

ORGANISING INFORMAL TRANSPORT WORKERS



The Informal Economy and the Unionisation
of Motorcycle Taxi Drivers in Benin

This country case study forms part of a global research project on organising informal transport workers. In 2005, this project was initiated by the ITF Education Department in cooperation with the ITF Road Transport Section. The overall objective of the project was to provide transport workers' unions organising, or wishing to organise, informal transport workers with a comprehensive guide and reference.

The research aims were to:

- document, analyse and synthesise the organising experiences, strategies and methods of unions organising informal transport workers through three detailed country case studies;
- identify the forms and extent of informal transport work; including identifying informal women transport workers;
- summarise issues concerning organising in the informal economy and their relevance to transport unions;
- formulate proposals for consideration by ITF policy-making structures;
- provide materials for use in planning education programmes on organising in the informal economy.

The research had two interlinked components:

- three detailed country case studies from Benin, Zambia and the Philippines of unions organising informal transport workers, including relevant contextual information;
- an overview of organising informal transport workers containing: information on informal transport work and men and women workers; organising challenges and strategies; synthesis of the case studies and recommendations for consideration by ITF policy-making structures.

For the case studies, the ITF identified three affiliated unions. The unions selected are from countries where informal jobs outnumber those in the formal economy, in Asia and Africa. We appointed research organisations from those countries to conduct the research. A research co-ordinator based in South Africa was appointed to produce the overview.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CFPA:	Centre de Formation Professionnelle d'Abomey / Abomey Professional Training Centre
CNSR:	Centre National de Sécurité Routière / National Road Safety Centre
ECHOPPE:	Echange pour l'Organisation et la Promotion de Petit Entrepreneurs / Exchange for the Organisation and Advancement of Small Entrepreneurs
FECECAM:	Fédération des Caisses d'Épargne et de Crédit Agricole Mutuel / Federation of Mutual Agricultural Credit and Savings Schemes
FENAB :	Fédération Nationale des Artisans du Bénin / Benin National Federation of Artisans
FODEFCA:	Fonds de Développement de la Formation Professionnelle Continue et de l'Apprentissage / Continuous Professional Training and Apprenticeship Development Fund
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GMTB:	Groupe des Motocyclistes Taximen du Bénin / Benin Motorcycle Taxis Group
IFCOD:	Institut de Formation et de Coopération Décentralisée / Institute of Decentralised Training and Cooperation
INSAE:	Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Économique / Institute of National Statistics and Economic Analysis
ILO:	International Labour Office
ITF:	International Transport Worker's Federation
LARES:	Laboratoire d'Analyse Régionale et d'Expertise Sociale / Regional Analysis and Social Expertise Laboratory
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
OBSS:	Office Béninois de Sécurité Sociale / Benin Social Security Office
OHADA:	Organisation pour l'Harmonisation du Droit des Affaires / Organisation for the Harmonisation of Business Law
PADME:	Programme d'Appui au Développement de la Micro entreprise / Programme of Support for the Development of Micro Enterprises
PAPME:	Programme d'Appui aux Petites et Moyennes Entreprises / Programme of Support for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
RGPH:	Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat / General Population and Housing Census
SAP:	Structural Adjustment Programme
SME:	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
SMI:	Small and Medium-Sized Industries
SYNAZEB:	Syndicat National des Zemijan du Bénin / National Union of Zemijan of Benin
WAEMU:	West African Economic and Monetary Union

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Context

The acceleration of urbanisation has attracted hundreds of millions of migrants to African cities, in search of a better life. They are surplus labour, mainly migrating from rural to urban areas, and unable to find employment in modern economic activities. They swell the ranks of the thousands of unemployed who already live in precarious circumstances. The poor performance of the economies of these countries does not create enough jobs to absorb the continuously increasing number of those seeking work, including those without qualifications. In a context characterised by the almost total absence of unemployment benefit, the unemployed develop survival strategies, and this is the driving force behind the proliferation of informal economic activities. This phenomenon takes different forms in different countries and the solutions found vary from one country to another.

Demographic trends in developing countries indicate rapid growth of the population and an increase in the rate of urbanisation. This demographic and urban boom, coupled with the geographical expansion of urban areas, has increased the demand for motorised transport, as thousands of people must travel long distances from home to work and back every day.

Benin is no exception to this situation. Here, more than elsewhere, the combination of various factors has contributed to the emergence and consolidation of an informal sector that employs a large proportion of the economically active population. The development of the Cotonou-Porto-Novo-Abomey-Calavi conurbation, the twin cities (Abomey-Bohicon) and the trading capitals (Parakou, Djougou); the country's geographical location, as a neighbour of Nigeria; and the economic crisis of the 1980s have all contributed to the growth of the informal sector. Exploitation of the opportunities to make money provided by the Nigerian market have given rise to economic activities, most of which are not recorded by official statistics. The economic crisis of the 1980s, characterised by the near-bankruptcy of the government, accelerated the rise in unemployment. The education system had already shown itself structurally incapable of meeting the needs of the economy. Among the sectors that many qualified and unqualified workers turned to for employment was the transport sector. It prospered in a context of lax legislation, which allowed the import of second-hand motorcycles and the fraudulent import of low-cost fuel and spare parts from Nigeria.

This part of the transport sector is an important component of the informal sector, both in terms of the number of jobs it generates, and its social and economic role. However, despite the many studies that have been conducted on this sector, not much is yet known of the way it operates and its real social and economic implications.

Objectives

This study aims to collect information directly from affiliates that actively represent workers in the informal economy. The ITF hopes, in this way, to learn more about their experiences and be able to share them with other affiliates.

Methodology

Overall approach

Assessment of the situation of the informal transport sector and the efforts made by all the involved actors to improve the operation and outputs for the various parties concerned, required an appropriate research methodology. A socio-institutional analysis was particularly required. Our study focused on the operation of both the formal and informal, government and corporate institutions that manage the informal transport sector in Benin.

Data was collected from several sources:

1. A study of existing documentation on the issue;
2. Interview-discussions with trade union officers about the issues raised in union documentation, their experiences and their vision for the future of the sector;
3. Processing and analysis of the data in accordance with the study objectives and the concerns of ITF officers.

Literature review

The existing documentation can be divided into two categories:

Synazeb documents, especially reports and the minutes of meetings of the union and other affiliates; trade union publications; and the union statute. Study of this documentation allowed us to determine with greater precision and rigour the range of variables that we needed to take into account as well as the modalities of their collection and analysis.

We also consulted studies about the informal transport sector in Benin. These studies were either dissertations or reports written by students, or prepared by various support institutions. They are located in the Land Transport Department, the Benin Chamber of Commerce, state and private (NGO) agencies that provide support for the informal sector (PAPME and PADME).

The Sample

The choice of locations was based on a carefully thought out approach. Cities were chosen not only because of their size, but also because of the numbers of motorcycle taxis, and finally, the existence of embryonic organisations of the actors. The following cities were chosen for the research. In the south of the country: Cotonou and Porto-Novo, two cities where there is a strong concentration of informal transport, Abomey-Calavi, Ouidah, Allada Abomey, Bohicon and Lokossa. In the North, Natitingou, Parakou, Malanville, Kandi and Djougou were chosen.

The actors were selected in conformity with the main interests of the study. The sample included directors of various institutions, trade union officers and motorcycle taxi drivers (known locally as zemijan).

Discussions and interviews with actors in the informal transport sector

This phase of research involved several actors who were closely involved with the subject matter of our study. They include elected representatives in the local authorities, union officials responsible for membership services, union representatives, ordinary members of the unions, in both the formal and informal sectors. These discussions covered the concerns of union members at all levels, especially about the importance of this sector to the Benin economy and the difficulties it faces.



Administrative organisation

Benin is located in West Africa, in a humid inter-tropical zone suitable for agriculture. It became independent on 1 August 1960. Its political history is punctuated by events that can be divided into three important periods:

- A period of instability from 1960 to 1972, punctuated by many military coups;
- A long period of Marxist Leninist government, from 1972 to 1989;
- A period of democratic government, since 1990 (year of the National Conference of Living Forces).

Benin is bordered on the east by Nigeria, on the west by Togo, to the north by Niger, to the north-west by Burkina Faso, and to the south by the Atlantic Ocean. It extends 750 km from Cotonou on the coast to Malanville on the River Niger; 125 km along the coast; and 325 km in at the latitude of Tanguiéta, in the north. The country is divided into twelve departments: Alibori, Atacora, Atlantique, Borgou, Collines, Couffo, Donga, Littoral, l'Ouémé, Plateau, Mono and Zou; 77 communes and 689 arrondissements. The political capital, Porto-Novo, is located in the department of l'Ouémé, and the economic and administrative capital, Cotonou, is located in the department of Atlantique. Other important cities are Lokossa (in Mono); Abomey and Bohicon (in Zou); Parakou, Kandi and Malanville (in Borgou and Alibori); Natitingou and Djougou (in Atacora and Donga).

Benin has witnessed rapid population growth. The population increased from 3.33 million in 1979 to 4.9 million in 1992 (growth rate of 2.9 per cent) and to 6,769,914 in 2002, according to data published by the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Analysis (INSAE). Forty-eight per cent of the population is composed of young people less than 15 years of age. Women represent 52 per cent of the population. Per capita income is approximately \$US 420 and Benin is classed among the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). It is listed 162nd out of the 177 countries on the Human Development Index.

Figure 1 : Administrative divisions of Benin

Figure 1: Administrative divisions of Benin



Recent economic development

Benin's economic history in the last 15 years has been a journey from a deep crisis to a period of adjustment and restructuring that is still continuing. Thanks to the reforms undertaken since 1989, under the sponsorship of the international financial institutions, the economy has gradually recovered from the crisis of the 1980s. This revival has witnessed a growth rate of about 5% and an improvement in the main economic indicators, including a reduction in the rate of inflation and the budget deficit.

