



Universiteit Utrecht

THE ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS IN LIVING WAGE FOSTERING

A case study on trade union capacities for living wage strategies in the cashew value chain of Benin



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Cover photo: A cashew fruit in Parakou, made by the author

Summary

The international demand for low-cost production has led to a rise of low-wage labor in food processing industries. In response, there is an increasing attention for living wages in global value chains. However, there is a theoretical challenge of conceptualizing 'living wage' and a practical challenge in its implementation. The adoption of living wage in agricultural chains in developing countries is especially coupled with corporate responsibility and allocate a significant role to trade unions in local embedding of living wage methodology and justification for wage gaps. Living wage lobby is peripheral to traditional trade union activities and further conceptualization of trade unions as local living wage agents is lacking.

A case study has been conducted to further explore role of trade unions in living wage strategies. Lévesque and Murray (2010) have developed a framework for Trade Union Capacity Renewal, answering to the changing employment patterns in the face of globalizing value chains. This framework was supplemented with concepts from living wage literature. The case study zooms in on the cashew value chain of Benin where agricultural production occupies 80% of the population. Raw cashew nut (RCN) production and processing faces structural reforms, aimed at increasing domestic value adding and participation in the international cashew market.

The research addresses the question *What is the potential role of trade unions in fostering living wage strategies in the Beninese cashew value chain?* First, positions of cashew sector stakeholders, producer groups and worker groups were mapped regarding trade union involvement within the cashew sector. Four conditions for stakeholder mobilization were identified including the contribution of trade unions to employee commitment in RCN processing, formalization within the sector, and an increased trade union transparency and accountability. Secondly, trade union capacities were analyzed through in-depth interviews with trade union leadership. It was found that capacity-building of proactive articulation, network embeddedness, infrastructural resources and learning is needed for optimal trade union renewal. Expert elicitation was conducted to increase credibility of the qualitative data.

The combination of conditions for stakeholder mobilization and trade union capacity-building suggests three reciprocal trade union strategies for living wage fostering in Beninese cashew processing. The strategies include labor organization in cashew processing, multi-stakeholder collaboration and customized exchange with cashew stakeholders, and collective cashew sector lobby strategies. These strategies prove feasibility of living wage embedding in value chains and require an external push to support collective bargaining institutes for sustainable living wage fostering.

Key words: living wage fostering, informal labor, corporate responsibility, trade union capacity renewal, cashew value chains

Acknowledgements

The International Labor Organization (ILO) celebrates its 100th birthday this year. In 1919, the ILO conceded that the right to work, fair income and freedom of association would cause social reform. To date, it remains difficult for governments, business and international organizations to foster fair income, a living wage. This case study research highlights some of the focal points of the ILO Constitution. It dives into a sector where living wage application is unconventional but receives increasing attention internationally. Although this research is not an explorative study, its focus on the Beninese cashew value chain feels like an exploration in itself.

Without CNV Internationaal, I would not have had the opportunity to conduct the case study research. Thank you for the support and facilitation of the research activities, while giving me the full freedom to arrange my own conceptual model. The energy and ambition of CNV Internationaal and my contact persons, including Nicole Mathot, Jan Ridder and former CNV employees Esther Droppers and Karin Bouwsma, was very contagious and motivated me to pursue my research activities with enthusiasm. CNV Internationaal has done wonderful work on moving ahead the discussion in the Netherlands on fair value distribution in international value chains, for example through the IMVO Convenant Voedingmiddelen, the Civic Engagement Alliance and the FWF Wage Ladder for the garment industry.

