

Trade Union and the Informal Sector in Africa: Cameroon

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Abstract

Recent history of the trade union in Africa highlights the fact that they are progressively interested in organising the informal sector for various reasons. But the congenital characteristics of the informal economy can appear as challenges to overcome. The purpose of this paper is then to analyze the relationship between trade union and the informal sector in Africa, focusing on Cameroon but also in countries where data and studies are available. In order to do this, statistical figures and analytical development are used to proceed in two steps. The first analyzes trade union and informality to check how unions can avoid the forgetting trap as far as informality is concerned. The idea is to discuss about the modalities of the organisation of the informal economy and to assess how the challenges of women and child labour organisations are considered by traditional trade unions. The second step is then to present how informal sector tries to take care of itself and to analyze the trade-off between conventional trade union behaviours and what can be considered as “informal unionisation” in terms of competition versus complementarity. Indeed one may suspect some tension between trade unions and the will of informal employers and informal employees to organise themselves.

Keywords

Trade Union, Informal Sector, Informal Unionisation, Negotiations

1. Introduction

The definition of a Trade Union (TU) is well known from the ILO: “*An organisation of employees usually associated beyond the confines of one enterprise, established for protecting or improving through collective action, the economic and social status of its members*”. This definition has at least three words that should be well understood: the first is “employee” that is those who are employed on a regular basis, that is, who get a

formal contract with an enterprise. The second is “enterprise” that is an institution well established in a recognised formal sector of activity, and the third is “members” that is those who are regularly registered as such with a trade union through payment of fees. It is then clear that in the context of informal economy, the situation may be obviously different. So there is no exaggeration to pose that historically the genetic code of trade union excluded “de facto” informal people everywhere around the world and particularly in Africa. In the case of Cameroon, for example, where the rate of unionisation is about 11 per cent in the formal sector and 1.6 per cent in the informal sector [1], no informality is historically discussed as far as unionisation is concerned as documented in [2].

But the mass of people in the informal economy may appear as a problem if the trade unions really want to play a relevant role as social actors. Indeed, around the world, about two thirds of all employees work in the informal sector and almost the majority of the labour force in Africa. It is estimated that as many as nine over ten rural and urban workers have informal jobs [3] [4].

In most of developing countries, the informal sector is expanding rapidly, and is vast, heterogeneous in terms of activities and occupations. At times, one qualifies it as innovative, dynamic and a provider of opportunities for those with entrepreneurship skills. Yet, working conditions in this sector are too oppressive, and often unsafe; incomes of unregulated wage earners and the self-employed are usually at or below the poverty line; access to state-provided social protection, training, and social services are severely restricted; exploitation and infringement of workers’ rights are common. For the vast majority of dependent and own-account workers, the informal sector is not a stepping stone to improvement, but a strategy for survival. Therefore, the informal sector is becoming not only a reality in the context of globalisation, but also a holder of great promises as far as its potential role for economic development is concerned. Indeed, a group of scholars and practitioners demonstrate their job potential and the dynamism it brings to the economy and its role as a social stabiliser [5], whereas another group considers it as a source of exploitation and social exclusion [6].

But in the absence of an “external actor” and given their prise de conscience that *united we stand, divided we fall*, informal actors have started to organise themselves to insure their well-being, protect their jobs and/or rights, negotiate with public authorities (mayors) for their working conditions, etc. In doing so, informal actors implemented some kind of “informal unionisation” with an increasing power that cannot be neglected. This then sounds as a warning.

For everybody, it becomes hard to act as if those people don’t need some institutional consideration. There was then no surprise to have an International Symposium on “Trade Unions and the Informal Sector”, organised by the Bureau for Workers’ Activity (ACTRAV) of the ILO in Geneva, October 18-22, 1999. The meeting was attended by 31 trade unionists from Africa, Asia/Pacific, Europe, Latin America and North America. That means the problems and needs are going to vary across forms or different actors involved. These features sound like the forms of organisation found in this sector and consequently trade unions need to deal with informality.

The question that immediately arises is then: how do traditional trade unions consider informal people? But given that those later have not waited to organise themselves, another consequent question is to assess whether there is a tension somewhere in terms of competition or complementarity between traditional unionisation and “informal unionisation”. The two sections of the paper are organised around these two questions.

2. TU and Informality: How to Avoid the Forgetting Trap?

The importance of informal economy and informal workers is so huge that it becomes simply impossible to be neglected in Africa. Reference [7] widely discussed the case of Cameroon, but it can be of interest to have in mind the following **Figure 1** borrowed from [1], highlighting that 90.5 per cent of people are working in the informal sector.

Limiting themselves to the organised sector means that traditional trade unions are covering only 3.7 per cent in the private sector and 5.8 per cent in the public (administration and enterprises) forgetting the others 90.5 per cent. In order to avoid this “forgetting trap”, traditional trade unions decide to consider those people. The general modalities they adopt are firstly discussed, and then the dual issues of women and child labour are developed.

2.1. Modalities of Organisation of the Informal Economy

Organising informal sector workers seems to generally respond to two ways of doing: extension of their field of negotiations, and creation of specific branches for informal workers.