Although the reforms have had good macroeconomic results, they have yet to change the living conditions of the population. Poverty and unemployment prevail. The latest estimates contained in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Document (PRSD) show an increase in poverty. In 1994-1995, with an average poverty threshold of 42,075 FCFA per year per adult in rural areas and 48,629 FCFA in urban areas, the incidence of monetary poverty was 25.2% in rural areas and 28.5% in urban areas. In 1999-2000, the same sources, using the poverty thresholds of 51,413 FCFA in rural areas and 91,705 FCFA in urban areas, estimated that the incidence of monetary poverty had increased to 33 % in rural areas and decreased to 23.3% in urban areas. Most of the studies on poverty conducted in recent years confirm this trend to an increase in poverty, especially in rural areas. The results obtained by the QUIBB¹ investigation revealed that 22 % of the population (1.5 million people) were extremely poor and 39 % (2.6 million people) were poor.

The employment situation started to cause concern in 1977, with an increase in the level of youth unemployment. In 1983, the steady worsening of the economic situation and a corresponding increase in unemployment prompted the organisation of a national seminar on employment, 12-21 December 1984. In 1985 and 1986, the number of job applications was officially recorded as being 12,555 and 21,177 respectively. However, the government, the only source of employment, only recruited 2,056 (16 per cent) and 3,681 (17 per cent) respectively. In 1987, the government's systematic recruitment of higher education graduates for the public services and public sector companies was definitively halted.

According to the Observatoire de l'emploi (Employment Observatory), the number of civil servants was 32,241 (8,637 women and 23,604 men) in 1997, including 260 contract employees.

Characteristics of the informal sector in Benin

According to data published by the General Census of Population and Housing (RGPH), in 2002, the informal economy acts as a crushing weight on the country's productive structure: it employs around 95% (97.7% of men and 99.1% of women) of the economically active population over the age of ten, that is 2,765,766 people. The modern sector (government and the private sector) is relatively undeveloped and only employs 5% (338,496 people) of the population. If agriculture and trade are excluded, informal employment is close to 611,469 people, working in more than 89,000 enterprises.

We will compare the data on employment in the informal and modern sectors, in order to appreciate their relative importance and respective contribution to the use of the country's human resources. In comparison to the employment figures for the urban informal sector in 2002, the role of the modern sector appears to be relatively modest. In fact, out of a total of 277,300 jobs counted, 56,000 (20.2%) are in the modern sector, of which 20,000 (7.2%) were in the private sector and 36,000 (13%) in the public sector. So nine out of ten jobs were in enterprises in the informal sector, according to the RGPH in 2002. This inter-sectoral comparison has not deducted rural employment from the total number of jobs in the public administration. If this was taken into account, the proportion of the modern sector would certainly be reduced by a few points.

In 2002, the dependence ration was 141 compared to 136 in 1992. Therefore, in ten years, the burden of inactive people on active people increased slightly.

¹QUIBB, Questionnaire des Indicateurs de Base du Bien être (Questionnaire about Core Welfare Indicators).

Table 1: Economically active population by sector and gender

	Economically active population	Informal sector	Formal sector – government	Formal sector - private
Total	100	94.9	2.6	2.4
Female	49.4	97.3	1.3	1.4
Male	50.6	92.7	3.9	3.4
Ratio of men to women	102	95	300	243
Workforce	2 811 753	2 669 644	73 627	68 482

Source : INSAE 2002.

The active population is employed mainly in the informal sector. This sector absorbs 95% of the workforce and the formal sector only represents 5%, divided almost equally between the public (2.6%) and private (2.4%) sectors. The informal sector includes 88% of the urban workforce and 98% of the rural workforce.

Table 2: Economically active population by industry (not including agriculture)

	Total	Informal sector	Formal sector (public and private)
Proportion (%)	100	91.1	8.9
Total	100	100	100
Extractive industries	2.8	3	0.3
Manufacturing industry	18.5	19.6	7.4
Water; electricity, gas	0.1	0.1	0.9
Construction and public works	5.2	5.4	3.7
Trade and catering	59.4	63.9	14.2
Transport and communications	7	6.7	9.6
Banks and insurance	0.3	0.1	1.8
Other services	14.9	9.6	69.1
Workforce	1 429 010	1 303 074	125 936
Not declared	108 364	100 109	8 255

Source : INSAE, 2002.

A look at the non-agricultural industries (table 2) shows that the informal sector is predominant, with 91.1% of the workforce, compared to 8.9% in the formal sector. Analysis of each industry shows that the workforce in the formal sector is only higher in water, gas, electricity; transport and communications; and banks and insurance. Analysis of the transport and communications industries merits particular attention, given that attempts to organise the transport sector in Africa have failed. The predominance of the formal sector (9.6%) as against 6.7% in the informal sector is no doubt due to the recent census of public transport in the major cities, like Cotonou.

Women are in the majority in the informal sector. According to INSAE (2002), there are 102 economically active men employed for every 100 women in the country as a whole. The ratio is 95 men in the informal sector; and 300 men in the formal public sector

and 243 men for every 100 women in the formal private sector. Formal permanent employment, which requires a higher level of education and qualifications, remains the preserve of men, who have a higher level of education than women.

The issue of funding for enterprises in the informal sector is the focus of debate on the development of the private sector. Although enterprises in the modern sector of the economy can turn to the banks, the same cannot be said of the informal sector, where enterprises are permanently confronted with restricted access to credit. Only the government has taken some initiatives to support this sector.

National and foreign government and NGO policies and initiatives to support the informal sector in general, and transport in particular, are listed in annex 1. Through national and foreign partnerships these proj-

ects financially sustain the informal sector:By the end of 1996, the projects had granted a total of 3,947 loans to 2,671 clients to the value of 1.57 billion F.CFA, with a monthly average of 120 loans. Beneficiaries included small businesses (80%), artisans (4%), catering (2%) and other categories (garages and other services – 14%). The repayment rate is 94%.

There is an absence of measures in favour of the informal transport sector, especially motorcycle transport. That could be explained by the government's strategy to eradicate this sector. This fear was confirmed in 1999, when the Head of State told motorcycle drivers to switch to manioc production. In brief, the absence of measures to support the informal sector as a whole explains the weak development of transport in Benin.

Current situation

The organisation of transport in African cities, particularly in Sub-Saharan countries, was inspired for years by Western models. In Benin, many state enterprises were created during the 1970s and 1980s (the revolutionary period). This experience, which consisted of creating bus companies, did not survive the social and economic crisis that shook all sectors of the country's economy. Workers employed by these enterprises had benefited from the same rights as other state sector workers on permanent contracts. This was the only form of transport that had existed in Benin except for the [[permanent driving agents]]. Like other countries in the subregion, Benin did not escape from this decline of African urban public transport companies. In fact, all these public transport companies were wound up after a few years of activity. This was because of a lack of subsidies, the use of vehicles that were inadequate for local conditions and bad management of human and financial resources. Employment in the formal transport sector disappeared with the failure of the state's attempt to comply with its responsibility to organise public transport. All the reforms undertaken to remedy this situation were in vain. The result was a massive increase in all kinds of transport in the informal sector. There were several reasons for this situation: cuts in public and private sector employment, unemployment, the new PAS measures and others.

In general, analysis of the mode of operation of informal transport reveals the existence of many malfunctions. Suddenly, most forms of public transport were informal.

Employment in the transport sector

The transport sector is responsible for 7.4% of GDP and is divided into four sectors: road, rail, air and maritime. The transport system is centred on Cotonou, the country's economic capital and location of Benin's only deep water port.

It is a key sector in the Benin economy because of its twin vocation as the focus of services for the interior of the country and a crossroads for international transit towards the region's landlocked countries (Burkina-Faso, Niger, Mali) and the neighbouring coastal countries, especially Nigeria.

Its main handicap remains the lack of domestic and foreign investment in the repair of deteriorated infrastructure and renewal of rolling stock and maintenance. There are also problems of an institutional nature such as inadequate training, and the lack of information to passengers and operators. Transport is one of the key components of the tertiary sector. Transport activities provide a fifth of employment in the formal sector and absorb a quarter of public investment.

Air transport

Benin has one international class airport that is accessible throughout the year, by all aircraft types, including jumbo jets. It is used by the world's biggest aviation companies. In addition to permanent state employees (civilian and military), it employs 251 people in related services in the informal sector, essentially in the provision of services such as car hire to foreigners who have just arrived; small-scale food outlets, in which women are in the majority; and baggage handlers. State employees are in the National Union of Air Transport Workers, affiliated to the CSA, but hardly any workers in the informal sectors are members of a union.

Maritime and river transport

Benin has one of the most dynamic ports in the West African subregion. It has approximately 3509 employees and is the fifth biggest port after Lagos (Nigeria) Téma (Ghana), Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) and Dakar. Port use and management are administered by several large public agencies: Cotonou Autonomous Port (PAC), the Benin Port Maintenance Company (SOBEMAP), the Benin Maritime Navigation Company (COBENAM) and the Benin National Council of Shippers (CNCB). There is also a multitude of forwarding agents, dockers, pointers, intermediaries, couriers, consignees and several transit companies, which operate informally. There are also several other port-related activities. The table below gives some examples of the employment generated by Cotonou port.

Table 3: Employment in Cotonou port

	Employment Low estimate	Employment High estimate
SOBEMAP		
Dockers	5 000	8 000
Mechanics	27636	44311
Vulcanisers	5690	10778
Spare parts	7586	5589
Wheels	5690	9581
Vehicle scrapyards	13818	22754
Car body works	3251	4790
Car wash	8941	4790
Shops	1626	3992
Total	74238	106586

Source : LARES, 2002 and field research, 2005

River transport is not very developed and is essentially focused on Lake Nokoue. It allows trading between the people living around the lake and the international market in Cotonou. Most of those working in this trade are women, although it is difficult to estimate the numbers involved. They are mainly boat owners that provide a shuttle service. No union exists for these workers, unlike the dockers and pointers who have a union, although it is not yet very active. These organisations operate as the mouthpieces of politicians and therefore have no trade union outlook at all. For example, the Association of Port Pointers and Dockers (APODOP) supports a candidate standing for the Supreme Court next March.

