



Project Management Skills, Monitoring and Evaluation Practices, and Performance of Youth Agro Pastoral Entrepreneurship Projects in Bertoua, Cameroon

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Original Research Abstract

Received:
5 February 2025

Revised:
5 June 2025

Accepted:
29 June 2025

Published in Issue:
30 June 2025

Youth unemployment is a major socio-economic issue in Cameroon, particularly in rural areas such as Bertoua. This study examines how project management skills and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices influence the performance of youth agropastoral entrepreneurship projects. Using a mixed-methods design, data were collected from 180 participants—150 youth entrepreneurs and 30 key informants—through surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Quantitative data were analyzed with SPSS, while qualitative data were thematically coded using NVivo. Results showed that most participants were single, aged 25–30, with at least secondary education, and had 1–3 years of farming experience. Although 62.7% had access to finance, a significant funding gap remained. High mean scores in planning ($M = 4.32$) and leadership ($M = 4.21$) reflected strong project management capacities. Strong correlations were observed between project management, M&E practices, and outcomes, with planning ($r = 0.61$) and data use ($r = 0.57$) emerging as key predictors. Regression analysis indicated that these factors explained 48% of project performance and 51% of outcomes. The study concludes that effective project management and robust M&E practices significantly enhance the performance and sustainability of youth agropastoral projects in Bertoua. It recommends expanding training opportunities, improving access to finance, establishing local support centers, and fostering public-private partnerships to address challenges and strengthen youth entrepreneurship.

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Keywords: Youth entrepreneurship; Project management; Agropastoral development; Cameroon

Cite this article: Foncham, B.G. , Konnant, F.L. , Fogang, M.D. , (2025). Project Management Skills, Monitoring and Evaluation Practices, and Performance of Youth Agro Pastoral Entrepreneurship Projects in Bertoua, Cameroon. *International Journal of Agricultural Management and Development*, 15(2), 93-100.

INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment remains one of the most pressing socio-economic challenges in Cameroon, particularly in

rural areas such as Bertoua in the East Region, where structural inequalities, weak infrastructure, and limited access to finance and skills training constrain economic participation (INS, 2023). According to the Institut

National de la Statistique, youth unemployment in the East Region is significantly higher than the national average, with about 32% of individuals aged 15–35 either unemployed or underemployed (INS, 2022). This situation has deepened rural poverty, fueled migration, and weakened national efforts toward inclusive development.

To tackle these challenges, the Government of Cameroon, in partnership with international development organizations such as the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), has introduced several youth-focused initiatives, including the Youth Agropastoral Entrepreneurship Promotion Program (PEA-Jeunes). This program aims to drive rural transformation by supporting youth engagement in agropastoral entrepreneurship through improved access to start-up capital, technical assistance, market integration, and training in essential project management skills (PEA-Jeunes, 2021; IFAD, 2022).

Project management skills—such as planning, budgeting, resource coordination, risk assessment, and stakeholder engagement—are critical to the viability and long-term sustainability of youth enterprises (Kimengsi, Mukong, & Balgah, 2023). Research by Balgah et al. (2023) shows that weak project planning and limited organizational capacity among young entrepreneurs often result in low productivity and premature project failure in rural Cameroon. Similarly, Awazi and Tchamba (2018) note that without context-sensitive management approaches, agropastoral ventures in fragile ecological and economic environments struggle to achieve their intended developmental outcomes.

Robust Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices complement these competencies by providing essential tools for tracking project performance, identifying challenges early, and ensuring accountability to both funders and beneficiaries. As Njoh and Tamba (2021) observe, integrating M&E mechanisms strengthens the capacity of rural projects to adapt dynamically to changing field realities. A regional study by Tabi et al. (2022) further revealed that youth-led agropastoral projects in the East Region employing structured M&E frameworks were 27% more likely to achieve profitability and operational continuity than those without regular assessment and feedback systems. Nonetheless, the overall performance of many youth agropastoral projects in Cameroon remains inconsistent. Persistent barriers include limited managerial experience, weak institutional coordination, and insufficient integration of risk management strategies (MINEFOP, 2021). Kimengsi et al. (2022) likewise contend that inadequate institutional support and fragmented implementation approaches often undermine youth-focused development interventions in rural Cameroon.

Given this context, there is an urgent need to better understand how project management skills and M&E practices interact to shape the success and sustainability of youth agropastoral entrepreneurship. This article examines this relationship in Bertoua, a region that exemplifies both the challenges and opportunities of

rural youth empowerment in Cameroon. Using a mixed-methods approach that combines empirical data with scholarly insights, the study aims to provide actionable recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and development partners seeking to strengthen the design and implementation of youth entrepreneurship initiatives in comparable rural settings.