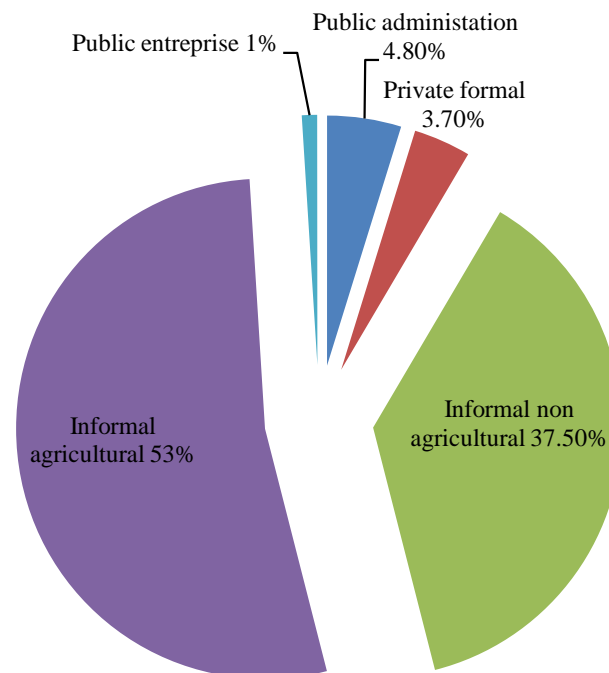


Figure 1. Employment in Cameroon, 2011.

2.1.1. Extension of the Field of Negotiations

The first way is where a traditional union extends its field of activity to include informal sector workers, or when a national trade union centre creates an organisation for informal sector workers like in Senegal, or in Burkina Faso, where the National Organisation of Free Trade Unions has organised both male and female self-employed workers.

Cameroon is doing the same. In August 2011 for example, before the presidential election, ten confederations and central unions, seven federations and fifteen national trade unions published together a list of conditions for the promotion of democracy and human rights. Among the list there were two that included informal workers in their social security demand, namely (i) the “*involvement of the national trade union of workers and organisations of actors of the informal economy in developing new strategies to extend social security to all sections of the population*”; and (ii) “*immediate signature and wide extension (for all social body) of the bye-law for the implementation of the decree which introduced free contributions for self-employed and those in the informal economy to social security*”.

In 2012 as well, the General Trade Union of Cameroon Workers (UGTC) includes the need of informal workers for dedicated space for their market in their general negotiations with public authorities, and this trade union even ask to reconsider the retirement age (from 50 - 55 years old to 60) for all workers including informal. In the same vein, on the occasion of the celebration of the 128th Labour International Day, the Public Sector Workers Central Union (CSP) included the informal workers in their demand for social security for every worker in the country. The newly elected (April 26, 2014) bureau of the Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions of Cameroon (CSAC) has clearly stated that one of its strong purposes is “*to implement mentoring policies and advocacy workers in the informal sector*”; and the Bureau created a position of “Secretary of the informal economy and rural workers”.

As it may be noticed, the issue of social security was indeed a serious and recurrent stumbling because of its old age as a claimed item. In fact, it goes back to the law of 10 November 1969 as amended and supplemented by those of the July 4, 1984 and by that of 19 December 1990 establishing an insurance scheme covering the old age pension, disability and death. After decades of claims, a decree was finally signed by the Prime Minister on August, 13 2014 laying down the conditions and arrangements for management of self-insured from 1 November 2014. In fact, voluntarily insured consist of all workers that are neither civil servants nor covered by the labour code. It is therefore of the professional (lawyers, notaries, etc.) but especially those in the informal sector. This insurance will affect the normal pension age, the wear and tear allowance, the allowance for wear early age, survivors’ pensions and funeral expenses. It excludes family benefits, and occupational hazards. Of course, applicants must have the ability to contribute (to have the means to pay his dues) to be registered. This is definitely a major step forward in unions and associations negotiations in Cameroon.

2.1.2. Creation of Specific Branches

The second way is when a new trade union is created specifically to organise informal

sector workers; which is the case of the Self Employed Women’s Union (SEWU), a South African COSATU affiliate. Another one is the Namibia Domestic and Allied Workers’ Union (NDAWU) that was officially established in 1990 and only a few years after, NDAWU succeeded in organising as much as one-third of the domestic workers throughout the country. In Côte d’Ivoire, the National Union of Informal Sector Women has helped to develop cooperative activities for self-employed women. In Senegal, the informal sector has become a reality within the Democratic Union of Workers of Senegal (UDTS) where it has been represented since 1998 within the national centre by the Informal and Rural Workers’ Federation (FETRI) [8].

In Cameroon, long ago, many traditional trade unions argued that informal sector workers were not that easy to organise due to their “volatility”. But since many years from now, they changed their mind and actively increased the general culture of workers no matter the sector of activity. **Figure 2** illustrates (from [1]) how far they somehow succeed in doing so in terms of representation inside enterprises, training of workers (33.2 per cent in the informal sector), involvement of informal workers members in a position of responsibility in the union (51.8 per cent), existence of unions in the firm and also the percentage of workers aware of some official text governing employment in the country (13.4 per cent in the informal sector). For example, the General Confederation of Workers (CGT-Liberté) has created a branch for taxi drivers, mechanics, restaurants, and the CSTC did the same for fishers, retailers, metal workers