Railways

The railway is 438 km long and links Cotonou and Parakou. It is a multinational railway (Benin, Niger) with a freight transport capacity of 600,000 tonnes per year.

Small feeder lines (140 km) are obsolete and are not currently in use. The development of the railways was accompanied by the emergence of a whole array of services: catering, sale of crafts, jewels and traditional medicinal products, etc. These services are offered to passengers on the trains or at stations. When the railways were constructed, around 25 stations were built along the only currently operational line, the Cotonou-Parakou line. Almost all the women from surrounding villages work in the informal sector at these stations. According to estimates made by railway workers themselves, between 5,000 and 10,000 people are employed in these services. These workers have no trade union organisation at all. However, they do have savings and credit associations (tontines) and organisations of a social nature that are structured as

associations, with a president who is responsible for seeing the organisation's rules are obeyed, a secretary who looks after the organisation's documents and a treasurer.²

The permanent staff in this sector are drawn from two rival nationalities, which makes this workforce far from cohesive. There is a trade union, but it has little power, mainly due to the social problems.

² See box

TONTINES

How workers in the informal sector deal with the lack of access to credit

The lack of credit available to workers in the informal sector, in the world in general, and in Benin in particular, has led to the creation of mutual credit schemes, known locally as tontines.

Tontines were first developed in response to the impossibility of getting access to the banking system. A tontine is a kind of group savings scheme that allows those who have a bit of money to spare, and who are willing to invest it, to raise a significant sum of money in a much more shorter time than if they tried to do it alone.

Tontines are structured like associations, with a president, who is responsible for seeing the organisation's rules are obeyed, a secretary who looks after the organisation's documents and a collector, who is often called a "walking banker". The banker usually prepares a document with 31 boxes in which to record contributions, and the name and address of the saver. This person and the banker agree on the daily sum to be paid to the banker – this can vary between 100 and 10,000 CFA. When all the boxes are ticked, the banker repays the whole amount collected to the saver, less a daily charge to cover office costs. The second form of tontine, and the one most common among workers in the informal sector, on the railways and other sectors, is as follows: members contribute a fixed and uniform sum; a draw is conducted to determine the order in which members will benefit. For example, ten members contribute a monthly amount of 1,000 F. The first beneficiary collects 9,000 F (plus his own contribution of 1,000 F), the second person receives the same in the following month, and so on. The people we spoke to said that tontines are not just used to finance income generating activities. They are frequently used to finance non-productive expenditure, such as marriages, births and funerals. Participants often authorise members to move up the list of beneficiaries to allow them to cover the costs of such eventualities. Although tontines are a financial instrument, they are also a forum for socialising and for promoting solidarity. So the social reasons for this phenomenon are far from being negligible. It is positive for people to meet together in this way, in a climate of mutual trust, and in Benin, groups sometimes organise parties, especially at harvest time, after the sale of the cotton crop.

Road transport

The main means of passenger and freight transport is by road. Government transport department figures show that there has been an 8-9% annual increase of traffic on asphalted roads and 5-6% on non-asphalted roads over the last ten years. The road network covers 3,425 km, 35% of which is asphalted. This sector has several forms of transport.

This sector provides around 93% of domestic demand for passenger transport and around 73% of the demand for freight transport. This is interurban and international transport. It is linked to the railways. The types of vehicles that provide these links are large lorries, small cars and buses. Despite their importance, these actors remain the least unionised in the sector,

in terms of the number of structures and members. For a long time, there was only one union in the sector; the Benin National Drivers Union (UNACOB), with branches at the department and commune levels.

In 2003, another union, the Benin Union of Interurban Drivers and Transporters (UCTIB), was created by a dissident branch. From the interviews we conducted, it is difficult to assess the representativity of these unions because they are very politicised. However, they protect the rights of their members, especially against harassment by the police and gendarmes.

Drivers have to pay a tax on each load they carry. The vouchers used for this are issued by the national Treasury under the responsibility of the Minister of

the Interior and Decentralisation and sold by the union office. One third of revenue goes to the union, which uses the money for running and other costs. It is difficult to estimate the number of members of these unions because of the widespread fraud. Urban transport is also ensured by taxis (taxi-ville). They generally do not operate outside the urban centres but sometimes they provide interurban or even inter-departmental transport. They are at the bottom of the table, in trade union terms. In the case of Cotonou, a union was formed called the Cotonou Taxi-Ville Drivers Union, to replace an older union that had never really functioned. According to Cotonou municipal authorities, there were 2050 urban taxis in 2005. They are subject to daily checks of their road-worthiness and have to pay a municipal tax.

There is another category of workers in the informal sector; which operates outside all taxi regulations. These are taxis that serve tourists and other hotel users. They are called "telephone taxis" (taxi télé). They are usually clandestine and escape regulation. There is no union for these workers.

Still in the road transport sector, the motorcycle taxis appeared for various reasons: to fill the gap left by the lack of car transport and while awaiting an increase in the car taxi fleet; to compete by taking a part of the market covered by cars; and to provide a service for people who did not use car taxis. This sometimes led to the complete disappearance of the car taxis. This form of transport appeared at the beginning of the 1980s and operated without any genuine trade union organisation. At the beginning of the 1990s, the first signs of trade union organisation appeared but the strong politicisation of these organisations meant that they disappointed as union. This situation favoured the emergence of many trade unions, including Synazeb.

The road transport sector (cars and motorcycles) created a lot of driving jobs, for owners as well as other users. The total number of jobs in the informal sector (drivers and users - related activity) created by this activity in Benin is more than 115 000 (AFD, 2005) at the national level with an annual average growth rate of 9% for the two categories of transport. In addition to the jobs generated directly by road transport, there is a knock-on effect on other sectors of the economy, including: the sale of fuel and oil (women form the majority of workers at sales points), the sale of motorcycles and spare parts, engine repair, etc. According to LARES (2005), the informal sector accounts for an average of 245 million litres of oil per year, representing 74% of the market for oil.

Those are the main features of the transport sector in Benin and its effects on other sectors (informal), in which motorcycles are the most important element with regard to job creation.

General framework of the law in the informal sector

How can we ensure that labour legislation in the informal sector can be protected? Workers' organisations and social movements have demonstrated their concern to promote labour legislation. However, they have had only a limited impact on the situation. There is no law that directly guarantee workers' rights in the informal sector. In other words, for the moment, there is no law protecting informal workers in Benin – social welfare, health rights, etc.

However, discussions are being held about drafting such a law, especially with regard to the artisan sub-sector. This is the only sector that has recently benefited from regulations, leading to the drafting of a Code for Artisans, begun in 1998 and adopted in 2001.

No fiscal or institutional plans are in existence to support this sector of the economy. The code only set out what the government understood to be artisan activity, with a typology of activities, conditions for exercising artisan activity and the institutional obligations of artisans. The code says nothing on other branches of the country's informal economy. One could therefore wonder why artisans might be interested in registering.

Apart from these isolated and partial attempts, the Ministry of Public Works and Employment approved a general collective employment contract which all trade union organisations, in both the public and private sectors, can adopt. This contract was signed on 17 May 1974 and aimed to regulate relations between employers and workers in public and private companies in the country. It is the only instrument that provides guarantees to workers in the private formal sector – employers must provide the Employment Department with details about their employees. This means that job cuts are made known and any rights to sick pay are generally respected. This contract obliges employers to pay at least the minimum wage. It also guarantees other rights that modern workers typically have.

Innovations to the Labour Code have a very minor impact on the informal sector because these provisions are only valid for private companies that are offi-

cially registered.

In conclusion, the Labour Code does not take account of workers in the informal sector, including the transport sector.

Measures to protect workers in the informal sector

There aren't any. However, the general provisions of the Labour Code define workers as persons who conduct their professional activity for remuneration, under the direction and authority of a public or private, physical or moral person.

Wherever a contract might be concluded, and wherever the residence of either party might be (except for workers in the informal sector), the Labour Department must be informed about all employment contracts concluded for implementation in Benin and subject to the provisions of the present Code.

The word "informal" does not occur in the country's Labour Code. That means there is nothing in the Code that provides for workers in the informal sector, in general, and in the informal transport sector, in particular. Social welfare measures only exist for workers in the public sector and for private companies that are registered at the National Social Security Office.

In this context, there are occasional initiatives by NGOs and international organisations on behalf of workers in the informal sector, especially in the transport sector. We include the initiatives of IFCOD here (see annex 2).

Other regulations affecting workers in the informal transport sector

The regulations to which informal transport workers are subjected depend on which category they are in. Drivers have to pay a series of fees and taxes.

Government regulations

- taxi tax collected by the Public Treasury
- compulsory driving licence for all drivers, especially drivers of four-wheeled vehicles

- compulsory technical check every three months for 10,000 F CFA for four-wheeled taxis. Private cars must have the check once a year. Large vehicles must have a check every six months. Random checks are carried out by the municipality each month to verify drivers' documentation is in order, especially in the case of taxi-villes.

Municipal regulations (the amount varies)

- For inter-urban taxis

Municipal tax (100 F CFA/trip)

- For motorcycle taxi drivers:

According to the municipality, there are:

- Motorcycle licence (6 000 F CFA in Cotonou) payable once and giving right to hold a professional licence.
- Weekly union dues of between 100 and 300 F CFA (for union members)
- Parking tickets for 50 F CFA charged by the municipality (for drivers using cycle parks)



The trade union environment in the informal sector

Considered to be a pioneer of the democratic movement in Africa and imitated more or less successfully by many other states, Benin is a model for trade union movements. In fact, there are several unions and union federations in all sectors of the country's economy and they all have almost the same priorities. Independently of whether they protect the interests of their members or not, this plurality is a manifestation of personal battles for leadership.

