International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research

ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:11, Issue:07 "July 2026"

The Value of Accountability and Integrity in the Cameroonian Context, Evidence from Government Labour Policy

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DOI: 10.46609/IJSSER.2026.v11i07.042 URL: https://doi.org/10.46609/IJSSER.2026.v11i07.042

Received: 26 May 2026 / Accepted: 10 July 2026 / Published: 31 July 2026

ABSTRACT

This paper on the Value of Accountability and Integrity in the Cameroonian context: evidence from government labour policy, is emphasising on the weaknesses in the Cameroon Labour Code. It is stressing on how degrading the wages and salaries policy is and turns the Cameroonian worker into a beggar, rather than a people who work and earn a decent salary. Every employer or trade union is obliged to carefully read and implement this guide known as the Cameroon Labour Code. The problem with the labour code's enforcement, in Cameroon is the lack of adequate wages and salaries policy, to enable the labour force to live decently and have a good work life balance. The purpose of this paper is to point out the very weaknesses of the Cameroon labour policy. Having looked at the various weaknesses, the paper concludes that most Cameroonians, work and go on retirement without earning a decent salary. Hence, they and their families cannot feed well, cannot have a vacation at home nor abroad and are unable to build a house for the family, before retirement age, due to the lack of accountability and integrity in the system. The paper suggests that to help the people of Cameroon, the wages and salaries system should be modified and upgraded by increasing the money paid to the workers. Improve on the pension systems and make the people feel like a people who can help themselves. Not every time depending on a meager salary, in order to survive, which cannot even take the individual to the end of the next month.

Keywords: Contract of employment, meager salary, negotiated salary, labour policy, pension, accountability and integrity

Note: CFA€, is Currency Fixed Against the Euro. That is the currency that Cameroon and the rest of the CEMAC countries are using. It was CFAF, which means Currency Fixed Against the Franc. When the Franc died the Euro took over, hence, Currency Fixed Against the Euro.

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ISSN: 2455-8834

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1. Introduction

The Cameroonian Labour Code, as it exists currently, is primarily based on Law No. 92/007 of August 14, 1992, and all subsequent amendments. There have been updates and adjustments, but the core legislation remains the 1992 law on labour matters. It is a pivotal guide of employment for the private sector of the economy. Every employer or trade union is actually obliged to carefully read and implement this guide known as the Cameroon Labour Code. The problem with the labour code enforcement, in Cameroon is the lack of adequate wages and salaries policy, to enable the labour force to live decently and have a good work life balance. The purpose of this paper is to point out the very weaknesses of the Cameroon labour policy mounted in its Labour Code. It is implemented in such a way that it lacks accountability and integrity in the work environment, in both the public and private sectors. We start by looking at part 1, of the Cameroon Labour Code.

Part 1 of the Cameroon Labour Code, Section 1.1, States that this law shall be used to govern the labour relations between wage-earners and employers as well as between employers and apprentices under their supervision. In section 1.2, it states that the "worker" shall mean any person, irrespective of sex or nationality, who has undertaken to place his services in return for remuneration, under the direction and control of another person, whether an individual or a public or private corporation, considered as the "employer". For the purpose of determining whether a person is a worker, non account shall be taken of the legal position of the employer or the employee. In section 1.3, it states that this law shall not apply to staff governed by:

i. The General Rules and Regulations of the Public Service;

ii. The Rules and Regulations governing the Judicial and Legal Service;

iii. The General Rules and Regulations governing Servicemen;

iv. The Special Rules and Regulations of the National Security;

v. The Special Rules and Regulations of Prison Administration Civil Servants;

vi. The special provisions applicable to auxiliary staff.

In Section 2.1, it states that the right to work shall be recognized as a basic right of each citizen. The State shall therefore make every effort to help citizens to find and secure their employment. This section lacks implementation, the rate of youth unemployment in Cameroon is alarming. Most of the educated youths in Cameroon, are either bike riders or are in the bushes, carrying out kidnappings or involved in one crime or the other. In section 2.2, it states that Work shall also be a national duty incumbent on every able-bodied adult citizen, but the government is doing very

