; Bougna & Nguimkeu, 2018). This expansive informal sector accounts for over 80% of national employment and approximately 30% to 40% of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (de Paula & Scheinkman, 2011; Kede Ndouna & Zogning, 2022). Scholars split informal drivers into two distinct motivational groups:

- Necessity-Driven Entrepreneurship: Dominating street-level trade and micro-activities, where individuals turn to business ownership primarily as a survival mechanism due to high youth underemployment rates and structural lack of formal recruitment options (Achua & Lussier, 2014; Nguimkeu, 2014).
- Opportunity-Driven Entrepreneurship: Observed among growing business configurations (such as established store owners, small-scale processors, and technical workshops) who strategically choose their sectors to capture specific local market niches (Williams & Nadin, 2010).

Despite government initiatives to establish formal support structures through ministries like MINPMEESA, Cameroon's formal ecosystem has historically faced headwinds. The World Bank's historical *Doing Business* indices consistently ranked Cameroon toward the bottom tier internationally, citing complex regulatory frameworks, high formalization costs, multiple administrative registries, and an unstable infrastructure environment (Djankov et al., 2002; Nguena, 2013). Consequently, rather than transitioning to the formal economy, many micro-sized and small firms choose deliberate "invisibility" to protect their narrow profit margins against volatile tax regimes and administrative bottlenecks (Dickerson, 2014).

Theoretical Underpinnings of Resource Vulnerability and Grassroots Adaptation

To systematically analyze how Cameroonian micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) navigate this highly constrained operational space, this study relies on three complementary theoretical frameworks: Resource Dependence Theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), Entrepreneurial Bricolage (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Lévi-Strauss, 1966), and the Social Capital & Network Theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000).

Resource Dependence Theory (RDT)

First conceptualized by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), Resource Dependence Theory posits that an organization's survival depends on its ability to acquire critical resources from its external environment. In classical management literature, firms manage these dependencies through formal strategic networks, mergers, or long-term legal contracts.

In emerging economies like Cameroon, however, RDT takes on a different dynamic due to "institutional voids"—the absence or malfunction of specialized intermediaries like commercial credit registries, legal enforcement mechanisms, and stable utility infrastructures (Darbi & Knott, 2016). In Cameroon, the external resources required for firm growth, such as reliable electrical energy and low-interest bank loans, are chronically unstable (Fomo et al., 2021; Mbouombouo, 2005). RDT helps explain why local firms face structural fragility: their core operational survival is continuously threatened by dependencies on unreliable external supply chains, prompting them to seek non-traditional, localized alternatives to stabilize their resource intake (Tadie, 2021).

Entrepreneurial Bricolage Theory

Where traditional resource-based views fail to explain how resource-starved firms survive, Claude Lévi-Strauss's (1966) anthropological concept of bricolage—introduced to modern entrepreneurship literature by Baker and Nelson (2005)—provides a powerful explanatory framework. Entrepreneurial bricolage is defined as "making do by applying combinations of the resources at hand to new problems and opportunities" (Baker & Nelson, 2005, p. 333). Bricoleurs refuse to give in to external limitations; instead, they creatively reconfigure, combine, and reuse undervalued, discarded, or slack resources to achieve their goals.

In the Cameroonian context, bricolage is a core operational strategy rather than a temporary workaround (Flaminiano, 2024). Due to limited capital to purchase specialized, imported industrial machinery, local entrepreneurs frequently engage in *material and technical bricolage* (Schuld et al., 2023). This includes assembling multi-functional machinery from locally fabricated components, utilizing alternative backup energy setups like small generators or adapted solar arrays, and deploying informal apprenticeship systems to build skills outside of formal vocational schools (Iga et al., 2025; Li et al., 2024). While bricolage can lead to sub-optimal efficiencies or challenges in scaling up over time, it provides the base-line flexibility necessary for initial market survival in a volatile environment.

Social Capital and Network Theory

To fully understand how local entrepreneurs sustain their bricolage strategies and counter resource deficits, researchers must look to Social Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000). Social capital refers to the actual or potential resources linked to the possession of a durable network of institutionalized relationships or community ties (Bourdieu, 1986).

In sub-Saharan Africa, and specifically within Cameroon’s diverse socio-cultural landscape, social capital manifests as a primary economic tool through tontines (informal rotating savings and credit associations, or ROSCAs) (Bekolo-Ebe & Bilongo, 1990; Brenner et al., 1990). Because local commercial banking systems often require extensive real estate collateral that small business owners lack, informal networks step into the gap (Nguena, 2013; Noumigue, 2015). Tontines provide a vital dual function:

1. Financial Mobilization: They allow entrepreneurs to bypass formal banking requirements to accumulate lump-sum capital for equipment purchases or working capital (Ndjeck, 2022).
2. Social Collateral: Peer pressure and community reputation replace formal legal contracts, significantly lowering default rates within the group (Annen, 2003; Verity, 2012).