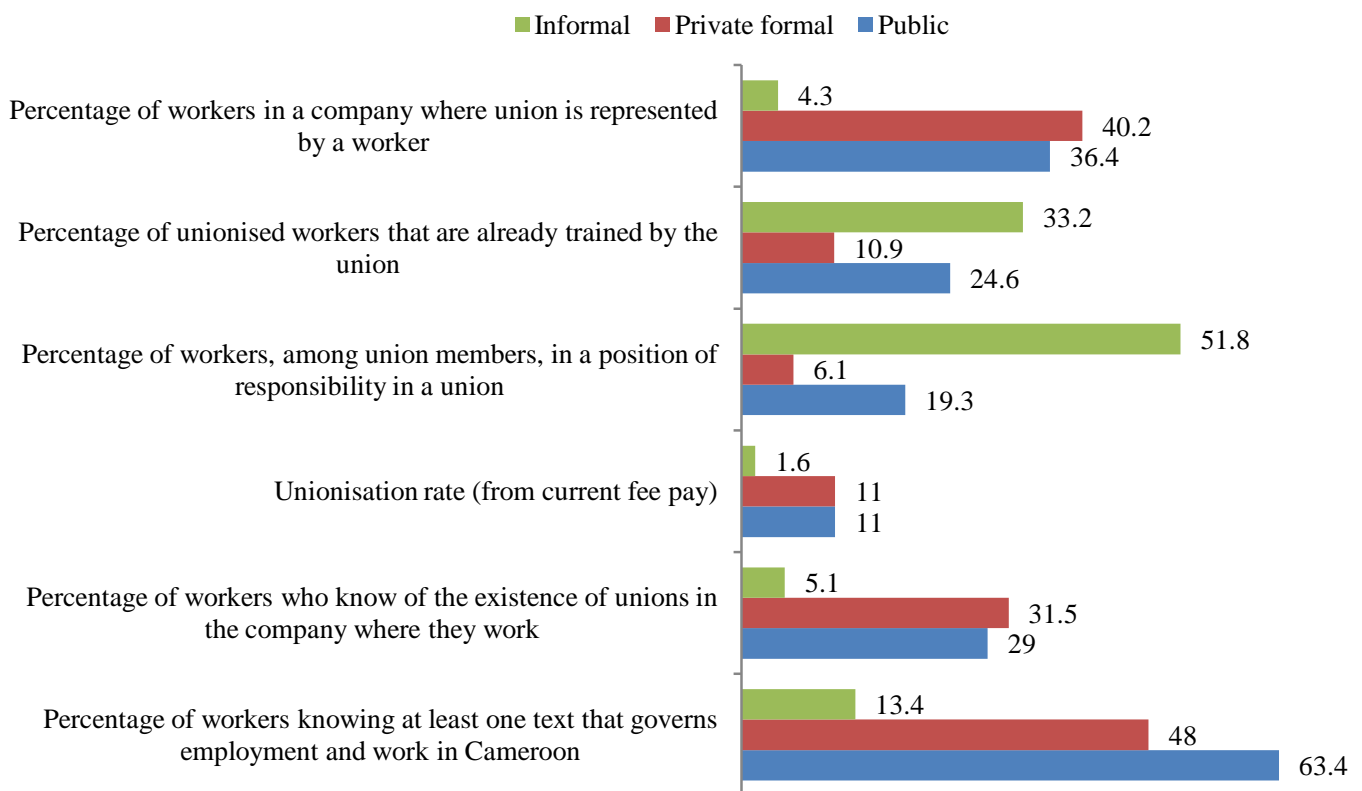


Figure 2. Trade union knowledge in Cameroon, 2011.

and agricultural workers. As example of unions created like that, there are among others, Departmental Drivers' Union of Mototaxis of Benoue-Northern region of the country (SDCMTACB), National Union of Farmers of Rural and Inter-urban Transportation Cars, Bus and Motorcycle of Cameroon (SYNEXPITAMOTOCAM) in Fouban (in the West), National Union of Cameroon Watchmen (SYNVEILCAM), Union of Motorcycle Conveyors (SYTRATAMO), Union of Mototaximen (SYMOTO); Drivers' Union Motorcycle Taxis (SYCOMOTA), and so on.

The CSTC which is the premier trade union in the country now-a-days gathers 500 base unions, 28 regional unions and 26 federations and national unions of formal and informal sectors. The managers of this trade union use to say in their speeches especially for the International Labour Day (1st May) that *"it is a duty to take informal workers into consideration otherwise their fight is somehow useless"*. This statement can be noticed in the figure where informal workers seem to be highly interested by trade union training and, once unionised, by a responsibility inside the trade union.

2.2. TU and the Dual Challenge: Women and Child Organisations

Among the informal workers, two categories of people need some specific attention, either because of their number and their social role inside the households (women), or due to the fact that they should normally be involved in some other activities because of their school age (children).

2.2.1. Organising Women

Women constitute the largest segment of the population who animate the informal economy. The highest prevalence of female informal employment is generally found in many African countries, and they constitute most of the rural informal sector where they perform in agriculture. In urban areas, women carry out several activities, such as the sale of fish and vegetables in markets, retail sales, laundry services, product transformation, horticulture, and the provision of home services and basic education for the members of their family. In African cities, street vendors, the majority of whom are women, represent a significant percentage of the workforce in the informal sector. These vendors are certainly the most "visible" component of the informal sector and play an important role as suppliers of a wide range of goods to low- and middle-income families.

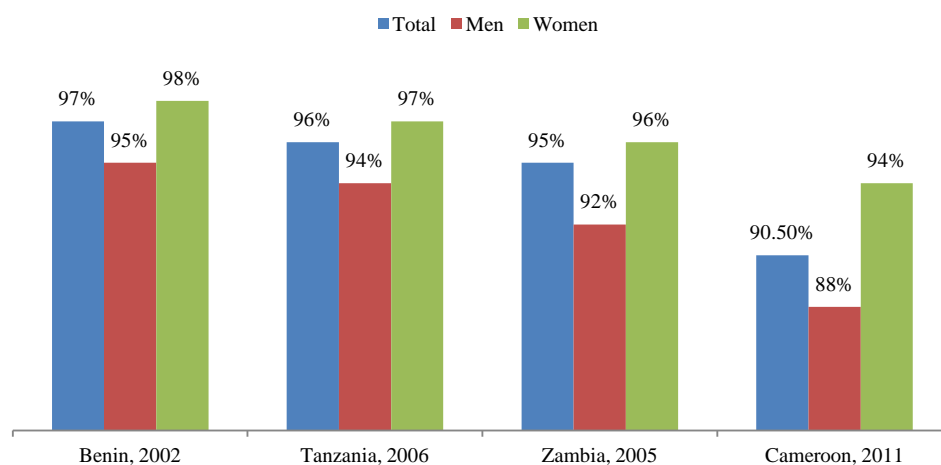
Figure 3 (various sources) illustrates this situation, considering employment in the informal economy (including agriculture). It appears that almost 100 per cent of women are in fact working in informal occupations and these figures can be observed in all countries, except in South Africa where they are around 20 per cent.