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Photo taken after the group interview with cashew producers in Tchaourou

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List of abbreviations

ACA	African Cashew Alliance (former ACi)
ACi	African Cashew Initiative
CEA	Civic Engagement Alliance
CNDS	Conseil National du Dialogue Social
CFA	West-African Franc
CSO	Civil society organization
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West-African States
FENAPAB	Fédération Nationale des Producteurs d'Anacarde du Bénin
IFA	Interprofessionale Filière Anacarde
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
GLWC	Global Living Wage Coalition
OHADA	Organization for Harmonization of African Business Law
NGO	Non-governmental organization
RCN	Raw cashew nut
UEMOA	West-African Economic and Monetary Union

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1. Introduction

For a large part of the global population income determines the quality of living. Whereas in the North mechanisms are in place for safeguarding a decent income, workers in the South face inadequate coverage and compliance of decent wages. Due to increasing globalization processes, the dynamics between societies and business has changed. Bundling market activities across different geographies has to date led to 'winners' and 'losers' in value distribution across sector activities. Especially at production stages value is disproportionately allocated. The demand for low-cost production has led to a rise of low-wage labor in development countries (Baldwin, 2014; Ye, Meng and Wei, 2015).

The rise of low-wage labor has led to a renewed interest in living wage by a group of scholars and international NGOs (e.g. Brenner, 2002; Neumark and Adams, 2003; Anker, 2011; Werner and Lim, 2016). Governments and multinational corporations also increasingly realize the opportunity of living wage adoption (Anker and Anker, 2017; Schrage and Huber, 2018; Miller and Williams, 2009). The relation between value creation and decent work is reflected in Sustainable Development Goal 8, promoting decent work and economic growth (UN, n.d.a). Defining and conceptualizing living wage has been central in a large part of the living wage literature (Anker, 2011) by different theoretical and philosophical notions, including capabilities philosophy, moral economics, and institutionalist thought. The body of research done is mostly focused on developed and emerging economies and suggests living wage implementation through legal mechanisms. In developing countries, living wage especially exists in codes of conduct of multinational corporations, hitherto industry initiatives have also become visible such as Asia Floor Wage and the FWF Wage Ladder. In agricultural sectors, living wage is also reaching the international agenda and is often coupled with certification schemes (Smith et al. 2017). Examples are Living Income Community of Practice (focusing on monetary and non-monetary income of agricultural producers), the Dutch IMVO Covenant Voedingsmiddelen and the Global Living Wage Coalition (GLWC).

The GLWC collaborates with foremost living wage scholars Richard Anker and Martha Anker, who in 2017 published a benchmark study on wage gaps in fourteen agriculture cases. In collaboration with Anker and Anker, the GLWC (n.d.) defines living wage as

“Remuneration received for a standard workweek by a worker in a particular [time and] place sufficient to afford a decent standard of living for the worker and her or his family. Elements of a decent standard of living include food, water, housing, education, healthcare, transport and other essential needs including provision for unexpected events.”

This definition is regularly used in literature and will therefore be used as living wage definition in this research study. Often minimal attention is allocated to the implementation phase of living wage approaches in international chains (Schrage and Huber, 2018) and local stakeholder participation and trade union involvement are often referred to (Smith et al., 2017; Schrage and Huber, 2018; Miller and Williams, 2009). The Anker and Anker Living Wage Methodology allocates a significant role to trade unions in local embedding of living wage methodology and justification for wage gaps. Living wage lobby is peripheral to traditional trade union activities and further conceptualization of trade unions as local living wage agents is lacking (Smith et al., 2017; Schrage and Huber, 2018; Miller and Williams, 2009). Scientific evidence remains limited on the role of trade unions in living wage implementation in supply chains. There are scholars such as Lévesque and Murray (2010; 2013) who observe a connection between globalizing supply chains and trade union renewal as solution to the rising global employment challenges.

This leads to an interesting case for living wage fostering in the globalizing food processing value chains. Food processing industries are known for the high existence of low-wage labor. This is highly worrisome

considering that agricultural workers in the South often experience the highest prevalence of poverty (Christiaensen and Demery, 2007) and are often victim to hazardous working conditions and low protection (ILO, n.d.). In West-Africa, about 50% of the employment is in agriculture, where labor conditions of workers are not legally protected or compliance is weak (Christiaensen and Demery, 2007; general for Africa: Rani et al., 2013; ILO, 2013). This is similar for Benin, whilst agricultural production is the major source of income for 80% of the population (FAO, n.d.). Different agricultural sectors in Benin at the verge of rapid development including raw cashew nuts. Cashew production and processing is facing structural reformations aiming to significantly increase domestic value adding. This is a response to the international demand for raw and processed cashew nuts (Ton et al., 2018). Processing industries are often heavily tied to local culture and traditions (Grunert, James and Moss, 2010) and highly facilitate employment generation. Yet, in West-Africa a large part of the payroll labor in processing is casually employed, without protection of formal contracts and legal mechanisms.