In the case of workers in the informal sector, there is at least one organisation/association or trade union for each profession. These organisations group especially artisans, transport workers and works in micro-commerce.

In the case of workers in the modern sector, there are seven major trade union centres, which have affiliates in the public, private and informal sectors: CSA, UNSTB, COSI, CSTB, CSPIB, CGTB, CSUB.

- CSA : Central Syndicale Autonome / Autonomous Trade Union Centre
- UNSTB : Union Nationale des Travailleurs du Bénin / National Union of Benin Workers
- COSI : Confédération Syndicale Indépendante / Independent Trade Union Confederation
- CSTB : Centrale Syndicale des Travailleurs du Bénin / Benin Workers' Union Central
- CSPIB : Centrale Syndicale des Privés et Informels du Bénin / Benin Union Centre for Private and Informal Sector Workers
- CSUB : Centrale des Syndicats Unis du Bénin / Benin United Union Centre

The statutes of these central trade union organisations and confederations state that only they and not their individual affiliated unions are authorised to negotiate with the government. Many other unions (affiliated or otherwise to the main centres listed above) organise workers in the informal sector.

Although there are many trade unions in Benin, the main characteristic of the movement is its lack of synergy and cooperation in the pursuit of its demands. Unions are small and operate separately so they have no real power vis-à-vis the state. One trade union leader told us that, "our lack of synergy and coopera-

tion is a real handicap." He maintained that this state of affairs is the result of manoeuvres by politicians who seek to divide and rule.

The table below lists some of the larger groups of organisations and the main trade unions in Benin, in the informal sector:

Table 4: Main organisations in the informal economy

ORGANISATION/ASSOCIATION	Observations	National Affiliation	International Affiliation
Fédération Nationale des Artisans du Bénin (FENAB)	Includes several groups of workers in the informal sector (agriculture and food, leather, textiles, clothing, wood, metals, mechanics, construction, retailers.		
Union National des Conducteurs du Bénin / National Union of Drivers	Most important union of road hauliers and lorry drivers		
Syndicat National du Transport Aérien / National Union of Air Transport Workers	Organisation of airport workers.	CSA	
UNACOTAMO	Motorcycle taxi drivers.	CGTB	FPTT
SYNAZEB	Motorcycle taxi drivers.	COSI	ITF
UCOTAC	Motorcycle taxi drivers.	CSA	
SYNCOTAMO	Motorcycle taxi drivers.		
SICOTAMOL	Motorcycle taxi drivers.		
UTIP	Taxis ville and interurban taxis.	CSA	
UDP	Dockers (not operational).	CSA	

Source : Field research, 2005

The above table shows that there are numerous organisations in the informal economy. There is a range of trade union associations that organise workers in the informal sector in Benin. In brief, this survey is not exhaustive for the simple reason that contacts for organisations are not always available.

It must also be noted that the statutes of these organisations are all much the same, giving their objective as the defence of the interests of their members. Other non-explicit motives explain why there are so many unions, for example, personal interests.

Motorcycle taxi drivers' unions

Table 5: Geographical distribution of motorcycle taxi driver unions

DEPARTMENTS	COMMUNES	NATIONAL UNION	National Affiliation	1990	1995	2000	2005
ATACORA-DONGA	Natitingou	ACTM/Informal sector			70	112	815
	Djougou	SYNCOTAMO			33	302	
ATLANTIQUE-LITTORAL	Cotonou	SYNAEZB	CSA Benin			400	700
		UCOTAC		-	3 578	61 662	1000
		FUZECO					
		SYNCOTAM					
		SYNAPROZEB					
	Abomey Calavi	SYNAZEB			84	90	
		UNACOTAMO					
BORGOU-ALIBORI	Parakou	ACVR /ZEMIJAN		505	412	1025	9 050
		SYNCOTAMOB					620
	Kandi	SYNCOTAMOB		-	-	102	963
	Malanville	SYNCOTAMOB				261	1 021
MONO-COUFFO	Lokossa	UCOTAMOL		-	46	912	1 225
	Houéyogbé	UCOTAMOH		-	23		
OUEME-PLATEAU	Porto-Novo	UCOMOTO		2 778	2 000	2 081	3 241
	Pobé	SYNAZEB	COSI				45
	Ifangni	SYNAZEB	COSI				25
		UCOTAMO					
ZOU-COLLINES	Abomey	GCTM				1658	5248
	Bohicon	UCOTAMO		-	-	2 458	5 263
	Dassa	SYNAZEB		-		324	60
	Ouessè	SYNAZEB		-		427	30
	Agbangnizoun	SYNAZEB				429	700

Source : Field research, 2005

These figures allow us to identify motorcycle taxi drivers' problems and quantify the number of unemployed. This gives an idea of the structure of the demand for transport and the developments that result if one wants to satisfy this demand with more conventional means.

It is important to underline that a small proportion of motorcycle taxi drivers is unionised. According to AFD estimates (2005), 10-15% of drivers are members of a union. That is explained by the reticence or even distrust felt towards these organisations. The big problem is that drivers are suspicious about the founders, believing they want to get rich on their backs.

In brief, the leadership difficulties, poor financial management, lack of judgment, politicking (electoral aims of political leaders, especially in Cotonou) and misappropriation of funds by union officers explain the proliferation of motorcycle taxi driver unions.

The problems faced by motorcycle taxi drivers

The job of Zemijan as a springboard

Motorcycle taxi drivers generally consider themselves to be marginalized from society and that the profession is nothing more than the lesser of evils. All those who have lost hope waiting for a hypothetical job, or for an uncertain better option, turn towards the Zemijan option. In fact, the job of taxi driver is felt by most drivers to be a springboard to a "better life". They never intend to spend much time in the job. In a context in which drivers consider their job to be a hobby, they are unlikely to get involved in an association or a union, and even when that happens, it poses problems.

Workers turn to the job of motorcycle taxis for several reasons, the most important of which are misery, poverty, the need to cover the costs of basic needs (see table of reasons in annex 3).

The profession of zemijan as a recurrent theme of government concern

Since 1989, regulation of the zemijan profession has been a recurrent theme of the transport authorities. Paradoxically, nothing practical has been done to support motorcycle taxi driver unions. There are a number of reasons to explain this state of affairs, including a lack of political will.

This mode of transport is an important source of employment, the elimination of which would mean the loss of 100,000 jobs. However, the authorities give the impression of being willing to accept the status quo, while waiting for real solutions to the social crisis that has hit Benin.

The other barrier to the development of professional groups is that some leaders want to use them in a political way. The political parties usually depend on them for advertising during the elections. This often leads to problems and to the proliferation of unions, all trying to play their role.

Role of the motorcycle taxi driver unions

The unions contribute to the rehabilitation of politics

The creation of trade unions, in general, illustrates the progress of democracy in the country. The replies to this series of questions were strongly influenced, in some cases, by the instructions given by trade union leaders to their members during our survey. This top-down approach can be seen in the replies to questions about state and municipal government aid for unions and about union activities vis-à-vis the government. So once again, the replies given by drivers need to be treated with caution in this series of questions, because either they did not reply or their replies were very short, slanted and similar to each other.

The unions protect fundamental freedoms

The freedoms of expression and association are “inseparable from all trade union activity”; intimately connected to democracy (in all countries) and are important because “they allow each individual or group to say what they think and to protect rights when they are violated or disrespected, especially their own.” The drivers interviewed thought that the protection of freedoms promotes “mutual aid and camaraderie, learning how to be tolerant, how to dialogue with others and manage conflict”. In a context

where countries are facing a major political crisis (as in the case with African countries), “we are well placed to feel the need to express and organise ourselves freely.” The unions build their organisations in the name of these freedoms.

The acquisition of offices

Some unions have bought a plot of land on which to build a union office. This is the case at Parakou, (ACVR), Kandi (SYNCOMOB/Kandi) and Djougou. These offices will house union administration facilities and provide a location for training and educating members about the highway code (the main cause of accidents – 95%). These are important initiatives in a context where motorcycle taxi driver unions continue to receive no support from the state and little support from NGOs and other agencies (see annex 4). The cost of these construction projects is about nine million CFA in Djougou and seven million in Kandi. We draw attention to these construction initiatives here as they indicate a certain degree of organisation on the part of the unions.

Motorcycle taxi drivers have benefited from the support of the state and private groups (see annexes 5, 6 and 7).

Description of the Union

Name: Syndicat National des Zemidjan du Benin

Abbreviation: SYNAZEB

Telephone number: +229(0)95 81 86 53

Fax

Email: synazeb@yahoo.fr

General Secretary: Chrétien Kossi Bango

Category of workers organised: drivers of Moto-Taxis and indirectly the wives of drivers who sell fuel.

Coverage of the organisation: National wide

Number of members: 1,000

Date of creation: 15 December 2000

Registration: Authorisation No. 455/MISAT/DC/SG/DAI/SAAP-ASSOC du 15/12/2000.

Affiliation: ITF and COSI

Introduction. Why Synazeb?

The Benin National Union of Motorcycle Taxi Drivers (Syndicat national de zemijan du Bénin) was established by motorcycle taxi drivers in 2000. Drivers wanted a union because of a series of problems:

- Problems related to contracts between drivers and owners;
- The poor state of the roads. None of the country's roads was suitable for motorcycles;
- The absence of any regulations on driving motorcycles;
- No social welfare provision;
- Lack of alternatives for other sources of income;
- Police and other harassment;
- Increasing insecurity in which drivers operated;
- The need to inform and educate motorcyclists to demand their rights.

These were the main reasons for unionisation of workers in the informal sector; especially those in Synazeb.