In Cameroon as stated by [9], women are organised according to groups, associations, and cooperatives (see **Table 1** below) and within all sectors of economic activities both in rural areas and in urban areas. Indeed, within the ten regions of the country, there are associations in all sectors that occupy women: dyeing, sewing, hairdressing, catering, hospitality, food processing, operation mining, forestry, trade and export of agricultural products (particularly to neighbour countries like Gabon, CAR or Congo).

Table 1. Types of organisations and primary strategies.

Primary strategy	Types of organisation
Grassroots organising and base building	Unions, Memberships Based Organisations (MBOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs), Cooperatives
Collective negotiations and representation	Unions, MBOs
Economic and livelihood development	Cooperatives
Policy, legal and rights advocacy	NGOs, CBOs, networks, alliances
Mobilisation and campaigning	Networks, alliances, unions
Social, welfare, training	NGOs, CBOs

Source: [15], p. 11.

**Figure 3.** Employment in the informal economy (% total employment).

On the same line, one of the core objectives of the CSAC is now-a-days to implement policies to sensitise and recruit women and youths, and to effectively consider gender issues; particularly within “the committee of working women and family” created for that purpose.

Even if there is only one lady as chairman of one of the ten confederations and central unions in the country (Mrs Antoinette Ekouan of the Cameroonian Confederation of Workers CCT), in order to attract women, trade unions have progressively increased the number of women in their management and to date, there are at least 25 per cent of women that are in deputy positions in the top management. Trade union’s support to the informal sector is based on services in areas such as: information, education and awareness-raising on family planning and trade union issues; training (literacy, economic management, learning crafts); socio-economic promotion (facilities for the conservation and transportation of its products); and the defence of material and moral interests of its members [10].

Organising informal sector women is feasible in general, but can be hard when it comes to domestics workers. It is well known that the main daily tasks performed by the servants are to clean utensils and home, do laundry, cook, do the shopping for the

household, supervise children, fetching water and firewood, doing minor repairs around the house, caring for the elderly and work in the fields or on farms. In Cameroon, 81 per cent of domestic workers are women and 62 per cent of them are placed by intermediaries [11]. The intermediary can be a relative (close or far), as well as it can be a friend or another acquaintance and even a stranger. But the relationship between the domestic worker and his employer is usually organised under the umbrella of this intermediary such that it is very difficult for them to even imagine to be unionise or even to belong to any organisation, particularly in the cities of Bamenda, Yaoundé and Douala (three cities identified by [12] as areas of high prevalence for domestic servitude and trafficking in Cameroon).

The CCT operating in the town of Sangmelima in the South of the country is one of the rare Confederations of those domestics' workers existing in the country. Apart from this traditional union, women's NGO called "Horizon Femmes" is trying to put some sixty domestic workers associations all over the country together with associations of defense of human rights, and their coexistence within the National Network of Associations for support to domestic workers (RENATRAD) helps develop a national platform on the issue of domestic employment.

2.2.2. Organising Children

Participation rates of children in the labour force are higher in Sub-Saharan Africa, where nearly half of the children aged 10 - 14 are working. Estimates suggest that in Benin, 27 per cent of children work, in Burkina Faso 51 per cent and in Burundi 49 per cent. In Kenya, Ethiopia, Niger and Uganda the estimated rates are between 40 and 46 per cent. In Mali 54 per cent of children are estimated to be working. In Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Zimbabwe the figures are between 20 and 30 per cent, 25 per cent in Angola. More so, there are a high percentage of children who drop out of school before completing and those out-of-school children constitute the majority of those who end up in the informal economy.

In Cameroon, the 2007 National Report on Child Labour stated that 41.1 per cent of children aged 5 - 17 are working. In 2011, those aged 10 - 17 are 39.6 per cent (33.3 per cent among the 10 - 13 group and 47.1 among the 14 - 17 group) and the phenomenon is more rural (52.3 per cent) than urban (18.4 per cent).

As shown in **Figure 4**, child labour is informal (non agricultural and agricultural) and rural; very few of them are owners, and none of them in the public sector. In general, trade unions are concerned by child labour issues through union policies and action plans. As far as union policies are concerned, they combat child labour and intend to link school leaving age to the minimum age for admission to employment, and to strengthen enforcement of legislation on child labour. They also encourage governments to ratify conventions relating to children and human rights. As far as the action plans are concerned, they usually create national commission or centres on the rights of children [13]. As example the National Federation of Trade Unions of Regional and Local Authorities of Cameroon (FENTEDCAM) has clearly adopted as core programmes the "eradication of corruption, the fight against poverty and against child la-