Given this background, the aim of this research is understanding the potential of trade union renewal for living wage fostering in cashew processing in Benin. Embedding living wage methodology through trade unions requires further understanding of the cashew sector and current stakeholders. An in-depth study is needed to closely analyze the dynamics in which trade unions participate in a specific context. A case study design focusing on the cashew sector of Benin is facilitated by CNV Internationaal, providing a real-life example to contribute to the conceptualization of the relationship between trade unions and living wage implementation. CNV Internationaal provided connections with a professional network provision in the Netherlands and in Benin. Fair wages are at the core of ILO Conventions and perceived as a basic human right. Wages as part of labor rights will be considered in the context of the Beninese cashew value chain. This includes current labor conditions and employment challenges in cashew processing. Understanding wage-setting supports the identification of living wage strategies. Building on the contextual embedding, the trade union landscape of Beninese trade unions will be analyzed and an appraisal of stakeholder positions on trade unionism will be considered aiming at finding opportunities for wage improvement strategies through trade union capacity building. Beninese trade union resources and resourcefulness are considered through an assessment of trade union capacities, based on the Trade Union Renewal model developed by Lévesque and Murray (2010; 2013) and supplemented with trade union capacities found in living wage literature. The scientific background has led to the main research question:

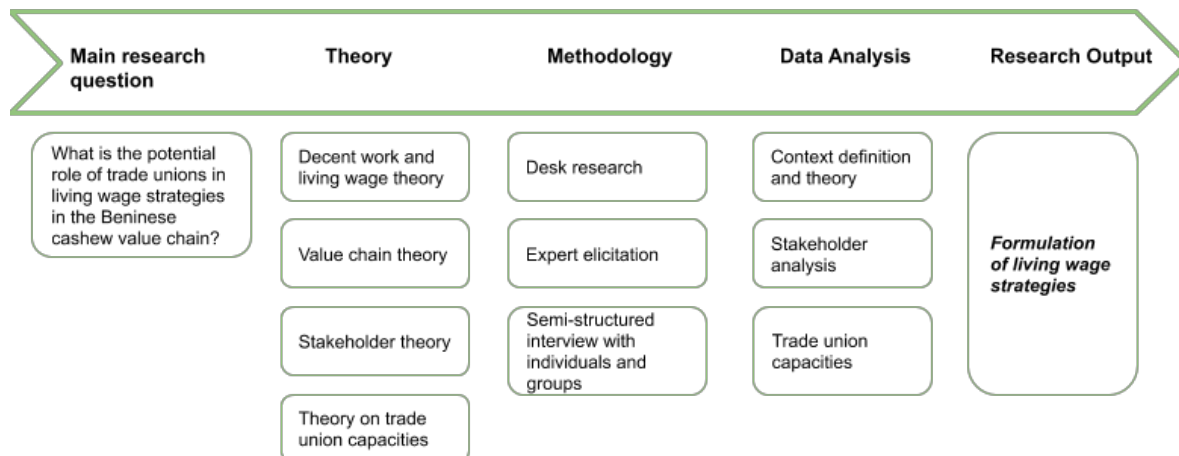
What is the potential role of trade unions in fostering living wage strategies in the Beninese cashew value chain?

The following sub questions help in guiding the study and finding answers. Data analysis will help in constructing the answer to the main research question.

1. What is the contextual embedding of wages in the Beninese cashew sector?
2. What are opportunities for wage improvement towards a living wage from a stakeholder perspective?
3. What capacities do Beninese trade unions have to effectively foster living wage?