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ISSN: 2455-8834

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little or nothing to provide job opportunities. In section 2.3, it states that Forced or compulsory labour shall be forbidden. However, most of the educated youths are forced to the bush, due to lack of opportunities. There is no enabling environment for youths' employment. In section 2.4, it states that "Forced or compulsory labour" shall mean any labour or service demanded of an individual under threat or penalty, being a labour or service which the individual has not freely offered to perform. In section 2.5, it states that the expression "forced or compulsory labour" shall not include:

i. Any work or service exacted by virtue of compulsory military service laws and regulations for work of a purely military nature;
ii. Any work or service in the general interest forming part of the civic obligations of citizens as defined by the laws and regulations;
iii. Any work or service exacted from any person as a consequence of a conviction in a court of law;
iv. Any work or service exacted in cases of any emergency, that is to say, in the event of war, disaster or threatened disaster, such as fire, flood, severe violent epidemic or epizootic diseases, invasion by animals, insects or plant pests, and in general, any occurrence that would endanger or threaten to endanger the existence and the well-being of all or part of the population.

Let us examine the wages and salaries system in Cameroon. We start with the careful examination of the contract of employment in Cameroon. It is an engagement document to be signed by the employer and employee on the terms of the contract.

2. Contract of Employment

Section 23: (1) A contract of employment shall be an agreement by which a worker undertakes to put his services under the authority and management of an employer against remuneration. (2) Contracts of employment shall be negotiated freely. In this case, the employer would always have the upper handle, since he/she has a stronger negotiating power. This is the reason why, most employees are very poorly paid in Cameroon. They are following the dictates of the white man, who advocates to keep the workers poor in order to weaken their bargaining power.

Section 24: (1) Irrespective of the place where the contract is made and the place of residence of either party, every contract of employment which is to be performed in Cameroon shall be governed by the provisions of this law. (2) The above rule shall apply in case of partial performance in Cameroon of a contract initially made under another legislation. It shall not apply, however, to a worker who is sent on secondment for a period not exceeding 6 (six) months. (3) Subject to the provisions of section 27, which states that the existence of the contract

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ISSN: 2455-8834

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may be recorded in whatever manner the contracting parties find convenient. Any form of evidence may be adduced in proof of its existence. (4) Written contracts shall be exempted from all stamp and registration fees.

Section 29: (1) States that the internal regulations shall be drawn up by the company heads. They shall deal exclusively with rules relating to the technical organization of work, disciplinary standards and procedure, safety and hygiene at work which are necessary for the proper functioning of the company. (2) If any other regulations are included (in particular, regulations respecting remuneration) they shall be deemed to be null and void, subject to the provisions of Section 68 (4) of this law. (3) Before enforcing the internal regulations, the company heads shall have to solicit from their staff representatives (if any) for their opinion and for endorsement to the Labour Inspector of the area who may order the deletion of or amendment to any provisions which may be repugnant to the laws and regulations. (4) An order of the minister in charge of labour issued after consultation with the National Labour Advisory Board shall prescribe the procedure for communicating, registering and posting up the internal regulations as well as the number of company workers above which the existence of such regulations shall be compulsory.

Section 30: (1) Employers shall be prohibited from imposing fines. (2) The only disciplinary penalty entailing loss of wages which an employer may inflict shall be suspension from work with loss of benefits. (3) Suspension from work shall be null and void unless the following conditions have been met simultaneously; (a) that it shall be for a maximum period of eight working days as from the time the penalty is inflicted; (b) that the worker shall be notified in writing of the suspension and the reasons therefor. (c) the Labour Inspector of the area shall be informed of the suspension within forty-eight hours.

Where the reasons for the suspension are found to be insufficient by the court, the worker against whom the suspension was pronounced shall be paid a compensatory allowance corresponding to the lost wages, and where applicable, damages, if he adduces proof that as a result of the suspension, he suffered further damages, in addition to his lost wages.

Section 31: (1) The worker shall devote all his gainful activity to the company, save as otherwise stipulated in the contract : provided that he may, unless otherwise agreed, undertake outside his working hours any gainful activity which is not liable to compete with the undertaking or prejudicial to the due performance of the agreed services. (2) However, it may be stipulated by agreement, between the parties that in the event of a breach of contract, the worker shall not engage, on his own account or on the account of another person, in any activity liable to compete with the employer in either of the following cases; (a) If the contract is broken by the worker and the employer has defrayed the travel expenses from the worker's place of residence to the place of work; (b) If the contract is broken in consequence of a serious offence committed by the