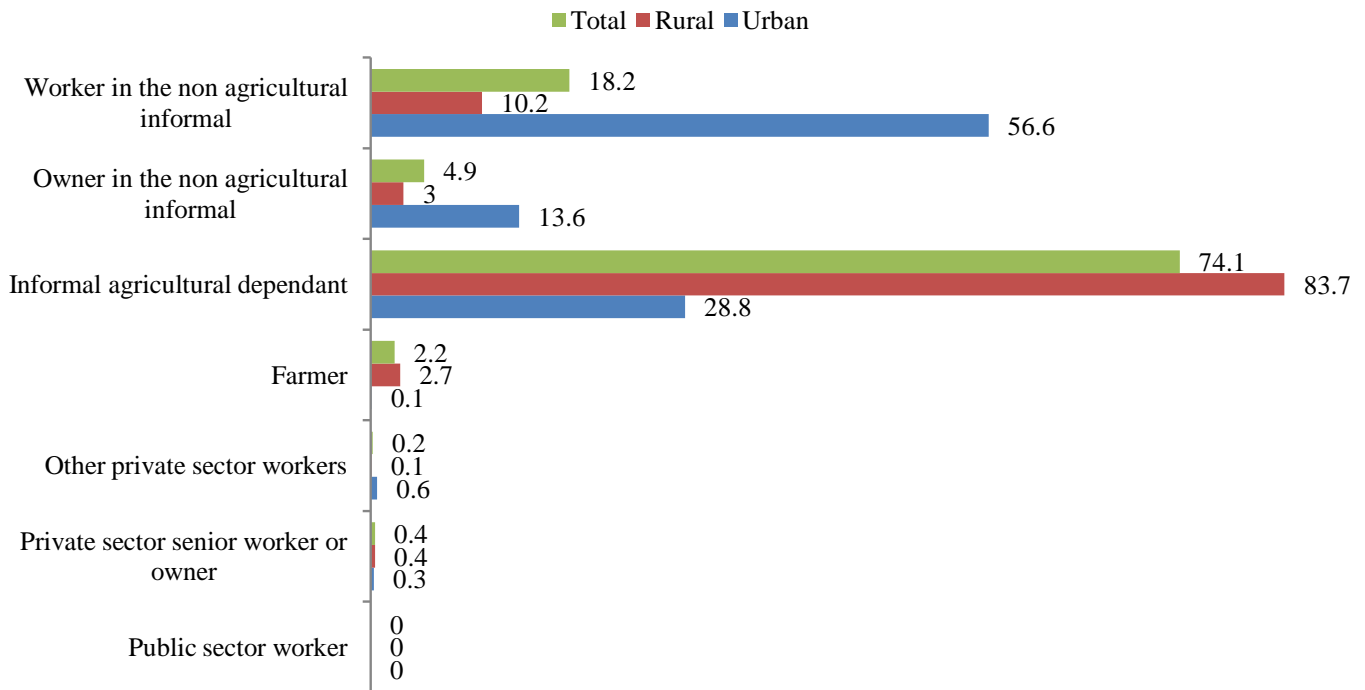


Figure 4. Child labour (10-17 years old) in Cameroon, 2011.

bour in all its forms”; and he decides to advocate the “adoption of the implementation text of the ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention”. More still, the USLC has proposed in July 2014 an “Advocating for the inclusion of the fight against child labour in the local development plans of cities of Bangourain and Magba (North West)” to be sponsored by donors.

Beyond this general concern, traditional trade unions don’t care about organising children. There then exist a lot of NGOs and associations in the country (Petit Dan & Sarah Foundation; Cameroonian Association of Children Rights; Children, Youth and Future Association—ASSEJA, Cameroon Association for the Protection and Education of the Child, Green Youth Association, etc.) but also from abroad (particularly from France) that gives some voice to working children. Children in Cameroon have not created a trade union as in Bolivia where there is the Bolivia’s Union of Child and Adolescent Workers (UNATSBO). But like adult informal workers children workers are organising themselves in a very admirable manner. Two major associations can be highlighted.

The first is the National Association of Street Children (ANER), established and located in Douala since 1994. It aims at identifying street children left on their own; to make efforts to mobilise children in order to reduce vagrancy, to train and occupy them; to help these children integrate by mediation between families and social services; and fight against theft, inactivity and AIDS. The ANER has a “twin” called the Association of Former Street Children (AAER) that occupies a marshland in Yaounde renamed “The Ghetto”. The President of the AAER says: “*We’ve been here for around six years. Only former street children are admitted here. In our association, there is a*

code of conduct: stop stealing, assaulting, taking drugs, smoking or drinking alcohol excessively. This code of conduct makes us to become a family. And like all families, we stand in the joys and sorrows. This is how we live in the Ghetto". In 2003, street children estimated to 4000 in Douala and 1000 in Yaoundé [14].

The second is the Association of Working Children and Youth of Cameroon (AEJT-CAM) founded in January 2003 with aims to put forth the rights of children and young workers, improve income generating activities, improve collaboration with partners, organise training and fight against the exodus, mobility and trafficking of children. The Association is operating in 12 cities throughout the country. Well established, the AEJT-CAM was selected from more than 15,000 associations and NGOs for the free distribution of ITNs by the Ministry of Health to fight against malaria. AEJT members and others were trained for three days to learn how to approach the Cameroonian and foreign households and explain the purpose of the campaign but also how to save lists of receipt of these nets. The distribution went well and the AEJT were among the first 10 to cover in a few days, their distribution area.

Interestingly, the AEJT-CAM is member of the African Movement of Working Children and Youth Workers (MAEJT). In 2011, the African Commission of the MAEJT was attended by participants from Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, DRC, Rwanda, Senegal, Chad, Togo and Zimbabwe. MAEJT statistics in October 2011 showed that 34 new AEJTs applied for membership and were accepted while 56 are under observation; and MAEJT grows more and more with a large number of children. It comprises 22 countries: 2,411 base groups, 273 AEJTs, 148,154 members, including 103,899 children, 44,255 youth and 83,323 girls, 64,831 boys and 299,692 sympathisers. Members and friends are a total of 447,846 people.

3. TU versus Informal Unionisation: Competition or Complementarity?

From the above analysis, it's obvious that conventional trade unions are facing an informal unionisation because of (or due to) the fact that they do not really consider informal economy as a large deposit of potential members. The dynamic of informal unionisation is firstly discussed before moving into the trade-off (if any) between employers' informal organisation and workers' informal organisations.