General study of Synazeb rules

Membership and recruitment

Membership

All physical persons, subscribing to the present statutes and not having previously opposed, openly or implicitly, the zemijans or their organisation are eligible to become members of the National Union of Benin Zemijans (Syndicat national des Zémijans du Benin – SYNAZEB). All members of Synazeb must pay their dues regularly and participate actively in the union, at their level.

Synazeb currently has 1000 members (in the country), most of whom are motorcycle taxi drivers. There are also some women members who benefit from the support of the savings association (see below) and who work in income generating activities (agriculture and food, gardening, sale of oil, etc.). Most of these women are the wives of drivers.

Members lose their membership rights in the following circumstances:

- non-payment of union dues on three occasions;
- non participation in the life of the union;
- resignation or leaving the union;
- death.

Retention and recruitment of members

This is the most difficult of the union's activities because of the multiplicity of trade unions. Unionisation is carried out by the national office and the other members of the union's decentralised structures through:

- Education at annual demonstrations (on AIDS etc.) ;
- Publicity cars driving through the city. [[Blue jeans are distributed for the march. Priority is given to those who join the organisation, when distributing the jeans]].
- Visits to motorcycle parks. The main difficulty encountered here is finding the money to pay for the recruitment operations, because several trips are needed to convince people to join.

It is not always possible to hang on to members because of the mobility of these people. However, education, training and information services, and the financial support provided to members when they are in difficulty, because of illness, etc. are the reasons why people stay in the union.

Door-to-door calls are also used for education. This policy, inspired by the strategy of politicians and used by them on the eve of elections, consists of going from house to house and family to family to try and recruit new members to Synazeb. This method seems to be very effective, especially because to visit someone personally in this way to discuss an issue constitutes a mark of respect that is very deeply-rooted in our societies.

Administrative and financial organisation

Synazeb's activities are financed by the union's own resources. However, at the education sessions (on HIV/AIDS, the Highway Code, pollution of the envi-

ronment, etc.) the office asks local NGOs for support. The union does not yet have permanent administrative officers. Synazeb's resources come from:

- Joining fee;
- Fee for issue of membership cards;
- Membership dues;
- Collections and subscriptions;
- Grants, donations, etc.;
- General funds for the union's social welfare work;
- Funds generated by union organised sporting and cultural events.

Trade union rules

The statute is the union's founding document as a moral legal person and through which the union is recognised by other actors. As such, it represents the union's formal set of rules.

The rules define the capacity of members to act together and their capacity to exercise an activity in a particular geographical area.

These rules register the union as one of the family of trade union central organisations in the country. Registration recognises a particular operational framework, based on subscriptions and the membership rights of individual members. In normal conditions, the capital is used during the financial year, with membership dues being paid into the union's funds. The union rules set out how it will be run, based on democratic principles and using a series of decision-making bodies (Congress, General Assembly, National Executive, branches). They define the distribution of responsibilities among members.

Democracy in the unions

General Assembly

The General Assembly is composed of all union members. It is sovereign and represents the universality of the members. Its decisions are final for all, including those that are not present, dissidents or those incapable of attending for reasons outside their control. All members have the right to be present or to be represented at the general assembly.

The General Assembly represents the collective or the whole membership. The General Assembly takes decisions on investments, the calculation and distribution of social assets and strategic guidelines. The General Assembly is the decision-making body with regard to adding new initiatives into the union's action plan.

Each member, present or represented, has only one voice in the General Assembly, whatever their social status. This follows the Rochdale principle: "one man, one voice". The executive is composed at the end of the Congress, as follows:

- General secretary;
- Assistant general secretary;
- Administrative secretary;
- Assistant administrative secretary
- A general secretary;
- Treasurer;
- Assistant treasurer;
- Safety secretary;
- Assistant safety secretary;
- Information and communication secretary;
- Education and literacy secretary.
- Women's Officer.

At the sub-prefecture level, there is an executive committee (Bureau de cellule) composed of at least seven members:

- 1 Manager
- 1 Administrative secretary
- 2 Treasurers
- 1 Organisational Secretary
- 1 Safety Officer
- 1 Auditor

The executive is elected by a General Assembly composed of a few delegates from each section in the respective sub-prefecture.

It is clear to see that the power within the union's lies with the leaders.

The boundaries of the unions

The union rules put down on paper the aims of the Association as well as the main restrictions that affect its operation. They establish the legal restrictions on trade union organisation by defining the union's field of action. Union activities are restricted to a particular geographical area and to a particular period of the day, in recognition of the lack of security in the cities. Any violations are punished in accordance with the law. The aim is to make it easier to detect swindlers, especially nocturnal ones. Provisions are generally the same for the different organisations in the country, although there are minor differences between organisations.

Description and operation of Synazeb's members

Characteristics of members

According to discussions with Synazeb, motorcycle taxi drivers are all male (throughout the country) and 60% are over 30 years in age and are generally married. Although most are illiterate, some have had an education ranging from primary school to higher education (see tables 6-8).

Table 6: Distribution of zemijan by age group

Age group	%
Less than 25	9
25-30	31
More than 30	60
Total	100

Source : Survey 2005

Table 7: Distribution of zemijan by marital status

Marital status	%
Married	56
Single	30
Separated	7
Divorced	7
Total	100

Source : Survey 2005

Table 8: Distribution of zemijan by level of education

Level of education				
Primary 42%	First-level 37%	Second level 12%	University 9%	Total 100

Source : Survey 2005

Analysis of table 16 shows that most motorcycle taxi drivers work in this job because of the unemployment crisis and public sector reforms. They are unemployed graduates, people who have been made redundant, students and increasingly civil servants still in post, but especially peasants who have just arrived from rural areas or artisans who have just finished their apprenticeship and do not have the resources to set up in business. That goes without saying, because no professional qualifications are required to become a motorcycle taxi driver.

Living and working conditions of Synazeb members

There are two types of motorcycle taxi driver among Synazeb members.

In general, Synazeb officers go and meet the motorcycle owner if one of their members has a problem with the owner. They negotiate and use the occasion to raise awareness. Negotiations cover working hours and the number of days to be worked per week.

Waged drivers

These drivers work for a vehicle owner, who is often a civil servant or a shopkeeper who puts the vehicle at their disposal on a contractual basis for an average monthly wage of 30,000 F CFA .

The first type of contract makes the drivers practically responsible for the vehicle. They take care of current and periodic maintenance. This type of contract generally covers a period of 18 months, and involves the payment to the owner of 2000 F CFA per day, at the end of which the drivers become owner of the vehicle.

The second type of contract involves providing the driver with a vehicle, but without the driver becoming owner of the vehicle. The working day is between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. with daily average earnings of 2000 F CFA. The vehicle is kept at the owner's house outside

working hours. The owner works as a taxi driver every Sunday.

The contracts of motorised tricycle drivers who are members of Synazeb stipulates the payment of 500 F CFA per day for 18 months. But these vehicles are currently disappearing because of their resistance.

Owner drivers

Owner-drivers work for themselves. They are more flexible in their organisation and hours of work. They generally take a day off on Sundays to maintain their vehicle. This category of drivers can often be distinguished from others by the cleanliness of their vehicle.

Another characteristic of motorcycle public transport is the spread of motorcycle parking areas across the town. These areas appear sporadically, and are often located alongside roads where traffic is the heaviest, for example, at markets, post offices, hospitals, education and training institutions, the airport, etc.

Our survey of Synazeb members showed that 32% of drivers work for themselves and have their own their vehicles, while 63% are employees, working for a relative (26%) an owner who is not a relative (34%) or an NGO (3%). According to a survey of Synazeb branches around the country, those who work for themselves are relatively more numerous in Abomey and Bohicon (67%), Porto-Novo (44%) and Djougou (47%). At Parakou, there is a much greater tendency to employ relations, compared to other cities. Cotonou and Porto-Novo are the only cities where some drivers work for NGOs (who they refuse to name) . Most employment contracts are written (56% in the cities surveyed). This average obscures the fact that the dominant position in this respect is occupied by Cotonou (72%) as against 28% in Parakou, 25% in Abomey and Bohicon and 9% in Porto-Novo.

29% of drivers had verbal contracts in the cities surveyed, with 57% in Porto-Novo, 45% in Parakou and

37% in Abomey and Bohicon.

Some drivers have no contract at all. These are more numerous in Porto-Novo and Abomey-Bohicon where they represent 34% and 37% respectively of the drivers in the survey.

Contractual obligations are numerous and non-negotiable. According to Synazeb officers, these include the obligation to:

- Pay a daily or weekly fee to the employer (especially in Parakou);
- Buy fuel and oil;
- Carry out small repairs;
- Accept the risks of the job.

Working hours of Synazeb members form part of their contractual obligations. With the exception of some cities (Abomey-Bohicon), where drivers work every day of the week, drivers in Cotonou, Porto-Novo and Parakou work six days a week. There are some variations to this picture. All drivers work every day that God sends, but the difference is that drivers work on their account on the last day of the week, Sunday. The word "wage" does not always define the situation exactly. In fact, very few drivers receive a wage. They keep the surplus (the profit) left after paying the employer, if they have a written or verbal contract to that effect. That is how Synazeb union members operate.

Problems faced by unionised workers and Synazeb's solutions

Most of the motorcycle taxi drivers who are members of Synazeb experience several types of problem with their employers or the government: lack of social welfare provisions (retirement, sickness, etc), lack of rest, no holidays, irregular wages, etc.

According to Synazeb's leaders, motorcycle taxi drivers are dissatisfied with their job, because of the problems they face at work, the most common of which are:

- Health problems caused by air pollution;
- Lack of retraining opportunities;
- Road accidents (caused by ignoring the Highway Code);
- No motorcycle insurance;
- Police harassment.