Building on the research question and sub questions, Figure 1 visualizes the research path towards drawing conclusions on living wage strategies. This thesis will start with the formulation of the research questions and framework, followed by the methodology and analytical framework. In Chapter 5, in-depth context of the case study is provided, followed by the findings of the case study research in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 and 8 draw conclusions on the findings and discuss them from a broader theoretical perspective.

Figure 1: Research steps (authors' own)



2. Theory

The following chapter will elaborate on theoretical notions of globalizing chains and international labor standards. Inclusive governance of value chains will be further explored, including the role of stakeholders in contextualizing social responsibility approaches. The theory finishes into a conceptual framework.

2.1. Global value chain governance

There are different academic notions on processes of globalization, some pointing out that first processes of globalization started with the Western voyages of discovery in the 15th century (Friedman, 2005). Others indicate two paradigms, one at the end of the 19th century when international transportation became affordable through steam power and a second during the late 20th century when information and communication technology developed rapidly, leading to a rapid international transfer of ideas. Since the dawn of civilization, people are looking for ways to avoid high costs of moving people, goods and ideas (Baldwin, 2014). Globalization can also be viewed as global 'capitalism', thus the internationalization of economies and enterprises (Smith, 2018). Bundling market activities across different geographies has to date has led to 'winners' and 'losers' in value distribution across the sector activities. Especially at 'production' stages, value is disproportionately allocated (Baldwin, 2014; Ye, Meng and Wei, 2015).

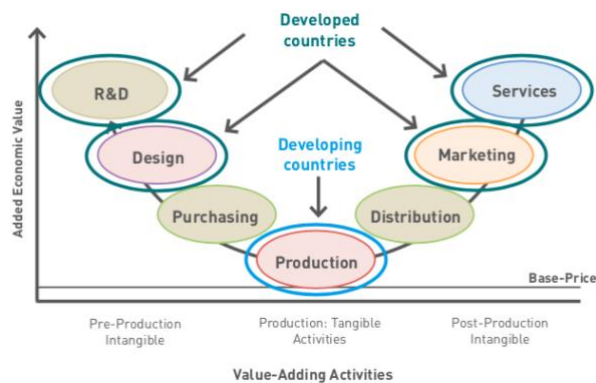
Within the literature, different definitions of chain analysis within the global economy can be found (Gereffi and Kaplinsky, 2001):

- Supply chains refer to input-output setting of value-adding activities, from raw material to the end product.
- International production networks target multinational corporations as 'global network flagships'
- Global commodity chains accentuate internal governance structure of supply chains and the role of multinational enterprises in building up global production and sourcing networks. A distinction is made between producer-driven and buyer-driven chains.
- French *filière* approach is a bundle of studies which focus on *filière* (chain) activities to study agricultural export commodities. Especially rubber, cotton, coffee and cocoa are focus commodities.

- Global value chains highlight the relative value of activities needed to deliver a product through stages of production, consumption and disposal.
- A substantial body of literature also discusses inclusive value chains, especially in referral to referring to poverty alleviation in agricultural chains through smallholder inclusion (Vorley et al., 2009; Guidi, 2011; Haggblade et al. 2010; Devaux et al., 2016).

Current processes of global value chains can be visualized according to a so-called 'Smiley-Curve', which presents how global companies usually distribute their business activities according to value and is visualized in figure 2. Gereffi (1994) developed a Global Value Chain (GVC) framework which augments understanding of the changing global-local dynamics from a vertical view. The disproportionate distribution of value especially affects low-income countries. As a result, participation in economic development processes deployed by globalization has been very limited. Effective embedding into Global Value Chains can be vital in value redistribution, for example by upgrading of processes, products, and functions and diversifying into more profitable value chains (Lee and Gereffi, 2015). Examining the dynamics and structure of different actors within a specific sector helps in understanding the distributed activities and actors involved and their roles, thus identifying gaps in capacity and access which could benefit redistribution of value (Gereffi and Fernandez-Stark, 2016). Global firms increasingly incorporate global standards in their supply chains aiming to improve quality of production and social standards of workers (Jamali and Mirshak, 2007; Gereffi and Fernandez-Stark, 2016).