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ISSN: 2455-8834

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worker. (3) Any such prohibition shall not apply outside a radius of 50 kilometres from the worker's workplace and its duration shall not exceed one year. Suspension and Termination of the Contract Section 32: A contract of employment shall be suspended: (a) if the establishment is closed by reason of the departure of the employer to undertake military service for any reason; (b) during the worker's military service or any period of recall for military service for any reason; (c) during the worker's absence in the case of illness duly certified by a medical practitioner approved by the employer or one belonging to a hospital establishment recognized by the State, for a period not exceeding six months; this period shall be extended until such time as the worker is replaced; (d) during the period of maternity leave provided for by Section 84; (e) during any period of disciplinary suspension of the worker, decided in accordance with Section 30; (f) during any period of leave for worker's education as defined in Section 91; (g) during the period of unavailability following an industrial accident or occupational disease (h) by mutual consent, during the exercise of political or administrative duties following an election or appointment; (i) during the period when the worker is under police custody or in preventive detention; (j) during the absence of a worker who has to follow his her spouse who has changed his her usual place of residence if such worker cannot be transferred. The duration shall be limited to two years, which may be renewed by mutual agreement between the two parties; (k) during a period of lay-off not exceeding six months. Lay-off shall mean the collective interruption of all or part of the work by the personnel of an undertaking due to accidents.

Section 33: (1) In each of the cases (a), (b) and (c) referred to in Section 32 above, the employer shall be bound to pay to the worker, if the contract is of unspecified duration, compensation equal either to the compensation in lieu of notice when the period of absence is equal to or exceeds the period of notice, or to the remuneration to which the worker would have been entitled during his absence when the period of absence is shorter than the notice period provided for in Section 34. (2) In the same cases, if the contract is of specified duration, the compensation shall be granted within the above limits, by reference to the notice provided for contracts of unspecified duration, the length of service being deemed to run from the start of the contract in force. In such case, suspension may not have the effect of extending the term of the contract initially provided for. (3) In case of lay-off and in the absence of a collective agreement, the conditions for compensation shall be laid down by order of the Minister in charge of Labour, issued after consultation with the National Labour Advisory Board.

Section 34: (1) A contract of employment of unspecified duration may be terminated at any time at the will of either party. Such termination shall be subject to the condition that previous notice is given by the party taking the initiative of terminating the contract. Notification of termination shall be made in writing to the other party and shall set out the reason for the termination. (2) The notice period shall start to run from the date of such notification. It shall not be subject to

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ISSN: 2455-8834

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any condition precedent or condition subsequent. Under no circumstances may it be set off against the leave period of the worker. (3) An order of the Minister in charge of Labour, issued after consultation with the National Labour Advisory Board, shall prescribe the conditions for such notice and its duration, giving regard to the worker's seniority in the enterprise and the occupational group to which he belongs.

Section 35: (1) During the period of notice, the employer and the worker shall be bound to respect all the obligations which each has assumed towards the other. (2) For the purpose of seeking other employment, the worker shall, during the period of notice, be allowed during each week one day off (with full wages) which may be taken all at once or one hour at a time as he may desire. (3) Where the above obligations are not respected by one of the parties, no period of notice shall be enforceable on the other party. This provision shall be without prejudice to the right of the injured party to claim damages.

Section 36: (1) Whenever a contract of employment of unspecified duration is terminated without notice or without the full period of notice being observed, the responsible party shall pay to the other party compensation corresponding to the remuneration including any bonuses and allowances which the worker would have received for the period of notice not observed.(2) Provided that a contract may be terminated without notice in cases of serious misconduct, subject to the findings of the competent court of law as regards the gravity of the misconduct.

Section 37: (1) save in the case of serious misconduct, where a contract of employment of unspecified duration is terminated by the employer, the worker with no less than twom successive years of seniority in the enterprise shall be entitled to severance pay distinct from pay in-lieu-of notice, which shall be determined giving regard to the worker's seniority. (2) An order of the Minister in charge of Labour, issued after a recommendation by the National Labour Advisory Board, shall prescribe the conditions for granting and calculating the severance pay.

Section 38: A contract of employment of specified duration may not be terminated prior to its expiry save in the case of gross misconduct, force majeure, or by the written consent of both parties.