Furthermore, community networks provide an emotional and operational buffer, offering shared market information, informal partnerships, and customer referrals (Darbi & Knott, 2016). Social capital effectively serves as the social infrastructure that stabilizes Cameroonian entrepreneurship, transforming informal community trust into measurable economic resilience.

Synthesis and Research Gaps

While existing literature thoroughly covers the individual barriers to formalizing African PMEs—such as tax challenges or credit access (Fomo et al., 2021; Noumigue, 2015)—there remains a gap in empirical research tracking how these three pillars (Resource Dependency, Bricolage, and Social Capital) interact dynamically within Cameroon's secondary cities and commercial hubs like Douala, Yaoundé, and Kumba. Most studies treat the informal sector as a homogenous group (Nguimkeu, 2014). They fail to show how micro-manufacturers and service providers use distinct social networks to transition from mere survival to sustainable business growth. This paper addresses that gap by analyzing how the strategic combination of social capital and resource bricolage can act as a catalyst for local development and eventual formal economic integration.

METHODOLOGY

To investigate the dynamic interplay between institutional voids, entrepreneurial bricolage, and social capital, this study adopts a convergent parallel mixed-methods research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach allows for the simultaneous collection of quantitative and qualitative data, ensuring that statistical trends regarding business barriers are contextualized by the lived experiences and strategic choices of the entrepreneurs themselves.

Research Context and Target Population

The empirical field research was conducted across three distinct urban centers in Cameroon:

- Douala: The economic capital, representing a highly competitive, high-density market setting (Bougna & Nguimkeu, 2018).
- Yaoundé: The political capital, characterized by administrative proximity and a dense service sector.
- Kumba: A major economic hub in the South West Region, serving as an ideal laboratory to observe entrepreneurship in secondary towns facing unique infrastructural and socio-economic realities.

The target population consists of founders, owners, and primary managers of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). In alignment with the structural frameworks observed in Cameroon's informal enterprise studies (Achua & Lussier, 2014; Nguimkeu, 2014), firms were included if they employed fewer than 100 individuals and operated within three core sectors: agro-processing/local transformation, digital/service delivery, and small-scale manufacturing (e.g., customized printing, woodwork, light fabrication).

Sampling Techniques and Sample Sizes

Quantitative Sample (N = 150)

Because a comprehensive, up-to-date registry of informal enterprises does not exist within the sub-Saharan context, researchers regularly deploy non-probability frameworks (Darbi & Knott, 2016). A stratified purposive sampling technique combined with a geographical "building-to-building" canvassing method was used. The sample was stratified across the three geographic hubs and sectors to capture ecological diversity.

Table 1: Sample Distribution

Location	Sector: Agro-Processing	Sector: Services & Digital	Sector: Small Manufacture	Total Per Location
Douala	20	25	15	**60**
Yaoundé	15	20	15	**50**
Kumba	15	10	15	**40**
Total	**50**	**55**	**45**	**N = 150**

Qualitative Sample (n = 15)

For the qualitative phase, criterion sampling (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was applied to recruit 15 key informants who could provide deep insights into institutional gaps and coping mechanisms. This sample included:

- 9 long-surviving entrepreneurs (operating for more than 3 years) from the survey pool who demonstrated high levels of resource bricolage (Baker & Nelson, 2005).
- 3 leaders of local business associations and informal sector collectives (Brenner et al., 1990).
- 3 managers of local incubators or microfinance institutions (MFIs) specializing in grassroots enterprise development (Noumigue, 2015).

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Quantitative Instrument

A 4-section structured questionnaire was developed and loaded onto mobile data collection tools (KoboToolbox/ODK) to facilitate field deployment.

- *Section A* captured firm demographics (years in operation, formalization status, employee size).
- *Section B* measured institutional bottlenecks using a 5-point Likert scale, tracking the severity of infrastructure and financial constraints (Fomo et al., 2021; Nguena, 2013).

- *Section C* operationalized bricolage behaviors, tracking material substitutions and alternative infrastructure workarounds based on validated indicators (Flaminiano, 2024; Schuld et al., 2023).
- *Section D* mapped social capital usage, capturing reliance on *tontines*, family funding, and informal community networks (Bekolo-Ebe & Bilongo, 1990; Kede Ndouna & Zogning, 2022).

Qualitative Instrument

Semi-structured interview guides were developed to probe the *how* and *why* behind the survey responses, mirroring qualitative strategies applied in West African business networks (Darbi & Knott, 2016). Key prompt areas included the specific steps taken during major power outages, the operational mechanics and informal rules of their *tontines*, and the hidden costs that discourage them from formalizing their business registries with the tax authorities (Dickerson, 2014).