Figure 2: The Smiley Curve (Gereffi and Fernandez-Stark, 2016, p. 14)



The increasing geographic scale of value chains has changed the dynamics between societies and business. Polanyi (1944) developed the Theory of Embeddedness, stating that the economy is embedded in economic- and non-economic institutions, and economic embedding eventually leads to social and environmental balances. This means that social relations define economic activity, thus economy is not existing in a social vacuum. It is an inclusive phenomenon and the ignorance of social structures might cause social imbalances (Levy and Kaplan, 2008). Granovetter (1985) further developed this idea into neo-substantivism thought, which suggested that economic exchanges were executed between actors with long standing relations, instead of strangers. The theoretical notions of Polanyi have increasingly gained interest after the effects of globalization became more apparent. Multinational companies developed social responsibility strategies for their supply chains, some with ethical morale and others afraid of reputation damage (Levy and Kaplan, 2008).

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has gained numerous definitions throughout the years, one of them by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) (Hys and Hawrysz, 2012, p.1) as: *"the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development, working with employees, their families and the local communities"*. CSR in business stems the obligation of business to meet the needs of a wider array of stakeholders (Jamali and Mirshak, 2007; Maloni and Brown, 2006).

CSR is not interchangeable with business ethics, but also encloses philanthropy, community, workplace diversity, safety, environment and human rights (Carter and Jennings, 2004). The level of implementing CSR varies amongst enterprises from additional activities to until integration into core business, often peripherally and top-down planned. Carroll (1991) developed a pyramid of CSR encompassing levels of intensity of CSR application, which is presented in figure 3. The first level of CSR is philanthropic responsibilities, followed by ethical responsibilities, legal responsibilities and finally economical responsibilities. Principally, the higher the level of CSR, the higher the level of supply chain embeddedness within the local economy (Lund-Thomsen and Nadvi, 2010).

Figure 3: *The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility (Carroll, 1991, p. 42)*



During the past two decades, the intentions of enterprises to incorporate CSR criticized due the incremental application, its peripheral route and its cost factor. Consequently, CSR was further conceptualized as CSR 2.0 in which the challenges of CSR are transformed towards a business philosophy. CSR 2.0 emphasizes the importance of innovative partnerships and stakeholder involvement by means of stakeholder panels, increased transparency and social entrepreneurship. CSR 2.0 recognizes a shift in power, from centralized to decentralized and value redistribution. Interestingly, Visser (2012) suggests a sequence difference in the level of CSR application in the African context, arguing that philanthropy is surpassing legal compliance. Priority is given to business-community relationships and good image through philanthropy and good behavior. This is partially based on acknowledgement of different social norms and culture in the operating context, in which CSR is viewed differently.

Other ways for adhering codes of conduct include the adoption of standards and due diligence practices. During the 1990s, CSR became increasingly institutionalized through environmental and labor standards, including ISO 14001 and SA 8000, and by guidelines such as the Global Reporting Initiative and corporate governance codes (Lund-Thomsen and Nadvi, 2010). Global standards play a major role in responsible supply chain governance. Due to globally stretched chain activities and the shifts in power in the chain, certification can increase compliance of producers and buyers, and create ownership in value chains without formal hierarchy, besides its advantage of cost-reduction (Fernandez-Stark et al., 2012). Also living wage is becoming embraced in certification schemes. The adoption of living wage provides local producers an opportunity for increased market access. Certification systems such as Fairtrade (in collaboration with the Global Living Wage Coalition, using the Anker Methodology), Utz Certified and the Rainforest Alliance; united in the ISEAL Alliance have included the principle of living wage (GLWC, 2019). A shift is happening from business responsibility to business accountability and legislation. International corporations are increasingly pressured to conduct due diligence on human rights violations and other supply chain risks. The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and

UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights are examples of guidelines at global level which guide business accountability. These guidelines also invite civil society and governments to hold enterprises accountable for human rights violations in especially developing countries (Ramasastry, 2015; Ruggie, 2011).