Section 39: (1) Every wrongful termination of a contract may entail damages. In particular dismissals effected because of the opinions of the worker or his membership or non-membership of a particular, trade union shall be considered to be wrongful. (2) The competent court may ascertain the wrongful nature of the termination by investigating the causes and circumstances thereof. The judgment must expressly mention the reason put forward by the party terminating the contract. (3) In all cases of dismissal, it shall be up to the employer to show that the grounds for dismissal alleged by him are well-founded. (4) Damages shall be assessed with due regard to

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International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research

ISSN: 2455-8834

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all factors indicating that prejudice has been caused and all factors determining the extent of such prejudice, and in particular, with due regard: (a) Where the worker is responsible, to his qualification and post; (b) Where the employer is responsible, for whatsoever the type of employment, the worker's seniority with the employer, his age and any vested rights. However, the damages shall not be less than three months' salary or more than one month's salary per year of service in the enterprise. (5) If the worker is rightfully dismissed by the employer without respecting the formalities provided for the amount of damages shall not exceed one month's salary. (6) The salary to be taken into consideration in above paragraphs shall be the gross average monthly salary of the worker's last twelve months of activity. (7) These damages shall be distinct from pay in-lieu-of notice and severance pay.

Section 40: (1) The provisions of Section 34 (1) above shall be applicable in the case of dismissal on economic grounds. (2) Dismissal on economic grounds shall mean any dismissal effected by the employer for one or more reasons not inherent in the person of the worker and resulting from an abolition or transformation of posts or an amendment to the contract of employment consequent on economic difficulties, technological changes or internal reorganization. (3) To avoid dismissal on economic grounds, the employer who envisages such dismissal shall convene the staff representatives, where available, to seek with them and in the presence of the Labour Inspector of the area, other possibilities such as : reduction of working hours, shift work, part-time work, lay-off, review of various allowances and benefits and even wage cuts. (4) At the end of negotiations which shall not last more than 30 clear days, and if an agreement is reached, a statement shall be signed by both parties and the Labour Inspector explaining the measures adopted and their periods of validity. (5) Where a worker states in writing that he does not accept the measures referred to in the above paragraph, he shall be dismissed with pay in-lieu-of notice and severance pay, where he meets the conditions for enjoyment thereof. (6) (a) Where the parties fail to reach an agreement after the negotiations provided for above, or where notwithstanding the measures envisaged certain dismissals are still necessary, the employer must determine an order of dismissals taking into consideration professional proficiency, seniority in the undertaking and the family responsibilities of workers. In any case, the order of dismissals must give precedence to professional proficiency. (b) To obtain the opinions and suggestions of the staff representatives, the employers shall send them the list of workers he intends the dismiss, explaining the criteria used. (c) The staff representatives shall be bound to forward their written reply to the employer within no more than eight clear days. (d) The employer's notification and the reply from the staff representatives shall immediately be sent to the Labour Inspector of the area for arbitration. (7) Staff representatives may be dismissed only if their posts have been abolished and with the consent of the Labour Inspector of the area. (8) In case of a dispute regarding the type or order of dismissals, the onus of proof shall rest with the employer. (9) A dismissed worker shall have prior claim, with equal

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ISSN: 2455-8834

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professional proficiency, to employment in the same establishment for a period of two years. (10) An order of the Minister in charge of Labour issued after consultation with the National Labour Advisory Board shall determine the terms and conditions of enforcement of the present section. All of the above laid down laws are merely in principle and absolutely lacking in practice, causing the workers of both the private and public sectors, lots of problems, in Cameroon. Let us look at the negotiable wages and salaries system in Cameroon.

3. The Negotiable Wages and Salaries System in Cameroon

Section 61: (1) In this law, "wages" means remuneration or earnings, however designated or calculated, capable of being evaluated in terms of money and fixed by mutual agreement or by the provisions or regulations or collective agreements which are payable by virtue of a contract or employment by an employer to a worker for work done or to be done or for services rendered or to be rendered.

(2) For the same type of work and level of proficiency, workers shall be entitled to the same remuneration, irrespective of their origin, sex, age, status and religion, subject to the provisions of this section.

(3) Apart from the cases provided for by the regulations or collective agreement in force and except where there is agreement between the parties concerned, no wage shall be paid to a worker in case of absence. Section 62: (1) A decree issued after consultation with the

National Labour Advisory Board shall determine the guaranteed minimum industrial and commercial wage. (2) Occupational categories and wages applicable to such categories shall be determined through negotiation within the framework of the collective agreements or company agreements provided for in Part III of this law.

Section 63: The rates of remuneration for piecework shall be so calculated that it provided a worker of average capacity, working normally, with a wage at least equal to that of the worker engaged in similar work and paid by unit of time.

Section 64: The minimum wage rates and the conditions of remuneration for piecework shall be posted up in the places where workers are paid.