Almost all Synazeb members think their working conditions can be improved in the following ways:

- Better organisation of their union;
- Switch to a different job;
- Motorcycle insurance;
- Periodic retraining;
- Highway Code training, to strengthen driving skills.

The nature of the solutions provided by Synazeb depends on the problems highlighted by union members. However, in general, the union prefers to negotiate, whatever the problem faced (with the private sector or with the government), before it resorts to marches and other means of applying pressure in support of its demands. In general, Synazeb's demands are submitted to COSI, which transmits them to the government. The union statutes state that only the central organisations are authorised to negotiate with the government. So Synazeb alone cannot directly promote changes in labour legislation aimed at providing social welfare services to workers in the informal sector.

Main developments and progress of the informal sector

Main challenges facing Synazeb

The union's action plan lists these as follows:

- Encourage the development of a sense of solidarity, mutual aid and camaraderie among activists, with no discrimination;
- Work for unity of all zemijans on the basis of clear and sound premises that take into account the interests of motorcycle taxi drivers;
- Educate members about their rights and duties as citizens under the rule of law;
- Ensure the continuous improvement of the professional qualification of zemijans;
- Combat all backward forces and all the problems that prevent the development of zemijans, their families and their cooperation;
- Work passionately to promote respect for road safety rules and the highway code;
- Educate all members on health and safety issues;
- Ensure that members respect their commitments to vehicle owners;
- Promote a solid professional and trade union education for activists, through retraining and work experience.

These objectives are backed up the following vision.

Synazeb's vision

Through its Action Plan, Synazeb aims to ensure the social welfare of its members and improve workplace health, and improve travelling conditions for people and goods, in order to promote economic and social development, while respecting the environment.

Working conditions in motorcycle transport are now a major public concern.

Synazeb's overall objective is to improve urban mobility and it aims to do this by pursuing the following four lines of work:

- Improvement of the institutional framework;
- Strengthening of the organisational framework;
- Strengthening capacities in the area of road safety;
- Promote the employment of motorcycle taxi drivers and/or their socio-professional redeployment.
- Extend national influence

Synazeb strategies and activities

Strategies for struggle and affiliations

Strictly speaking, it is difficult to distinguish Synazeb from the country's many other unions. This multiplicity of interlocutors with the authorities makes the unions even weaker than they would be in what is already a difficult environment.

However, most of Synazeb's demands are the same as those of the national union to which it is affiliated – the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (Confédération des Organisations Syndicales Indépendantes – COSI – see illustration). In the absence of an activities report from the executive, we have drawn on the comments made by trade union officials when we interviewed them, to prepare this list:

The weapon most used by Synazeb is to take to the streets in a protest march. In these cases, the authorities (Ministry of Security, etc.) respond by seeking contact with union officers to resolve the problem. These protests often take place after:

- The arrest of a union member by the police;
- The murder of a union member by criminals.

For example, Synazeb organised a protest march in Dassa Commune (about 200 km from Cotonou) in September 2005 after the murder of one of its members by criminals. Synazeb, with the support of other unions, including UNACOB, the powerful road hauliers' union, felt strong enough to declare a general strike (journée morte) in this town. No taxi drivers, including motorcycle taxis, taxi-villes and inter-urban

taxis worked that day. The major roads were blocked for two hours. The security forces were forced to negotiate with Synazeb. One of the union's demands was met – the creation of a motorcycle park for the use of union members.

This was one of the union's successes, especially considering that it is not often the authorities make concessions, especially to motorcycle taxi drivers.

Internal activities of Synazeb

- Signature of contracts

In general, drivers are unaware of the content of the contracts they sign with motorcycle owners because they don't know how to read and write in French. The owners take advantage of this situation and sometimes make drivers work for longer than the period stipulated in the contract. To combat these bad practices, the union decided to witness the signature of contracts between their members and motorcycle owners and to keep a copy of the contract. This is doubly useful in that it allows the union to note the working conditions of their members and intervene in case of conflict, especially if an owner terminates a contract. The union has been present at the signing of 200 contracts.

- Mutual savings and credit scheme

This is one of the unions major achievements. The fund is currently 700 000 F CFA. Monthly contributions are 700 F CFA. The scheme operates like a solidarity fund, coming to the aid of members in difficulties, for example, to cover the costs of motorcycle repair, motorcycle purchase (three beneficiaries), purchase of school equipment (83 families supported with a total of 195 000 F CFA), support for income generating activities of women (15 women supported) in small-scale agriculture and food production businesses. Interest rates are up to 5% and loans are repayable between six and 12 months. Loans vary between 10 000 and 100 000 F CFA.

This scheme also allows members to cope with occasional pressing financial needs due to illness or death. Social schemes can also help by paying the cost of the repatriation of a body from the town to the village, or by loaning money without interest. As Synazeb members emphasise, this scheme is, above all, a form of insurance.

The overall level of support depends on how much

money is contributed by members and that is where the main problem lies – some members will not contribute, while there are many requests for assistance.

- Mutual health savings scheme

These schemes are usually more active at branch level, in the interior of the country. They constitute the second activity on which the union has built up the organisation of its members. Members contribute up to 300 FCFA per month. The union has been able to conclude agreements with some health centres to provide health care for union members suffering from sickness or accident. The union covers up to 80% of the costs and the rest is paid by the union member.

This is the one Synazeb structure that is facing severe financial problems because there are between two and five accidents per week, caused by drivers ignoring the Highway code.

- Community education on HIV/AIDS and STDs

The union organises community education sessions every year and they are financed by the union's own funds. They take the form of meetings chaired by specialists on this issue at which films about AIDS and how the disease is transmitted are shown. These

methods are more effective than the use of written information because so few union members can read.

In general, the education sessions (caravans) on HIV/SIDA are very much targeted at the highest risk groups, namely sex workers and their sexual partners, lorry drivers, officers of the public security forces, dockers, apprentices, artisans and motorcycle taxi drivers.

These interventions must continue, and we are convinced that any reduction could lead to a rapid deterioration in the situation, because of the mobility of sex workers and the steady entrance of new workers to the trade. These education sessions allow contact with almost 100,000 people.

- Training on road safety and air pollution

This activity is partly carried out using publicity vehicles in the country's major centres and partly through training workshops led by specialists. On these occasions, the union prints T-shirts carrying road safety and anti-air pollution slogans. These training sessions are attended by two representatives of union branches at commune level, who are expected to report back to their members. They are funded by subscriptions from members of the organisation.

The working life of women who sell fuel at the roadside in Cotonou.

To sell fuel at the roadside in Benin means setting up a company. Most such enterprises are set up by women who are members of Synazeb. They are often aided by members of their own family – their children, sisters or aunts in the village or, more often, or employees who are paid a daily wage of between 200 and 500 F CFA. Investment capital is often drawn from various sources and initial capital is between 5,000 and 10,000 F CFA, which is the price of a 20 litre container of fuel. In order to be certain they will sell all their fuel, these women are the first to rise in the morning and the last to bed. There are many fuel supply points in Cotonou. The women generally get supplies early in the morning or late in the evening.

At the point of sale, the women call out "stop" or "super-fuel" to drivers of vehicles passing by. Some women have regular clients. It is sometimes a real struggle just to sell a few litres. Work at home, the education of their children, and sometimes agricultural work in rural regions means that women cannot always spend much time selling fuel. House work is often combined with selling fuel, both in relation to hours of work and what happens to the money. Often, women can only reinvest their takings once the basic needs of their family are satisfied. The double working day is a heavy burden.

Some observers say that these women cannot be isolated from the economic, social and cultural context in which they live. The values of society, such as the way that the economic role of women is undervalued, the stereotypes, women's limited access to certain types of professional training (financial management), and their limited influence on policies and legislation all have some influence on the survival and growth of these micro-enterprises.

These education campaigns are sometimes supported by the media in various ways: blanket broadcasting, publicity spots, debates on road safety, newspaper articles (publications of the National Social Security Centre).

- Solidarity

In addition to the solidarity elements of union activities, solidarity forms the bedrock of the organisation and is shown by the assistance provided to members, especially with regard to:

- when a member dies, has a road accident or is ill;
- when a member is redeployed;
- defence of members involved in a dispute with clients or other people;
- to cover the costs of funerals of members.

Solidarity is also the pursuit of “common objectives” and the desire “to be useful to the group, without necessarily receiving as much as one gives”.

- Acquisition of motorcycle parks for members.

The union negotiates directly with the municipal authorities to obtain one or more parking areas (depending on the size of the locality), especially in the vicinity of markets, which is where many clients are found. Parking in these areas requires presentation of a special card issued by the union. A charge is made for parking, unlike at other parking areas where it is a free-for-all. The union has managed to negotiate three motorcycle parks near to Cotonou’s biggest markets. These parks are managed by a committee of three members elected by the motorcycle taxi drivers in their area.

- The construction of offices by union branches in the interior of the country

The union does not yet have a national office. It is currently lodged in rooms at the employment exchange. This is not a permanent arrangement. It is not easy to acquire a plot of land in Cotonou because of property speculation. A 30 square metre plot of land costs about 15 000 000 F CFA. This creates a financial problem for the union.

However, in the interior of the country, some union branches are taking the initiative in this respect. They are investing union funds in the construction of

branch offices, for example, at Dassa.

This initiative is the next concern of the union’s national executive. It is trying to raise money from members and has also asked some national NGOs that regularly invite the union for education activities for help with this project. There has been no positive response so far.

- Obtaining motorcycles from private sources for members

As it is impossible to provide financial help to members wishing to buy their own motorcycle, the union helps to negotiate the sale of motorcycles from certain private sources, from certain NGOs. During 205, 24 contracts were signed between union members and motorcycle owners in Cotonou, Dassa et Savalou.

- The role of women in Synazeb

In general, there are not many women motorcycle taxi drivers in Benin and even less union members. With a woman on the national executive, Synazeb is an exception to the rule. The union has 15 women members out of a total of 1 000 members. Most of them own motorcycles and have their own small informal company.