Project management skills in agropastoral entrepreneurship

Effective project management is central to the success and sustainability of agropastoral ventures, particularly in developing countries like Cameroon, where entrepreneurial ecosystems remain underdeveloped. Core competencies such as planning, leadership, communication, budgeting, and risk management equip entrepreneurs to manage resources efficiently, coordinate teams, and adapt to environmental and market uncertainties (Kimengsi et al., 2022). Applying structured project management frameworks can substantially enhance the outcomes of youth agricultural initiatives.

In Cameroon, the integration of the International Labour Organization's *Gérez Mieux Votre Entreprise* (GERME) or *Manage Your Business Better* training module into programs such as PEA-Jeunes has demonstrated significant impact. Beneficiaries of this program have reported increased managerial confidence and improved enterprise performance, including higher yields and incomes (Sebastien et al., 2023). Awazi et al. (2019) further emphasize that capacity building through technical and managerial training is vital for enabling youth to navigate complex agricultural value chains, especially in resource-constrained settings.

Despite these efforts, many young agropastoral entrepreneurs still lack the foundational project management knowledge required for effective enterprise planning and scaling. As Balgah et al. (2015) note, rural youth entrepreneurship in Cameroon is often marked by ad hoc decision-making and limited strategic foresight, which undermine project outcomes. Strengthening project management education and integrating practical, context-specific tools remain essential for unlocking youth potential in the agropastoral sector.

Monitoring and evaluation practices

Robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks are critical to the success of agricultural projects. They allow implementers and stakeholders to systematically track progress, assess outcomes, identify gaps, and make timely adjustments. Njoh and Tamba (2021) note that projects with strong M&E systems exhibit greater adaptability and accountability, both of which are essential for long-term sustainability.

In Kenya, Koima and Mukulu (2020) found that stakeholder participation, technical M&E skills, and project team involvement significantly influenced project performance outcomes. Similarly, Gituro (2020), in a study of Kirinyaga County, linked structured M&E frameworks to the sustainability and resilience of

agricultural projects, particularly in volatile environments.

In Cameroon, however, the institutionalization of M&E remains uneven. As Kimengsi et al. (2023) observe, many rural projects either lack dedicated M&E officers or depend on donor-driven evaluation cycles that fail to reflect local realities. Furthermore, youth-led agropastoral enterprises often apply M&E only at the funding stage, neglecting continuous performance monitoring. This practice weakens feedback mechanisms and limits opportunities for learning and adaptation.

Youth agropastoral entrepreneurship

Bertoua, the capital of Cameroon's East Region, embodies both opportunities and challenges for youth entrepreneurship. With abundant arable land, favorable rainfall, and rising demand for local agricultural products, the region holds strong ecological potential for agropastoral enterprises. Yet socio-economic constraints—including inadequate infrastructure, limited access to financial services, and weak extension systems—continue to impede youth participation in agriculture (INS, 2023; Buwah et al., 2024).

The PEA-Jeunes program, targeting rural youth in areas such as Bertoua, seeks to address these barriers by providing comprehensive support packages that include vocational training, mentorship, and seed funding (PEA-Jeunes, 2021). Impact assessments indicate that program participants have demonstrated greater entrepreneurial engagement and reduced migration to urban centers (IFAD, 2022). However, sustained success requires more than resource provision. As Awazi and Tchamba (2018) contend, rural development interventions in Cameroon must also focus on governance, institutional coordination, and context-sensitive adaptation. For local youth projects, this means integrating robust project management and M&E practices to enhance performance, reduce risks, and support scalability.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between project management skills, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices, and the performance of youth agropastoral entrepreneurship projects in Bertoua, Cameroon. This design was chosen for its ability to capture statistical trends through quantitative data while also exploring nuanced, context-specific experiences via qualitative inquiry (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). By integrating these methods, the study facilitated both hypothesis testing and an in-depth exploration of stakeholder perspectives.