Section 65: (1) When the remuneration of a worker's services consists in whole or in part of commissions or sundry bonuses and allowances or compensation in lieu of such allowances, such remuneration, in so far as it does not constitute a refund of expenses, shall be taken into a account in calculating remuneration during paid holidays, pay in-lieu-of notice and damages. (2) The amount to be taken into consideration for this purpose shall be the monthly average of the

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ISSN: 2455-8834

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items referred to in sub-section 1 above. (3) The period in respect of which the calculation is made shall not exceed the twelve months of service preceding the cessation of work.

Section 66: (1) An employer shall be bound to provide housing for any worker he has transferred in order to perform a contract of employment necessitating the installation of such worker outside his normal place of residence. Such accommodation shall be adequate and correspond to the family status of the worker, and shall satisfy the conditions to be determined by order of the Minister in Charge of Labour, issued after consultation with the National Labour Advisory Board. (2) If no housing is provided, the employer shall be bound to pay the worker concerned a housing allowance. The minimum rate and methods of payment shall be fixed by the above-mentioned order. (3) The employer shall be bound to ensure a regular supply of foodstuffs for any worker and his family to whom he provided accommodation where such a worker cannot produce such foodstuffs himself. Such supply of foodstuffs shall be subject to payment at a value to be determined by the order referred to above. (4) The facilities provided for in this section shall not be claimable when wages are not due, except as may be provided in the regulations in force, or stipulated by mutual agreement between the parties concerned.

Negotiated wages and salaries are the results of discussions and agreements between employees (or their unions) and employers, determining the terms of pay, including wages, salaries, and other forms of compensation. This process, often called collective bargaining, involves reaching an agreement on wage rates, benefits, working conditions, and other employment-related matters. When an individual joins the service, the pay brackets (Pay Chart) are set and standardized. Each rank has a fixed dollar amount depending upon the years of service. For each promotion, the service member knows exactly what the pay increase is to the penny including the amount one should receive according to the number of years accumulated, "time in service". This is not the case in the corporate/private sector and to some degree, civil service industry. The next job position after military separation could be considered the first promotion in the corporate/private arena. In some cases, the corporate/private sector pay ranges do not match that at which one received in service (active duty). There are also special compensations common with military that are not available in private and corporate settings. Leaving the service, now individuals have to "ask" for pay and know what to ask for. Salary negotiation is a process where one party negotiates the amount of their pay, income, earnings, commission, salary, wages, wage remuneration, annual review, or salary raise with another party. Anything and everything is negotiable when it comes to a corporate sector job offer, but offers are not as flexible in the Civil Service arena. Some areas to negotiate include: the benefits package, job title, work flexibility, salary compensation, severance pay amounts, hours of employment, working conditions. Negotiations generally begin with an offer from a prospective employer. Typically, if a job candidate is going to negotiate for a salary, they should submit a negotiation between 24-72

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ISSN: 2455-8834

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hours after receiving an offer. The candidate should negotiate with only one representative from the company to eliminate confusion and mixed messages. Understand the Market "Know Your Market Value" Research the average salary of the career you are pursuing on websites such as Pay Scale, Salary.com, or LinkedIn Salary. You need to know the market value of the position you are applying for to speak intelligently about your income expectations. Think about knowing your required salary amount, the way you think about knowing your clothing size or shoe size. Just as Nikes fit different than Reeboks, the same job position may pay a different salary in different parts of the country. Are you currently earning above or below the average salary for your job title? Why? Are you ready to make the case for your income requirements? During negotiations, disclose your current salary, bonuses, and any other perks you expect. Explain your professional goals, and why opportunities for growth are important to you. You may finish up by stating that you are eager to work for the company you are interviewing with, because of its forward thinking and upward mobility. Look at the pay range related to your desired job both nationally and locally. Include the salary levels within the position (entry, junior management, middle management, senior management, executive staff, and CEO). It is important to understand how your industry (oil and gas, electric auto, food and grocery, housing, fashion, gaming, etc.) is trending nationally and globally, or if it is a basic commodity (food, shelter, transportation, clothing, medical, etc.). Is your industry stable in the region you are considering? Your interviewer will assume you know the pay range of the position. Your knowledge will be a measure of how much you know about your chosen position. During negotiations, disclose your current salary, bonuses, and any other perks you expect. Explain your professional goals, and why opportunities for growth are important to you. You may finish up by stating that you are eager to work for the company you are interviewing with, because of its forward thinking and upward mobility.