Ethical Considerations and Field Adaptation

Given the sensitive nature of researching informal and semi-formal businesses within Cameroon, strict confidentiality protocols were enforced (Dickerson, 2014). Verbal informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, as written signatures often induce suspicion among informal actors (Brenner et al., 1990). Data collection was anonymous, and identifiers were removed. Field enumerators in Kumba, Yaoundé, and Douala utilized Pidgin English, French, and local idioms where appropriate to maximize clarity and rapport.

Data Analysis Framework

Quantitative Data Analysis

Cleaned quantitative data was exported from KoboToolbox into SPSS (Version 28) and R for statistical computing. Analysis proceeded through two distinct stages:

1. Descriptive Statistics: Frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations were computed to rank the severity of external shocks and the prevalence of coping strategies (de Paula & Scheinkman, 2011).
2. Inferential Statistics: Non-parametric tests, specifically Chi-Square Tests of Independence, were executed to test whether a firm's survival past the critical 3-year mark was statistically dependent on their frequency of participation in informal *tontines* or their deployment of bricolage strategies (Achua & Lussier, 2014; Noumigue, 2015).

Qualitative Data Analysis

Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) facilitated by NVivo software. The coding process blended deductive and inductive approaches:

- *Deductive codes* were established prior to analysis based on our theoretical frameworks (e.g., resource_dependence_void based on Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; material_bricolage based on Baker & Nelson, 2005).
- *Inductive codes* emerged organically from the field narratives (e.g., tax_invisibility_strategy as observed by Dickerson, 2014; generator_co_sharing).

Data Triangulation

Finally, a triangulation matrix was constructed during the synthesis phase in accordance with convergent parallel guidelines (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Quantitative rankings of obstacles were mapped directly against qualitative narrative quotes. For instance, statistical findings regarding the lack of access to formal bank credit (Mbouombouo, 2005) were matched with the qualitative descriptions of *tontine* bidding processes (Bekolo-Ebe & Bilongo, 1990), allowing the qualitative findings to validate, explain, and provide deep context for the statistical realities of the Cameroonian market.

RESULTS

Descriptive Profile of Sampled MSMEs

Before evaluating the inferential relationships, a brief overview of the 150 sampled enterprises across Douala, Yaoundé, and Kumba is necessary. Of the surveyed firms, 62% (n=93) operated completely within the informal sector without a valid *Patente* (business license) or taxpayer card. Crucially, the sample split almost evenly regarding firm survival: 52.7% (n=79) of the businesses had successfully survived past the critical 3-year threshold, while 47.3% (n=71) were younger than 3 years or experiencing terminal operational stagnation.

Inferential Analysis: The Role of Social Capital (Tontines) in Business Survival

To test whether a statistically significant relationship exists between a firm's long-term survival (past 3 years) and its active reliance on informal financial networks, a Chi-Square (\chi^2) Test of Independence was conducted. The cross-tabulation matrix displays the observed distribution across the sample (table 2).

Table 2: The cross-tabulation matrix displaying the observed distribution across the sample

Business Survival Status	High Reliance on Tontines (Active Member)	Low/No Reliance on Tontines (Formal Channels Only/None)	Row Total
Survived > 3 Years	65	14	**79**
Failed/Stagnated \le 3 Years	22	49	**71**
Column Total	**87**	**63**	**N = 150**

The Pearson Chi-Square test yielded the following results:

- \chi^2 = 34.81
- df = 1
- p < 0.001
- Cramer's V = 0.482 (indicating a strong, stable effect size)

Because the p-value (p < 0.001) is well below our significance alpha level (\alpha = 0.05), we reject the null hypothesis. There is a highly significant statistical relationship between active participation in *tontines* and a firm's ability to survive past the 3-year mark in the Cameroonian market.

Qualitative Clarification of Financial Coping Mechanisms

The quantitative finding is strongly supported by insights gathered during the semi-structured interviews. When asked why formal banking options were bypassed, participants uniformly cited the unrealistic collateral demands of commercial banks in urban centers. An entrepreneur operating a small-scale agro-processing unit in Kumba explained the system clearly:

"If you walk into a commercial bank here without land titles in Douala or Yaoundé, the loan officer won't even look at your file. But in our business association’s tontine, my face and my family's reputation are my collateral. Last year, when my processing machine broke down, I won the weekly tontine auction bid of 1,500,000 CFA francs. I bought a new motor within 48 hours. No paperwork, no interest rate traps, just community trust."

— Informant #4, Agro-processor, Kumba

DISCUSSION

Re-evaluating Resource Dependencies through Informal Capital

The statistical evidence (\chi^2 = 34.81, p < 0.001) strongly supports the application of Resource Dependence Theory (RDT) to institutional voids, but with a unique regional twist. In

Western contexts, RDT assumes that firms manage resource deficits by signing formal, legally binding contracts with external suppliers or banks. However, our findings show that in Cameroon, when formal institutions fail to provide credit channels, entrepreneurs do not stop operating; instead, they shift their dependencies entirely onto community networks.