The woman on the national executive is Women’s Officer and deals mainly with the training and organisation of women on gender issues. With the help of national NGOs, she organised training activities, in which five members of the union participated. She has formulated training projects on accounting and income generating activities (production of manioc flour, gardening, etc.). These projects await funding.

- Setting up of income generating activities

Given the magnitude of the challenge facing the union, its leaders have sought alternative ways of boosting income.

- Household waste collection: the organisation of household waste collection is a headache for the municipal authorities, especially in Cotonou, where the generation of waste is especially high. In the light of this problem, Synazeb has formulated a proposal and awaits authorisation for the collection of waste for 1 000 F CFA per month, per household.

- Cooperative for the production of manioc flour: Synazeb has set up a women’s cooperative for processing roots and tubers. This cooperative has been

operating since December 2004 in Dassa.

External activities of Synazeb

- Close cooperation between unions and the police in the management of internal problems

The motorcycle taxi trade has to deal with the problems suffered by the informal transport sector in general. The biggest problems are theft, murder and road accidents, all of which may result in the disappearance of the vehicle. Once the police have registered a complaint, they hand the case over to the union, with a view to the union coming to some kind of settlement between the driver and the vehicle owner. In the case of road accidents, the union pays the driver a grant of 80% (Parakou), 35% (Kandi) and 50% (Natitingou) to cover health care or vehicle repair costs, if the driver is up to date with his union dues.

If the vehicle has been stolen, the union mediates between driver and owner with a view to negotiating reimbursement over a long period, and thus avoid the person at fault going to prison or the owner asking his parents for reimbursement. The owner and the person at fault are usually called in to the union office to settle the problem.

If the problem cannot be solved on an amicable basis and the case goes to court, the union convenes an extraordinary meeting to discuss urgent measures, including contacting a lawyer to defend the union member in question. In such cases, money is a major problem because union dues are not enough to cover costs and it is necessary to negotiate with anyone who might help. In general, the union uses personal contacts, and resorts to family and friends, and especially political contacts.

Finally, the union negotiates with police to prevent Synazeb members working after 23.00 for security reasons.

- Recruitment of members of the solidarity and credit cooperative from among workers in the informal economy

In cooperation with national NGOs that specialise in credit schemes for workers in the informal economy, the union organises information, education and membership recruitment meetings. These recruitment initiatives take place in the major urban centres through the organisation of giant meetings. The aim of these educational initiatives is to set up credit schemes for workers in the informal economy to allow them to cope with urgent needs (education of their children, etc.). Synazeb uses these events to hold small meet-

ings with members of branch executives on issues related to group dynamics: operations and contributions of the union's savings and credit schemes. Synazeb is the only motorcycle drivers' union to be invited to these information and education events.

- Cooperation with zemijan cooperatives and groups to set up social projects (see box);

Zem Comfort Project

In partnership with the Christian Savings and Credit Cooperative (CCEC) and groups of motorcycle taxi driver, Synazeb set up an association, called Zem Comfort. Its main aim is to improve the working conditions of zemijan and retrain them for other income generating activities.

The project has two parts:

Health. A monthly contribution of 2,5000 F CFA gives motorcycle taxi drivers access to doctors and nurses who can ensure the health care needs of themselves and their wives and children at low cost.

Micro Finance. The idea is to constitute a guarantee fund that will allow zemijans to obtain financial support from development partners and donors. It is expected that this fund will be set up in the course of the next year. The following year will be dedicated to setting up projects for zemijan who want to change their job. Motorcycle taxi drivers commit themselves to daily contributions of a minimum of 100 F CFA or a weekly minimum of 500 F CFA.

The zemijan fund will be deposited in a high street bank account under the control of the president of the council of administration of the association of zemijan drivers and the president of the CCEC. The bank will pay interest on these funds and issue a deposit certificate to each contributor after the fund has been established for one year. An interest payment will be made to certificate holders at the end of each financial year.

- Establishment of a mutual savings and credit scheme

BIT has contributed more than 13,000,000 F CFA to a mutual savings and credit scheme for Synazeb and workers in the informal sector, and also agreed to cover the costs of setting the scheme up. These funds will be used to provide financial support to workers in the country's informal sector. From start to finish, Synazeb has been very active in setting up this association, so much so that it has been awarded the Vice Presidency of the Council of Administration, an appointment that is favourable to Synazeb members. This scheme will play a key role in improving the living conditions of Synazeb members, and provides them with one more escape route from their poverty. The establishment of this mutual society came as a great relief to Synazeb, which was finding it increasingly difficult to provide the support needed by members.

So, the union has made progress but there are many obstacles to overcome.

The major problems and obstacles faced by Synazeb

These can be grouped in the following way:

- Financial problems (Synazeb only income is members' contributions);
- Refusal of the authorities to negotiate with Synazeb;
- Training and education problems regarding driving skills;
- Lack of basic knowledge about trade unionism;
- Ignorance of the laws covering the rights and duties of workers in the informal economy;
- Lack of social security.

Main changes required by Synazeb and its members

To improve the position and conditions of workers in the informal economy in general, and in motorcycle transport in particular, union leaders have made the recommendations set out below.

Given the desire of Synazeb members to one day enjoy the benefits of the social security system and retire, and with the objective of providing more suitable and flexible solutions, Synazeb is currently negotiating with a life insurance company to seek solutions to workers' problems. Synazeb's proposals to this insurance company are currently being studied and results

were expected within days, at the time of writing. The union has proposed a daily contribution of 100 F CFA for 10 years in exchange for sickness and death benefits (payment made to the family of the deceased) or, alternatively, automatic provision of care at 95% of the cost.

With regard to labour legislation, Synazeb cannot influence labour legislation in Benin on its own. It advocates joining with other unions to establish a strong union able to pressure the government into providing an annual grant (as it does for unions in the formal sector, which benefit from a large grant of almost 200,000,000 F CFA).

Improvements in the institutional environment

The CNSR capacity building programme should formally take into account motorcycle transport:

- Equipment
- Training and retraining of trainers;
- Creation of a committee to deal with category A driving licences;
- Training of drivers;
- Technical checks on motorcycles;
- Information and education of motorcycle passengers and drivers on the environment, etc.
- Appoint Synazeb representatives to the CNSR Council of Administration;
- Establish a documentation centre on studies, regulations and registration.

Improvement in the regulatory framework

- The government should create conditions that would allow motorcycle taxi drivers to operate like any other sector of the economy: creation of a clear legal and fiscal environment in which all actors in the motorcycle taxi sector have confidence;
- Revise the texts and laws regulating land transport.

Improving driver safety

- Improvements to the roads;
- Effective technical checks on motorcycles;
- Strengthening of road education at schools and on the radio;
- Organise a motorcycle taxi drivers day.

Support for the creation and/or building of Synazeb capacities

- The provision by government and other national and

- international organisations of logistical support for Synazeb to organise their activities; financial assistance for trade union training activities and support for health and savings and credit schemes;
- Ensure the permanent training and retraining of trade union officers, drivers and women;
- Create a Synazeb scheme for a motorcycle engine repair network;
- Create programmes to protect Synazeb members against sickness, accidents, etc.;
- Introduce environmental protection measures; replace two-speed mopeds with four-speed mopeds;
- Synazeb's acquisition of its own offices;
- Build capacity of women in the field of group management;
- Support the development of income generating activities, especially for women, by placing them in women's groups in the agriculture and food processing industry.

Benin is characterised by the predominance of the informal sector (nine out of every ten people work in the informal sector; according to the last census, in 2002); a liberal economic system; a deficit in the balance of trade; difficult access to employment and inadequate infrastructure. The installation of well designed and effective infrastructure is the basis for reducing poverty. For trade (the engine of economic growth) to prosper, it needs reliable and efficient transport, that facilitates production and exchange, allows farmers to take their produce to market and promotes private investment. Poor transport infrastructure impedes development in Africa and causes poverty.

The birth of a new trade unionism in Benin was due to the change in direction towards liberal democracy, in 1990. A new generation of autonomous and independent unions emerged in the country following the break up of the monolithic system affiliated to the then governing party. However, despite trade union differences, there is a certain level of unity of action in the country, especially among civil servant unions, contrary to the situation among the unions of motorcycle taxi drivers. Among the latter, demands are almost absent and initiatives are rare, for the simple reason that, although they are unionised, drivers consider their job to be a step towards a better job, because the profession is seen as no more than a lesser evil by the people who do the job.

In brief, study of this issue reveals the importance of the issue of motorcycle transport in the country. The predominance of motorcycle taxis is an undeniable fact of life. However, unionisation remains the most difficult task. Although there are now several unions organising motorcycle drivers, their power remains weak and uncertain. The fundamental reason for this state of affairs resides in the fact that they are still new organisations trying to get better known.

The trade union strategies developed by workers in the informal sector of the economy, especially in transport, are handicapped by the strong politicisation of the unions, the rivalries between unions, the tendency for workers to move between unions, the low collection rate for union dues and the fact that the zemijans have a negative opinion of their own trade (seeing it as a 'temporary' job that they do while waiting for something better, a springboard to better things). However, these trade unions are genuinely able to put pressure on the government to be more

transparent in the resolution of problems and improvement of living conditions.

A lesson that we think can be learned from Synazeb's experience is that trade unions must rid themselves of the hold that politicians have over them today throughout almost the whole country. They can avoid manipulation and political take-overs, if they remain vigilant. Despite their rivalries, they should fight together to improve living conditions and the education of their members, by planning and organising seminars on trade unionism, the Highway code and road safety in the same way that Synazeb does. In order to fund their activities, they should focus more on balancing the financial books by improving the collection rate of union dues and the loan recovery rate, which will require educating their members and making them more loyal to the union.