The more you know about the company, the industry, and geographical locations, the more comfortable you will be to discussing salary negotiations. The job comes with pay, so all you have to do is stay within a reasonable range. Discus your goals, but stay away from having a bottom-line deal breaker mindset. If the company cannot meet your salary requirements, you might not want to work with such a company. If what you are asking for just cannot be met, but you feel your experience and education warrant the range you are asking for, consider asking the hiring manager to bring you in at a lower pay for a designated period of time, maybe 6 months, 9 months or 12 months, with a pay review at the specified time. A preliminary timeframe to work for a company gives both you and the hiring manager a chance to learn more about each other. If the company is not straight forward about salary negotiations, it is probably a sign of other questionable things to come, which may be a bad signal for the potential employee.

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ISSN: 2455-8834

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In any case, be sure to leave a good impression on the interviewer by sharing that you either enjoy their products, or that you really believe in their philosophy and customer service and you are looking forward to working there. Staying positive does two things: 1. It shows the hiring manager you are serious about working with the company, and 2. It helps you make a better assessment of the positions within the company in your area. Pay and benefits should not be a dreaded conversation. Instead, it should be an exciting subject for you and your prospective employer. The company is ready to fill the position you are applying for, and you are on the verge of accepting a job with pay, benefits, and room for growth. If you cannot reach a salary negotiation you are comfortable with, ask about the company's view on education and promotions. All in all, your eagerness to work with a particular company, and your interest in growth, and promotion will be a clear indicator of your leadership potential, which are all good things. So, get excited, do your homework, and go to your interview with confidence in your skills to negotiate a salary. The payment package for employees in Cameroon, as set by the government forces is very low, then when negotiated downwards the potential employee will have very little to keep him or her sustainable. Sustainability is very important, but these are principles laid down which are never put into practice in Cameroon. However, some practice it poorly, meanwhile, others do not, at all. Let us now look at the minimum wage rate in Cameroon.

4. Workers Minimum Wage and Salary in Cameroon

The current minimum wage in Cameroon is 43,969 CFA francs per month in 2025. It came into effect on February 23, 2024 and it is valid as from May, 2025. A legal minimum wage is in effect in Cameroon, and no worker may be paid less than this mandatory minimum wage rate. This means that in Cameroon, employers paying less than the minimum wage may be subject to legal action. Some employers are still going against this law and paying less. They argue that their actions are justified by the state of things in the economy, especially for private sector operators. The employee needs a wage rate that is sustainable and good enough to provide for any future eventualities. This means that the money earned at the end of the month, must be divided as shown in table1:

Table 1: Division of Earnings at the End of the Month

S.N	Description	Percentage	Remarks
1	Savings	20 %	Compulsory
2	Basic Needs	30 %	Very Important
3	Other Needs	50 %	Important

Source: Visemih (2025)

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ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:11, Issue:07 "July 2026"

Where the minimum wage is 43696 CFA, in the current Cameroon wage policy, where the cost of living is very high, this may only be applicable in the suburbs and not in the cities, especially cities like Douala, Yaounde, Bafoussam and Bamenda, to name but a few. The average cost of living in any city in Cameroon can be seen in table 2:

Table 2: Average Minimum Expenditure in the City in Cameroon

S.N	Description	Amount	Remarks
1	Rent	25,000	Very Necessary
2	Clothing	10,000	Necessary
3	Food	30,000	Not Standard Food
4	Transport	15,000	Depending on Distance
5	Leisure	15,000	Important
	Total	**95,000**	

Source: Observation, Visemih (2025)

Table 2 is showing that on average, in the city, an average individual can spend on a monthly basis, a total of 95,000 CFA€, The rent of 25,000 CFA€ is for an average room, with a toilet inclusive, hence a room and parlour will cost more than 25,000 CFA€. The clothing for 10,000 CFA€, means the individual will not be changing his or her clothes all the time. The 30,000 CFA€ for food means he/she would be very keen on not going for anything expensive, hence he/she, will rely on eating some kind of substandard food. The transport of 15,000 CFA€ will actually depend on the distance from home to the work place. For leisure he/she has 15,000 CFA€ for the month for relaxation purposes. Looking at table 2, you would see that an average worker cannot survive in the city with a minimum wage of 43,696 CFA€. It is very, very impossible and that is why most Cameroonians are dying under the heavy weight of poverty. Poverty has taken away their sense of Accountability and Integrity. With the lowest wages and salaries scale in Africa, Cameroonians are reduced to non-dignified individuals, lacking in both accountability and integrity. This is because the Cameroonian workers' payment system is very poorly designed. The system gives the workers next to nothing for their effort, put into the system. The added value of the people into the system is not rewarded at all. An average Cameroonian cannot afford a holiday whether in or out of the country and yet they work 24 hours, seven days a week (24/7). Cannot afford a retirement home for the family, hence most Cameroonian workers go on retirement in rented property. It is absolutely diabolical. The people are suffering under the heavy weight of poverty, carefully designed by the system in which they find themselves. It is a curse to 80 % of Cameroonians, working day and night without the