3.1. General Considerations of Self Organisations

Informal workers organise themselves in order to be able to fight for their rights and to get some voice. The forms taken by such endogenous organisations are explained before a tentative comparison with traditional unions.

3.1.1. Forms of Informal Unionisation

I started to show above that in many countries, informal workers have created associations and other same organisations that are officially registered and act as some kind of "informal unionisation". According to [15], autonomous organisation in the informal

economy is a relatively recent global phenomenon, and those organisations are known mainly under the name of “Membership-based organisations of the very poor (MBOPs)”. The authors noticed that informal economy organising models and organising strategies are inextricably linked. Organisations may use more than one strategy even if one or more can be considered as primary strategies. **Table 1** below shows the link between the forms of informal economy organisations and their primary objectives.

These MBOs are also diverse in geographical coverage, ranging from small (often fragile) local organisations, to national organisations, federations and alliances, regional networks and associations, and a variety of international organisational forms—both inside and outside the formally constituted institutions of the international trade union movement commonly, informal workers form cooperatives, especially in sectors such as agriculture and waste/recycling. These are found in various forms: producer cooperatives, consumer cooperatives, service or marketing cooperatives, and so on. Some are formally registered, while others are less formal. NGOs are often important agents and catalysts in the development of MBOs. Many NGOs have been established to support informal workers.

There are local and national NGOs that concentrate on community or livelihood development, housing or human rights for which informal economy workers become the focus of attention. In areas where trade unions or other MBOs have little influence, profile or organisational strength, NGOs may attempt to fill the vacuum—either by advocating or campaigning on the workers behalf, providing support and advice, and/or establishing some sort of workers association [16].

3.1.2. Comparison with Traditional Unions

The different forms of informal unionisation in Africa co-exist with traditional trade unions for multiple reasons explained above. Vis-à-vis their target population, these organisations are experiencing success but also failures. For instance, they both failed to organise their target whatever they do. In Cameroon, [17] studied 682 informal workers in December 2000 in Yaoundé including women’s dressmakers, men’s tailors, women’s hairdressers, wood workers, car mechanics, bricklayers and carpenters, radio and electric repair, leather workers, restaurants, administrative services and cyber cafés, refrigeration repair, and blacksmiths. Only relatively few, on average one in six of the respondents, were members of an association of artisans, or similar grouping. Car mechanics (23 per cent), hairdressers (22 per cent), construction workers and restaurant operators (20 per cent), were somewhat more likely than others to be thus organised.

The dynamic of the operations of informal unions and traditional unions indicates that there are certainly rooms for complementarity and for competition between these two. **Table 2** gives some common usual services offered by chosen associations (all those services can be offered by all of them of course); and **Figure 5** (from [18]) lists some of the same offer by trade unions where it appears that 89 per cent of the trade unions offer training to their members, 78 per cent dispute resolution in the firm, 56 per cent negotiations with employers about living and working conditions and only 30

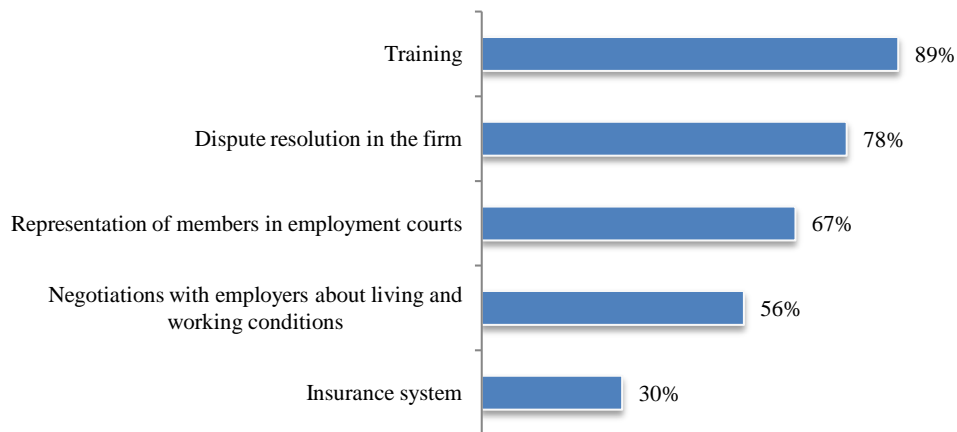


Figure 5. Services offered by trade unions in Cameroon.

Table 2. Services offered by some informal workers’ associations.

Associations of retailers	Traders associations	Women and children associations
Pricing in the market	Social security	Training and apprenticeship
Tax reduction	Borrowing	Activities of mobilisation
Safety market	Saving	Fund raising
Mutual aid	Corporatism	Negotiations with authorities
Management of space	Commercial support	Insurance options

Source: Compilation.

per cent an insurance system.

Beyond the legal the solution recently introduced in Cameroun about voluntary workers, the insurance system provided by trade union is clearly in competition with social security, insurance option or mutual aid that can be found inside associations. Of course, dispute resolution in the firm, representation of members in courts or negotiations with employers are not for informal workers. But their associations try the same with corporatism, negotiations with authorities, pricing in the market or fund raising in order to ease their relationship within their environmental actors.