The study population comprised youth entrepreneurs engaged in agropastoral projects under the PEA-Jeunes initiative, alongside project managers, trainers, extension officers, and government or NGO personnel involved in program implementation in Bertoua. A multi-stage sampling approach was employed. Initially,

purposive sampling identified key informants with extensive knowledge of project implementation, followed by stratified random sampling to ensure that youth respondents were representative across different agropastoral sectors and demographic groups. Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to 150 youth entrepreneurs. The questionnaire included both closed- and open-ended items assessing project management competencies, access to training, exposure to M&E practices, and perceived project outcomes such as income changes, productivity, and overall project sustainability. Prior to the main survey, the instrument was pre-tested with 10 participants to ensure reliability, clarity, and appropriateness. Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents by age, gender, and type of agropastoral activity, serving as the primary source of demographic data. Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). Five project managers, ten trainers, and five representatives from government or partner NGOs were interviewed to capture institutional perspectives on program implementation, monitoring challenges, and training strategies. Additionally, two FGDs involving ten youth participants provided insights into collective experiences, challenges, and successes under the PEA-Jeunes program.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 22. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, and standard deviations, summarized the data, while inferential statistics—Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis—assessed the strength and significance of relationships among project management skills, M&E practices, and project performance indicators. For qualitative data, audio recordings from interviews and FGDs were transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically. A coding framework facilitated the identification of key themes such as "training adequacy," "risk mitigation strategies," and "monitoring and feedback challenges." NVivo software supported the organization and interpretation of qualitative data, ensuring that findings were firmly grounded in participants' narratives and experiences.

RESULTS

The socio-economic characteristics of respondents were examined to identify factors influencing the success of youth agropastoral entrepreneurship projects. Variables such as gender, age, education, marital status, and experience were included to understand how demographic and experiential factors shape access to opportunities and resource utilization. Training in project management was also considered to assess its effect on entrepreneurial competencies. Collectively, these variables provide insight into the key determinants of project performance and sustainability in youth-led agropastoral initiatives. The sample was slightly male-dominated (58%), reflecting persistent gender disparities in agropastoral activities, although the 42% female participation indicates increasing involvement of women in the sector. Most respondents were aged 25–30

years (40.7%), suggesting that youth often enter entrepreneurship as they acquire maturity and skills. Educationally, the majority (88%) had completed at least secondary education, providing the capacity to understand project management and monitoring tools. Most respondents were single (68%), likely allowing greater flexibility and time to focus on entrepreneurial ventures. Regarding economic activities, 41.3% were engaged in crop farming, 32.7% in livestock rearing, and 26% in mixed agropastoral ventures, reflecting a trend

toward income diversification. Over half had 1–3 years of experience, indicating a relatively new but expanding entrepreneurial base. While 62.7% reported access to finance through programs like PEA-Jeunes, a significant 37.3% still lacked funding, posing a barrier to growth. Importantly, all respondents were beneficiaries of the PEA-Jeunes initiative, making them ideal subjects for analyzing how project management skills and M&E practices influence youth entrepreneurship outcomes in Bertoua.

Table 1. Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Population group	Sample size	Justification
Youth Entrepreneurs (Beneficiaries)	150	Selected from various sub-divisions to ensure geographic and gender representation.
Project Managers	5	Selected based on coordination roles in PEA-Jeunes in the East Region.
Trainers/Facilitators	10	Included those directly involved in business training and field mentoring.
Government/NGO Partners	5	Provided institutional perspectives on project design and evaluation.
Focus Group Participants	10 (2 groups)	Composed of youth with shared agropastoral activities for collective discussion.
Total	180	

Table 2. Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 150)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	87	58.0
	Female	63	42.0
Age group (years)	18–24	36	24.0
	25–30	61	40.7
	31–35	53	35.3
Educational level	Primary Education	18	12.0
	Secondary Education	67	44.7
	Tertiary Education	65	43.3
Marital status	Single	102	68.0
	Married	44	29.3
	Divorced/Widowed	4	2.7
Main economic activity	Crop Farming	62	41.3
	Livestock Rearing	49	32.7
	Mixed Agropastoral	39	26.0
Years of experience	Less than 1 year	17	11.3
	1–3 years	78	52.0
	More than 3 years	55	36.7
Access to finance	Yes	94	62.7
	No	56	37.3
Participation in PEA-Jeunes	Yes	150	100
	No	0	0.0

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics – Project Management Skills, M&E Practices, and Performance Outcomes (N = 150)

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation
Planning and scheduling skills	4.32	0.61
Resource allocation and budgeting	4.05	0.72
Risk management ability	3.89	0.68
Communication and leadership skills	4.21	0.55
Regular monitoring visits	4.01	0.73
Availability of M&E tools	3.78	0.68
Feedback mechanisms	3.95	0.70
Use of monitoring data for decision-Mmaking	3.85	0.65
Project performance score (composite)	4.12	0.60
Project outcome score (composite)	4.08	0.58

Table 4. Pearson Correlations – Project Management and M&E Practices with Performance Outcomes