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ISSN: 2455-8834

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necessary expected reward. Most of the wealth in Cameroon is controlled by only 20 % of the people, while 80 % drown in poverty. It is an abnormal system designed to keep its population in a poverty-stricken condition, what a shame.

5. Wages and Salaries in Cameroon

Despite the fact that the Cameroonian worker population is very poorly, lowly paid in Africa, the conditions in the work places are absolutely very poor. In every economy that is well and carefully designed the private sector drivers the economy, but in Cameroon it is the reverse, it is the public sector that drivers the economy, hence, there is no proper development and growth. The economy of Cameroon is stagnant, because it is designed in such a way that the public sector takes the upper hand, while the private sector is slugging and dying. When the private sector is slugging, there can be no development and growth. According to Visemih, (2025), development and growth are propelled by the private sector. The public sector is there only to provide the necessary, to keep the economy afloat.

When people are paid a meager salary, which cannot sustain them for up to the next month's pay day, most people must find other ways to survive. Finding ways to survive usually entails the following actions:

i. Engaging in a second job, which will render them less effective in the first one,
ii. Involving in some corrupt practices, in order to make ends meet,
iii. Absenting from work more frequently, because may be due to lack of transport money,
iv. Lack of motivation and willingness to attend work, because of poor pay and poor working conditions,
v. Lack of energy, because poor feeding, resulting from poor pay

These elements bring about the lack of accountability and integrity in the work environment. Meager pay and poor working conditions contribute immensely to the workers' poor performance in the work place. This is the situation in Cameroon, forcing workers into a situation of developing the lack of accountability and integrity. They are not deliberately doing so, because it is a situation of circumstances facing them. They have to survive in circumstances where their direct work environment cannot be sustainable. When workers are paid a meager salary, which cannot sustain them throughout the month, the employer is inadvertently encouraging the employees to steal and also get involved in some unorthodox behaviour. The syndrome of meager salary is greatly affecting the Cameroonian economy, in that most workers private and public are packing their bags and abandoning the system. They are migrating to other countries, seeking for better pay. This provides a signaling effect for the Government to adjust its policies and render the system more conducive for a proper work-life-balance, which is

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ISSN: 2455-8834
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sustainable for the workers. Workers must feel comfortable in their work environment. With the help of recent technology, the average work place should be carefully designed to help the worker to perform well and be paid well. From the workers corner, let us look at the services rendered by public contractors.

6. The Service of Public Contractors

In Cameroon, the public contractors are seen to be totally lack of accountability and integrity, due to the lack of the proper finishing of their contracts. Most contractors never finish their contracts to their proper end. They do very corrupt work, which lacks proper finishing. This failure is not on their part, but on the part of the contractees. The contractee awards a contract to the contractor and in effect takes back nearly all the money in the name of kickbacks. Imagine a situation where a contractor is awarded a small contract of about one million CFA€ and because of kickbacks, the contractor is only left with 600,000 CFA€, to execute the contract. Is the contractor going to do the job as expected? The answer is an absolute NO. The money is considerably reduced and for that reason the contract would not be executed properly. It is not possible to execute the contract with only 60 % of the contract price, hence the contractor is forced to manage the resources available and end up doing a very absurd job. This is where there is an absolute lack of accountability and integrity, forced by circumstances that could be controlled. A contract is awarded to a contractor and 40 % of the contract price is held back and the contractor is forced to manage 60 %. In Cameroon, the contractors are forced to borrow money from the banks and other finance sources, at very high interest, in order to execute the contract, because the Government would only pay after a very long time. The act of borrow money to execute the contract cost an additional 20 %, which means that the contractor is only left with 40 %, with which to execute the contract. What magic is the contractor going to perform, in order to get the contract ready at just 40 % of the contract price? See table 3:

Table 3: Contractor's Contract Price Distribution

S.N	Details	Amount CFA€	Percentage
i.	Contract Execution	400,000	40
ii.	Kickbacks	400,000	40
iii.	Interest Payments	200,000	20
	Total	**100,000**	**100**

Source: Visemih (2025)

Accountability and integrity in our dealings can only be achieved, if we change our mindset and behave responsibly. The demands for kickbacks and the delays in payments for contract works,

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ISSN: 2455-8834

Volume:11, Issue:07 "July 2026"

are seen as irresponsible behaviour. All of these, resulting from the poor system, that is not kind to its population and give rise to all sorts of abuses. Such a mindset can never encourage development and growth in the economy of Cameroon. It gives rise to corruption and corruption is a great damaging agent for any economy. Let us look at pension for retired workers in Cameroon.

7. Pension for Retired Workers in Cameroon

The National Social Insurance Fund (CNPS) of Cameroon is a government-managed social security programme that provides protection and assistance to workers in Cameroon. The programme was established in 1960, shortly after Cameroon gained independence from France. The CNPS was created to provide a safety net for workers and their families in the event of retirement, disability, illness, or death. It is a mandatory programme for employees working in the private sector of the economy, as well as self-employed individuals who choose to enrol in the programme. The fund is managed by a board of directors, which is responsible for overseeing the management and administration of the fund. The employer and employee jointly contribute to the fund. Employers are required to contribute 7 % of their employees' salaries to the CNPS, while employees contribute 6.2 % of their salaries. Self-employed individuals who choose to enrol in the programme contribute a fixed amount based on their income. The funds collected are used to provide several benefits and invest in various projects aimed at improving the welfare of its members. Employers contribute to the National Pension System (NPS) as part of their employees' retirement savings. This contribution is typically voluntary but can be mandatory for government employees. The employer's contribution is tax-deductible, and the amount can be a percentage of the employee's basic salary plus dearness allowance (DA) of 4.3 %. This implies that the total percentage contribution to be made to CNPS is 17.15 % of the monthly salary of the worker registered at CNPS. In principle, at the end of the year, every employee with twelve months of seniority in the organization should be granted an allowance known as the thirteenth-month allowance, equivalent to one month of category salary, which has never been practiced in Cameroon. No allowance is paid and even the old-aged pension to get paid is a big problem, even though the members contributed during their employment days. You see poor old people queuing outside the CNPS buildings crying out for their pensions to no avail. It is a sad situation in Cameroon, to see pensioners suffer to obtain the money they are rightfully. Some even die even before their pension start flowing, because of the delays involved in the processing of pensions. The pension cannot be sustainable, since it is a percentage of the meager salary paid to the pensioner.

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ISSN: 2455-8834

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8. Payment of Arrears to Civil Servants

The payment of arrears to civil servants is not done in the right time. It is too much delayed and causes too much pain to the individuals concerned. Some civil servants even go on retirement in a very sad state of poverty, because the government is owing them and not paying. The rate of pay is so minimal, such that the workers cannot manage their monthly earnings, no matter how, till the end of the other month.This pathetic and very sorrowful for workers. They can barely supply basic needs for their families, left alone save something for future needs. Hence, some civil servants go on retirement with a house to stay in and may not be able to afford rent money, during retirement. In this situation, how can the homeless family cope with the expensive life that prevails in Cameroon. It is a very sad situation, in that the masses are suffering both retired and working civil servants, the government is doing everything its powers to keep the population on under strict poverty. It is necessary to pay them a good salary, to enable them to be responsible family heads. Pay their arrears in good time, in order to avoid suffering, pain and misery in the society.

9. Conclusion

Every employer or trade union should carefully read and implement this guide known as the Cameroon Labour Code. The problem with the labour code enforcement, in Cameroon is the lack of adequate wages and salaries policy, to enable the labour force to live decently and have a good work life balance. Most Cameroonians, work and go on retirement without earning a decent salary. Hence, they and their families cannot feed well, cannot have a vacation at home nor abroad and are unable to build a house for the family, before retirement age. To help the people, the wages and salaries system should be modified and upgraded by increasing the money paid to workers. Improve on the pension systems and make the people feel like a people who can help themselves. Not every time depending on a meager salary, in order to survive. This would greatly improve on the standard of living of the people. Especially, the pensioners who only receive a certain of the meager salary, the used to receive during their working days.

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