Box: Training by the National Association of Street Children (ANER).
 In the area of training the ANER acts as follows: it addresses the children and tries to identify their desires, skills and abilities, and hence from their centres of interest, it tries to train them performing simple tasks (moving cars, washing, cleaning the windows, etc.). It organised sections of auto laundry, training workshops for male and female hair, activities of carrier bag at the market, etc.
 The ANER also borrow from adult volunteers capacities to train children in activities such as construction or improvement of the market. Where possible, it helps to become self-initiated activities (like itinerant washing cars).
 The association currently has plans to create a hub of activity developing craft training, but also to create an orchestra and organise conferences.
 Initially, the ANER was supported by the European Union and the French cooperation. It is today without financial and political support from the municipality of Douala.
 Source: [19], p. 28.

Examples reported by [19] show that in order to participate in the management of their market, the Association of Traders of Madagascar Market (ACMM) in Douala took shares in the capital of Madagascar New Market. In the other markets in the city, security and safety have been also entrusted to traders associations. The reconstruction of the Koulouloun market in Douala was conducted on self-financing of the Association of Traders and Street Vendors of Cameroon (ACSCAM) amounting to CFAF 350 millions in 2001, which is an evidence of the ability of traders to contribute to the market management. These are examples of actions that can never be tackled by the traditional unions.

Another room of complementarity is when a strike is appealed at the national level. An example is the Government's decision to increase the price of a liter of super and diesel, as well as that of the domestic gas from June 2014. As consequence, the General Confederation of Transportation Trade Unions of Cameroon (CGSTC) announced a general strike of workers in this sector. Immediately, the National Association of Informal Sector Operators against Poverty in Cameroon (ANOSILP) decided to join. The objections raised by ANOSILP were legion: physical spaces for street vendors, free return of some shops to young operators evicted from Yaounde, granting public funding to genuine youth and informal sector operators project leaders, and effective supervision of operators in the informal sector for their migration to the formal sector.

But obviously a dual reality is highlighted in this co-existence between unions and associations as concluded by [20]: on one side, a unionisation based on a project intended to address emergencies or transformation of economic, social and professional situation in the country; on the other, a dynamic informal association with lack of resources and representation impeding them from reaching a broad surface of intervention and a national weight likely to weigh effectively the difference. This is why from existing surveys ([17]-[19] among others) many informal sector workers recognise that despite the existence of numerous associations they belong to, the need to build a real trade union remains important to be able to properly represent their interests and their rights, and to strengthen their positions against the authorities.

3.2. Informal Organisations: Employers and Workers

In order to move forward in the understanding of the informal organisations, especially as far as their actions are to be compared with that of traditional unions, it can be of some interest to check if there is some unionisation of informal employers (as we can notice in the formal sector), and how negotiations are tackled by informal workers unions.

3.2.1. Unionisation of Informal Employers

The 1st meeting of employers' organisations of West Africa (FOPAO) and Central Africa (UNIPACE) held in Douala on 9-10 October 2014 discussed many items including informality. The third point of the "Dynamics of Douala" says that "*we note the preponderance of the informal economy (...) At the same time the qualities of flexibility*

and creativity of the actors in the informal economy is an asset and we agreed to work for the promotion of mechanisms and programs that contribute to the gradual integration of the informal sector into the formal economy”.

The notice to be done from this statement is that it doesn't distinguish workers and employers in the informal sector, which is indeed one of the prominent aspects of informality in many countries in Africa including Cameroon. As reported by [7] informal trade unions generally mix employees and employers. For example, the SDCMTACB (motor taxi in the city of Benoue, North Cameroon) was created in 2008 by workers (taxi drivers) and employers (taxi owners) and both (drivers who own their motorcycle), in such a way that it is difficult to distinguish between them. The same can be noticed with the SYNEXPITAMOTOCAM (cars, buses, motorcycles) whose headquarters is in Foumban, West Cameroon. The members of this union are both owners of traveling agencies, drivers, loaders, and workers in traveling agencies. The same conclusion can be drawn from SYTRATAMO, SYMOTO, SYCOMOTA, among others.

According to recent statistics from the Ministry of Youth, 850,000 young people are in the business of motorcycle taxis drivers throughout Cameroon. Their willingness to unionise or to belong to any organisation as owners and/or drivers has led to a high number of unions in the field of motorbike taxis. The secretion in Douala of an umbrella group called GRASMOTA (Group of Associations and Unions of Motorcycle Taxis) comes from this observation. This group has the ambition to cover the whole country even though this group cannot be considered as an informal employer union.

Looking with a magnifying glass, maybe I may consider that the Federation of Unions and Common Initiative Groups of Producers and Consumers Associates of Cameroon (FUGICPROCA) somehow acts as a union of informal employers. Indeed, on the occasion of its annual general meeting on 15 April 2008 in Douala as reported by [21], the FUGICPROCA which comprises 50 per cent of the operational Common Initiatives Groups (GIC) of the country has given the impression of being an employer organisation. Representatives (that is to say the bosses) of GICs in the agricultural sector have stigmatised their difficulties to achieve optimal production and meet local demand; discussed their problems with financing and access to credit, the escalation of inputs and the marketing of their products. To overcome the obstacle of credit, the Federation has set up a fund for agricultural financing to help their members (even if they believe that the 12 per cent rate for 6 months refundable after the sale of the products of the harvest is high). It imported a cargo of 17 tons of fertiliser to reduce the price of this product on the market; and seeks to transform the fund agricultural financing into a finance institution. The FIGICPROCA has also developed some programmes funded from abroad, particularly the “employment in rural area project” funded by UNDP.

If it is that scarce to highlight a union of employers, it is more difficult to point out an association of employers, at least because the same causes produce the same effects: employees and employers are together when it comes to create an association. This is visible with the Waste pickers association (ARD), the Association of Merchants and Street Vendors of Cameroon (ACAM), the numerous Associations of Merchants and

Sellers (ACV) of different markets in the country (Nkololoun, Madagascar, Sandaga, Douala II, New-Deido, Bafoussam, Mokolo, Mvog-Mbi, etc.), the Hairdressers Association (ACOIF), the National Association of Street Vendors of Cameroon (ANESCAM), and so on.