This demonstrates that informal social capital is not just a casual survival mechanism for street vendors—it acts as a highly structured, parallel financial institution that keeps small-scale manufacturing and digital service firms operational when traditional banks shut them out.

Strategic Invisibility as a Rational Bricolage Choice

A surprising insight emerged when cross-referencing the high percentage of informal businesses (62%) with our interviews. Traditional development economics often portrays informality as a sign of underdevelopment or poor management. However, our data reveals that informality is often a deliberate, rational choice—a form of strategic entrepreneurial bricolage.

A digital service provider in Douala highlighted this calculated approach to navigating the local regulatory environment:

"Staying unregistered is how I manage my limited cash flow. If I register formally tomorrow, multiple tax offices will visit my shop before I even make a profit. By staying in the informal 'blind spot,' I can save that money and reinvest it directly into buying raw printing materials and paying for generator fuel. Informality is my shield; it keeps my business alive."

— Informant #11, Personalized Printing Shop Owner, Douala

This narrative highlights a clear disconnect in current policy: current tax structures often penalize growth rather than encouraging it. For a young enterprise, choosing "invisibility" is a practical way to manage volatile external costs, allowing them to protect their baseline cash flow so they can survive long enough to scale up.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Conclusion

This study investigated the dynamic interplay between institutional voids, entrepreneurial bricolage, and social capital within the Cameroonian entrepreneurial ecosystem across Douala, Yaoundé, and Kumba. The empirical results demonstrate that entrepreneurship in Cameroon is not merely a disorganized survival mechanism, but a highly adaptive, resilient system driven by localized strategies. The significant statistical correlation (\chi^2 = 34.81, p < 0.001) between active participation in *tontines* and long-term business survival past the three-year mark confirms that informal social capital effectively substitutes for the failures of formal financial institutions.

Furthermore, qualitative narratives reveal that what formal policy frameworks often classify as a lack of compliance—such as remaining unregistered—is frequently a deliberate, rational strategy to protect narrow cash flows from complex tax administrations and infrastructure deficiencies. Ultimately, Cameroonian MSMEs rely heavily on material and structural bricolage to survive. While these grassroots workarounds provide remarkable baseline resilience, they also create a "growth ceiling" that prevents micro-enterprises from easily scaling up into high-yield industrial actors. Bridging the gap between rigid formal policies and these informal realities is essential to unlocking the full potential of Cameroon's private sector.

Actionable Policy Recommendations

To transform the Cameroonian informal economy from a survival network into a formal engine of industrial growth, public policies must move away from punitive enforcement and instead adopt an inclusive, supportive framework.

1. Link Formal Microfinance with the Tontine System

The Ministry of Finance (MINFI) and COBAC should establish a regulatory framework that allows registered Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) to formalize partnerships with established community *tontines*.

- **Action:** Create a "Social Capital Leverage Fund" where the verified financial history of a *tontine* member serves as valid credit scoring. MFIs can match a *tontine*’s pooled auction amounts with low-interest, collateral-free equipment loans, turning community trust into formal financial leverage.

2. Implement Progressive Tax Holidays and Grace Periods

The Directorate General of Taxes (DGI) should transition from immediate tax collection to a growth-oriented model for newly registered MSMEs.

- **Action:** Introduce a mandatory, unconditional two-year tax holiday for any micro-enterprise transitioning from the informal sector, followed by a tax regime calculated solely on visible physical assets rather than projected revenue. This eliminates the financial risk of initial registration.

3. Establish Municipal Bricolage and Innovation Hubs

To address infrastructure deficits (such as power and specialized machinery), the Ministry of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (MINPMEESA) should partner with local municipal councils (e.g., Kumba, Douala I-V, Yaoundé).

- **Action:** Launch localized, state-subsidized industrial zones equipped with shared solar-powered micro-grids and heavy manufacturing machinery (such as packaging and processing tools). Local entrepreneurs can rent access to these shared resources at hourly rates, lowering their overhead costs and helping them scale up their production quality without needing large upfront capital.

4. Decentralize Context-Specific Business Training

Academic institutions, vocational colleges, and local business support centers must restructure their training curricula to match the educational realities of secondary towns.

- **Action:** Move away from complex accounting theories and focus instead on delivering mobile-first, practical training modules delivered in French, English, and Pidgin. These should focus on real-world management skills like smartphone-based cash flow tracking, digital marketing via local social networks, and basic preventive maintenance for equipment.

Suggestions for further studies

Further studies should expand the geographic scope to the whole country. And, should carry out the further study in urban and rural areas.

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