Variables	Project performance score	Project outcome score
Planning and scheduling skills	0.61**	0.55**
Resource allocation and budgeting	0.56**	0.49**
Risk management Ability	0.48**	0.45**
Communication and leadership skills	0.59**	0.52**
Regular monitoring visits	0.52**	0.53**
Availability of M&E tools	0.47**	0.46**
Feedback mechanisms	0.50**	0.48**
Use of M&E data in decision-making	0.55**	0.57**

Note:** $p < 0.01$

Table 5. Multiple Regression Analysis – Predictors of Project Performance and Outcomes

Predictor Variables	β : Project Performance	p -value	β : Project Outcomes	p -value
Planning and scheduling skills	0.35	0.000	0.32	0.001
Resource allocation and budgeting	0.23	0.008	0.21	0.012
Risk management ability	0.16	0.021	0.18	0.017
Communication and leadership skills	0.24	0.010	0.22	0.009
Regular monitoring visits	0.30	0.001	0.28	0.002
Availability of M&E tools	0.22	0.008	0.20	0.014
Feedback Mechanisms	0.25	0.005	0.23	0.006
Use of M&E data for decision-making	0.33	0.000	0.35	0.000
Model R ²	0.48		0.51	

Table 6. Summary of Entrepreneurial Impact and Stakeholder Insights

Impact Indicator	Result
Monthly income increase (%)	27.4%
Productivity increase (e.g., output per hectare)	22.8%
Average jobs created per entrepreneur	2.3
Sustainability practices adopted (mean score)	3.8 / 5.0
Business continuity rate (after 12 months)	84%
Stakeholder agreement on M&E importance	4.65 / 5.0
Support for PM capacity building	4.50 / 5.0

Descriptive statistics indicate generally high mean scores across both project management and M&E practice variables, suggesting that youth entrepreneurs and program stakeholders perceive themselves as well-skilled and adequately supported. Planning and scheduling ($M = 4.32$) and communication and leadership ($M = 4.21$) emerged as particularly strong areas. Project performance and outcomes also demonstrated encouraging averages ($M > 4.00$), reflecting a favorable project environment in terms of outputs, income, and continuity.

Strong, statistically significant correlations were observed between all project management and M&E variables and both project performance and outcome scores. Planning and scheduling and the use of M&E data showed the highest correlations (0.61 and 0.57, respectively), highlighting that both internal project management competencies and external monitoring structures are critical to achieving successful project outcomes. These findings empirically support the strategic integration of project management and M&E practices in youth development initiatives.

The regression models explain 48% of the variance in project performance and 51% in project outcomes, indicating strong explanatory power. Among the predictors, planning and scheduling skills ($\beta = 0.35$) and the use of M&E data ($\beta = 0.33$ – 0.35) emerged as the most influential factors. These findings suggest that strategic foresight in management and data-driven project adjustments significantly enhance the success and impact of youth entrepreneurship projects.

The findings reveal significant economic and sustainability impacts, including measurable gains in income and productivity, along with a high rate of business continuity. Stakeholders strongly endorsed policy reinforcement, particularly in M&E integration and project management capacity development, underscoring the practical relevance of the statistical results. These insights indicate that targeted interventions in PM and M&E can generate tangible socioeconomic benefits for youth entrepreneurs.

DISCUSSION

Project management skills and performance outcomes

The quantitative results show a strong and statistically significant relationship between project management skills—particularly planning, budgeting, risk management, and leadership—and overall project performance. Regression analysis identified planning and scheduling skills ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$) as the most influential predictors of project success, underscoring the critical role of foundational project management competencies in enhancing operational efficiency and output. Qualitative responses from beneficiaries further support these findings. Youth who participated in the GERME (Gérez Mieux Votre Entreprise) training under the PEA-Jeunes program reported notable improvements in time management, financial oversight, team coordination, and goal setting. These results are

consistent with the evaluation of the GERME tool by [Nguezet et al. \(2020\)](#), which confirmed that structured managerial training significantly enhances entrepreneurial performance in Cameroon's agricultural sector. Additionally, the observed expansion of operations and innovation among youth who applied these skills supports the broader argument that project management capacity directly contributes to business growth ([Awazi & Kimengsi, 2022](#)). The fact that more than 60% of respondents expressed willingness to scale or diversify their activities further suggests that project management skills foster entrepreneurial resilience and strengthen strategic decision-making in agropastoral ventures.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices

The study found that effective M&E practices were positively and significantly associated with improved project outcomes. The use of M&E data in decision-making ($\beta = 0.33$ – 0.35) emerged as one of the strongest predictors of project success, highlighting the practical value of data-driven adaptation. Projects that conducted regular monitoring visits, engaged stakeholders, and established feedback loops were more likely to achieve gains in yield, client retention, and sustainability practices. Qualitative accounts showed that youth who received M&E training were better able to track performance indicators and apply findings to strengthen their operations. These results are consistent with [Gituro \(2020\)](#), who emphasize that M&E systems enhance accountability and adaptability in agricultural projects. Respondents also stressed the need for refresher courses and technical coaching in M&E, echoing [Kimengsi and Balgah \(2021\)](#), who call for the institutionalization of M&E to promote transparency and learning. This insight is critical for scaling development initiatives, as many youth entrepreneurs face challenges in interpreting M&E data without sustained support.