3.2.2. Informal Negotiations

Informal negotiations which are negotiations tackled by informal actors should be the obvious way to deal with all the problems they face. The extend of the priority issues for negotiations listed in **Table 3** for each informal group highlights the fact that they need social partnership. Reference [22] also suggests that social partners are key actors in finding solutions in the informal economy. To have a voice, MBO's, CBO's and so on should be duly represented in the social dialogue institutions and processes. In many

Table 3. Some priority issues for informal negotiations.

Sector/Group	Priority issues
Street, market vendors and hawkers	(a) Right and space to vend, (b) Facilities- storage, shelter, toilets, water, (c) Protection against police harassment, (d) Safety and security, (e) Taxation
Garment workers, tailors	(a) Living wage, (b) Right to organise, (c) Excessive overtime, (d) Security of employment
Waste pickers and recyclers	(a) Access/right to recyclable waste, (b) Integration into municipal systems, (c) Recognition and improved status, (d) Health and safety
Agricultural, forestry and fish workers	(a) Right to land and land use, (b) Right to natural resources, (c) Access to resources and equipment, (d) Access to markets
Domestic workers	(a) Recognition as workers, (b) Protection against dismissal, abuse, (c) Freedom of movement, (d) Less hours, more rest, (e) Better living conditions
Transport workers, motorbike taxis	(a) Access to routes and passengers, (b) Protection against harassment, (c) Health and safety/accident protection, (d) Parking and facilities, (e) Taxation
Women workers all sectors	(a) Safe and affordable child care, (b) Income protection during/after childbirth, (c) Sexual harassment protection, (d) Equal income for equal value work

Source: Adapted from [23], v-vi.

circumstances and various countries, representation of informal workers has been effective through the extension of employers and workers organisations already present in the formal economy. In Cameroon, the recent success of the extension of social security to voluntary workers is a relevant illustration.

Labour relations in Cameroon have two unique characteristics discussed by [2] and [20] among others: the first is that social dialogue is just a bilateral relationship between employers and government on one hand, and between trade unions and public authorities on the other, indicating that the Cameroonian social dialogue is not a face-to-face negotiation between employers and employees. The second relates to collective agreement. While it universally defines agreements between the unions of employers and unions of employees to govern by improving the provisions of the Labour Code, conditions of employment of a branch activity, Cameroon's collective agreement is first the result of a desire of the State that convenes the social partners and invites them to agree to a pre-existing agreement. Once accepted by employers and unions, the agreement is signed by the government and co-signed by the social partners. So, instead of being the guarantor of the collective bargaining agreement, the state is both the promoter and the final decision maker. In such a context, it is clear that there is no room for informal sector operators unless they are represented by formal social partners.

When it's not the case as it use to be, negotiations by informal actors just become informal discussions or informal debates somewhere at the City hall of the town; employees and employers defending the same causes in general about their activities conditions. These conditions include for example tariffs, wearing recognisable work clothes, the conditions for entry into the profession, work schedules, location, working hours, taxation, police harassment, sanitation and so forth (see **Table 3**). For example in January 2000, traders of fresh food of central market of Douala protested violently against eviction attempts which were served on them by the Mayor. At the Bonamousadi market, the Sub Divisional Officer had to intervene several times to bridge differences between the association of traders and the public enterprise of land planning (MAETUR) about space management. In January 2002, market traders of the Cité des Palmiers (Douala neighbourhood) went on strike for three days to protest against rising rents unilaterally decided by the company in charge of rentals. And you can have many testimonies of this nature; ultimately resolved at the City Hall.

Of course, salary discussions and elements of the employment contract (amount of daily income, work schedule, maintenance of the equipments, etc.) between employers and employees are generally excluded from the dialogue between associations and local authorities. If in the formal sector where social partners are structured there is no direct dialogue between employers and employees, it is even worse in the informal sector where there is no such organisation, no permanent and recognised negotiations forums.

4. Conclusions: The Road of the Future

The aim of this paper was to analyze the relationship between trade union and the in-

formal sector in Africa, with a focus on Cameroon, and to check whether traditional trade unions help or impede the development of informal sector. To do so, I proceed in two steps: the first analyzes trade union and informality to check how unions can avoid the forgetting trap as far as informality is concerned. The idea is to discuss the modalities of organisation of the informal economy and to assess how the challenges of women and child labour organisations are considered by traditional trade unions. The second step is then to present how the informal sector tries to take care of itself, especially through associations officially registered and acting like conventional unions to protect their members and give them some voice (NGOs, MBOs, cooperatives and so on). This “informal unionisation” is nowadays very popular in Africa. This step also analyzes the trade-off between conventional trade union behaviour and this “informal unionisation” in terms of competition versus complementarity.

But in the future, the relationship between traditional and informal unions cannot be considered outside of a context heavily influenced by the debate on the formalisation of the informal sector. ILO which contains a lot of references about this fruitful debate recognizes that “in particular, strengthening the organisation and representation of workers and entrepreneurs in the informal economy is an essential element of a strategy towards formalisation, and the gateway towards realising rights or accessing resources” ([22], p. 21).

This debate is not likely to end Cameroon before many years. Indeed, one of the recurring reasons of informalisation is the public sector inefficiencies, and particularly the weakness of business regulation. This weakness is exacerbated by the rampant corruption that pollutes any attempt to comply with the rule by informal actors. The willingness of many of them to leave the informal sector to be transformed into MSEs (micro and small enterprises) faces the permanent arbitration between the costs of informality and gains of formalisation. So long as these costs will be lower than these gains, they will turn to remain in the informal sector.

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