Finally, the institutions established by Synazeb (mutual societies, finance, credit) are a good example of the "intermediary sector". Institutions in this sector should be recognised by the authorities and obtain legal recognition (by adhering to the country's collective agreement with the Clerk of the Higher Level Court, Social Affairs). This will take them out of the informal sector, where Synazeb has absolutely no chance of pressuring the public administration into improving the living and working conditions of its members. These institutions should also promote widespread participation by women, especially in positions of responsibility (manager, treasurer of mutual schemes), recognising that women often have more dynamic financial skills that make them more likely to press for investments in new activities.

Annex I: Institutions that support small enterprises

Name	Type of support	Location	Beneficiary sector
Non-government organisations:			
Centre for the Study of Action Research and Support for development (CERAD)	Training, organisation and management	Cotonou	Informal
Exchange for the Organisation and Advancement of Small Entrepreneurs (ECHOPE)	Marketing techniques (target group: Artisans du soleil)	Cotonou	Informal
Institute of Decentralised Training and Cooperation (IFCOD)	Promotion, integration	National	Informal
Abomey Professional Training Centre (CFPA)	Technical training	National	Informal
CMGT	Savings and credit	Cotonou	Informal
Benin Secours (Benin Help)	Help with employment	National	Informal (mainly)
Employment and Training (EFOR)	Carpentry	Cotonou	Informal
Government and international cooperation agencies:			
Department for Artisans (DA/MCAT)	Government policy on artisans	National	Informal
FECECAM	Savings and credit for agriculture	National	Informal (mainly)
Benin Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCIB)	Representation of enterprises	National	Formal
Benin Chamber of Agriculture	Representation of farmers	National	Agriculture
United Nations Organisations			
BIT/UNDP	Training, savings, credit, organisation, equipment	National	All enterprises
Belgian Cooperation Belge/BIT	Women in agriculture / food production	4 cities	
World Bank / PADME	Credit and guarantees	Cotonou	Small traders
French Cooperation			
MICAC-CFD	Training, funding, various	National	All enterprises
German Cooperation			
SAD-GTZ	Training, various	National	All enterprises
Swiss Cooperation			
Office to Support Artisans (BAA)	Training, organisation and marketing	Cotonou	Informal
Dutch Cooperation			
Project to Support Grassroots development (PADEB) and Women's Mutual Aid Project (PASSEF)	Savings, credit, organisation	Cotonou	Informal
Regional Institute for Cooperation and Development (IRCOD)	Technical training, financial support, artisans	Parakou	Informal
United States Cooperation	Assistance, training	National	All enterprises
USAID - Peace Corps			

Source: Republic of Benin: Etude sur le cadre institutionnel, légal et réglementaire ayant trait au secteur informel: impact et politiques de réforme (Study on the institutional, legal and regulatory framework of the informal sector: reform policies and their impact, Cotonou, September 1996 and data from 2003.



Annex 2: Activities of the NGO IFCOD

Introduction to ZEMI-SUR

Social, Education and Training Component

To promote the professional organisation of motorcycle taxi drivers, IFCOD devised an education and training programme to help drivers obtain a category A driving licence. However, it proved very difficult to get drivers together when their main focus was on the day ahead. So IFCOD set up an Education Canteen, offering food at low prices, to try and create a meeting place for drivers. It also offered all members of the association credit for the purchase of school materials, rice, corn and other food, and health assistance, by acting as guarantor for the purchase of medical products on credit, in the case of illness.

Economic Component

The second component helped drivers with things more directly related to their profession, for example, the supply of spare parts. This project was able to go ahead thanks to aid from the French development fund. It also included engine repair, messaging, tourist guide etc. In exchange for all these advantages, drivers were asked for a daily contribution of 100 F CFA. Despite the tempting conditions of the ZEMI SUR project, the IFCOD programme did not meet with much enthusiasm from drivers.

- Adoption of the government's Artisans Code (see above);
- Education and training programme to help drivers obtain a category A driving licence.
- Education Canteen, offering food at low prices, to try and create a meeting place for drivers.
- School-aid. Credit for the purchase of school materials.
- Food-aid. Credit for the purchase of rice, corn and other food
- Health assistance, by acting as guarantor for the purchase of medical products on credit, in the case of illness.
- Mutual health scheme.

The other component helps drivers with aspects more directly related to their profession, for example:

- The supply of spare parts. This project was able to go ahead thanks to aid from the French development fund. This project has terminated.
- Engine repair.
- Messaging.
- Tourist guide.

In exchange for all these advantages, drivers were asked for a daily contribution of 100 F CFA. All these projects began with 200 drivers. Despite the tempting conditions of the ZEMI SUR project, the IFCOD programme did not meet with much enthusiasm from drivers.

All these projects failed for several reasons:

- Lack of judgment and corruption that is typical of trade union officers (executive member accused of misappropriation of funds).
- Lack of contributions, etc.

In brief, the changes introduced by the Labour Code have not really had an impact on workers in the informal sector.

Annex 3: Motives for working as a motorcycle taxi driver and time they expect to spend in the job

Profile of driver	Motives	Time in the job	Notes
Unemployed graduates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cover daily expenses - Accumulate some capital to start another business or set up a workshop 	Until a job is found or the necessary capital accumulated	Students, graduates from universities, training centres, workshops
Former civil servants or private sector employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deal with the problems caused by the new situation - Cover daily expenses while waiting for another job 	The time it takes to find another job or be redeployed to another activity	
Civil servants and other officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An extra source of income 	Temporary	They use their free time for this job
Artisans and blue-collar workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An extra source of income - Workshop not profitable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Until work picks up - Temporary 	While waiting to set up in business
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Something to do - Cover daily expenses - Easy way to get rich 		Young people with no training, criminals, peasants who think that it will be easy to earn a lot of money

Source : CNSR 1997, and field research 2005

Annex 4: Creation of the mutual health scheme UNACOTAMO

A health mutual society for the zemijan

The focus of its training is the prevention of road accidents. However, UNACOTAMO goes further than that. In addition to its accident prevention programme, it has taken other initiatives in the health field. Thanks to funds from Dutch Christian trade unions, UNACOTAMO inaugurated a co-operative clinic called Economica Santé, in October 1998. This integrated health centre, located at Calavi, 30 km from Cotonou, is open 24 hours a day, thanks to a shift system organised by the Centre's three doctors. The health centre is open to members of UNACOTAMO and local residents. Payment is at the point of delivery, but users may also subscribe. A weekly subscription or purchase of an annual loyalty card gives users the right to free consultations and a 20% reduction on health care. The health centre also has a drugs dispensary that stocks about a hundred generic and essential medicines.

Membership potential is high, because the union has cafés in central and suburban stations of Cotonou. Primary health care facilities need installing at motorcycle taxi stations, in order to raise awareness. Following the example of the Centre Afrika Obota and the Committee for Cooperation with Mutual Societies (Comité de Concertation aux Mutuelles), UNACOTAMO benefits from support from World Solidarity (Solidarité Mondiale) and Christian Mutual Societies for the organisation of this new mutualist movement, and for management of the health centre.

National Union of Motorcycle Taxi Drivers (Union nationale des conducteurs de taxis motos – UNACOTAMO).

Annex 5: Support for the organisations of motorcycle taxi drivers – Zemijan

The spectacular development of this mode of transport came as a surprise to the authorities. It provoked excitement among the public because it provided an escape route from the country's economic recession. The use of motorcycle taxis grew very quickly in a disturbing way, creating more problems than it resolved: unsafe roads, crime, deterioration of social conditions for drivers. Faced with this situation, the government of the Revolution and private groups felt the need to organise the profession.

Annex 6: Government initiatives

In 1989, at the peak of the economic recession, the Revolutionary Government recommended the Ministry responsible for transport to take action on motorcycle transport. Since then, several initiatives have been taken to bring this profession into the formal sector of the economy and educate drivers, including:

- Draft regulations for the profession of motorcycle taxi drivers, (but never adopted by the government;
- National information campaign (posters, slogans and adverts) by the CNSR, 1992-1993, to promote the compulsory use of helmets, which was never respected;
- CNSR awareness raising campaigns, using rural radio stations to target drivers and other road users;
- The organisation of professional training for motorcycle taxi drivers, in Cotonou (1995-1996). This training was organised by the DTT and the CNSR, and was attended by 397 drivers, 36 of whom already have had driving licences for categories A1, A2 and/or B. There was a success rate of 84%. Forty-two (16%) candidates failed definitively. For the operation as a whole, 99.61% obtained their driving licences.

Then we have:

- The organisation, in February 1996, of a national forum of motorcycle taxi drivers. The results of this forum, which brought together around 1000 drivers, from all departments in the country, did not live up to the expectations of the organisers. One important decision was to create the Zemijan Foundation, but this remained a dead letter because of the political nature given to it.
- The CNSR held several meetings and working days with driver representatives, members of the transport technical services and the social partners, on the question of motorcycle taxi drivers;
- Registration of all motorcycle taxi drivers at commune level.

Annex 7: Private groups and non-governmental organisations

Private groups and non-governmental organisations have taken initiatives to organise drivers in associations or other structure that could help members defend their own interests.

- In 1989, the Motorcyclists Group of Benin Taximen (Groupement des Motocyclistes – Taximen du Benin – GMTB) was created. The founders of this trade union organisation affiliated to the National Union of Benin Drivers (Union Nationale des Conducteurs du Benin – UNACOB). This national initiative did not succeed, but other associations appeared in the mid-1990s at commune or departmental levels. The same thing took place in all the country's departments.
- The best example of non-governmental organisations was the Institute for Decentralised Training and Cooperation (Institution de Formation et de Coopération Décentralisée – IFCOD). In 1994, this organisation set up the ZEMI-SUR programme. Its objective was to resolve the economic, social and road safety problems of motorcycle taxi drivers. This ambitious project had social and economic components.