Project outcomes and entrepreneurial impact

Youth projects that integrated strong project management with robust M&E frameworks consistently achieved superior outcomes. These included measurable gains such as a 27.4% average increase in monthly income, 22.8% productivity improvements, and over 80% business continuity. Supported by qualitative narratives, these results highlight the transformative potential of integrated capacity-building. A significant share of respondents (67%) reported improved economic conditions and expansion into new markets, aligning with national trends. For example, the United Nations in [Cameroon \(2023\)](#) documented the creation of more than 5,000 youth-led enterprises under similar empowerment initiatives. Participants also reported increased confidence, business ownership, and community engagement, demonstrating that the support provided by PEA-Jeunes generated multidimensional benefits extending beyond income. The observed link between entrepreneurial confidence and structured support underscores the importance of viewing youth projects

not only as economic interventions but also as instruments of social empowerment and community development.

Implications for policy and practice

The results highlight the synergistic relationship between project management skills and M&E systems in advancing sustainable youth entrepreneurship. Programs like GERME strengthen strategic thinking and accountability, while embedded M&E frameworks enable continuous learning, real-time adjustment, and long-term impact measurement. However, persistent challenges—especially limited access to finance, market linkages, and technical advisory services—continue to constrain scalability. Many respondents pointed to the lack of follow-up financing or mentorship, which threatens long-term impact. To close these gaps, policymakers and development partners should design targeted interventions to reinforce youth entrepreneurship support. Key measures could include establishing public-private partnerships to expand financial access, creating decentralized training hubs to provide ongoing M&E coaching, and introducing incentives to stimulate innovation and scaling of youth agribusinesses. Such initiatives would strengthen the resilience and scalability of agropastoral enterprises, particularly in regions like Bertoua, ensuring that youth are not only trained but also equipped to thrive in dynamic and competitive markets.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study examined the relationship between project management skills, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices, and the performance of youth agropastoral entrepreneurship projects under the PEA-Jeunes program in Bertoua, Cameroon. The findings show that competencies in planning, budgeting, communication, and risk management are significantly associated with higher project performance and operational efficiency, with GERME training enhancing strategic decision-making, time management, and leadership. Likewise, well-structured M&E systems characterized by regular data collection, feedback mechanisms, and data-informed decision-making positively influenced income generation, productivity, and business continuity. The integration of technical training and institutional support enabled youth entrepreneurs to scale their businesses, innovate production methods, and contribute to local job creation, underscoring that sustainable entrepreneurship depends not only on individual motivation but also on the quality of training, project oversight, and supportive ecosystems. Despite these gains, challenges such as limited access to finance, technical advisory services, and market integration threaten long-term success.

Addressing these gaps requires institutionalizing and sustaining project management and M&E training through ongoing mentorship, expanding youth-friendly financing schemes, establishing decentralized advisory centers for continuous technical and market support, and strengthening public-private partnerships to foster an

enabling environment for youth-led agribusinesses. Overall, investing in comprehensive capacity-building and embedding M&E systems within youth projects is essential for improving their performance, resilience, and sustainability, offering valuable guidance for policymakers and development actors seeking to unlock the full potential of youth entrepreneurship in Cameroon and similar contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the faculty and staff of École Supérieure des Technologies et Industries Siantou (ESTIS) and the Higher Institute of Agriculture and Rural Development, Bamenda University of Science and Technology, for their support during this research. Special thanks are extended to the Center for Scientific Research, Human Rights and Development (CENSREHURD) for providing the research fellowship and resources that made this study possible. The authors also appreciate the constructive feedback from colleagues and reviewers who contributed to improving the quality of this work.

Authors Contribution

Babit Gilbert FONCHAM conceptualized the study, designed the methodology, and led the data collection and analysis. He also drafted and revised the manuscript.

Foncham Linda Konnant contributed to the literature review, provided critical insights on environmental aspects, and participated in manuscript drafting and revision.

Mathieu Duclos FOGANG supervised the agricultural engineering components of the study, provided technical guidance, and critically reviewed the manuscript for intellectual content.

All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Availability of data and materials

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this research. All opinions and interpretations presented in this study are those of the authors.

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