2.2. Decent work in international supply chains

Internationally accepted labor standards were introduced by the International Labor Organization in 1919, requiring member states to protect its labor workforce. International Labor Law is summarized in the ILO's Core Conventions as a way for putting social reform into practice globally. The ILO has a tripartite structure, assembling governments, employers and workers of 187 member states (Daele, 2005). The Core Conventions are ratified by most UN member states, attempting to provide policy instruments to protect workers in vulnerable positions. In 1998, the ILO adopted the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. All members, even the nations who have not ratified the Core Conventions, are obliged to promote and realize these fundamental rights. Central to these rights are freedom of association and right to collective bargaining and the elimination of forced labor, child labor, and discrimination in respect of employment and occupation (ILO, n.d.). The International Labor Organization (ILO, 2007, p. vi) defines decent work as "productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity". The ILO core conventions describe aspects of decent work, which overall encompass that decent work includes;

- "Opportunities for work that is productive and *delivers a fair income*;
- Provides security in the workplace and social protection for workers and their families;
- Offers better prospects for personal development and encourages social integration;
- Gives people the freedom to express their concerns, to organize and to participate in decisions that affect their lives; and guarantees equal opportunities and equal treatment for all." (ILO, 2007, P. iv)

The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 23.3) also concedes that remuneration of work should cover a decent standard of living for workers and their families (UN, n.d. b). Decent work empowers workers (ILO, 2015) and contributes to better health, productivity, and worker satisfaction. Trade unions are important agents in decent work progress at the workplace and in civic society as countervailing power in market processes through the institution of collective bargaining (Ernst et al., 2012). Collective bargaining stimulates good labor relations, ensuring harmonious and productive industries and workplaces, and increasing labor protection. It also reduces transaction costs associated with formal coordination mechanisms (Fukuyama, 2001; ILO, 2015). The Sustainable Development Goals incorporate decent working conditions through Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth. Target 8.8, which is to "Protect labor rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment" suggests indicator 8.8.2.: "The importance of freedom of association and collective bargaining in protection of labor rights" (UN, n.d.a).

To enhance the Core Convention "*opportunity for work that is productive and delivers a fair income*", the ILO (n.d.) introduced the Minimum Wage Fixing in 1970 (No. 131) and one specifically for agriculture (No. 99). Convention No. 131 denotes that the minimum level of wage should be sufficient to meet the needs of workers and their families but avoids specification on how needs should be met. The 'minimum wage' as a concept is based on the idea of fixing a wage floor with a binding force through legislation or other methods. Convention No. 131 is unspecified, in order to provide the discretionary power to countries in setting contextualized minimum wage rates, involving full consultation of social partners. Contextualization therefore means that needs are specified per nation and should consider economic factors, denoting economic empowerment and aiming at economic development of a country (ILO, 2014). The full machinery for constructing a minimum wage system according to Convention No. 131

includes five elements which should be followed by all member States, including a binding force, a broad scope of application (which also supports fair competition between employers), full involvement of social partners in design and operation of the system (e.g. through tripartite structures), it should consider both needs and economic development, periodic adjustment and the implementation of measures for effective application, thus compliance mechanisms (ILO, 2014).

The Preamble of the ILO Constitution states that "Whereas also the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labor is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries." This includes the payment of fair wage as a measure for improving labor conditions (ILO, 2014). The concept of fair wage exists next to minimum wage and living wage, implying regular and full payments to workers, compliance with minimum wage regulations and meet a living wage, complying with normal working hours (excessive hours are additional), balanced work structure, no discrimination, and rewarding tasks according to skills and performance. This indicates that the concepts of living wage and minimum wage are closely connected: fair wages are conditions for wages that meet the needs of workers and their families (ILO, 2014). For many developing countries, the implementation of minimum wage mechanisms are different if not absent compared to developed settings. In Africa, about 86.8% of labor is employed in the informal economy of which about two-third is living in rural settings, thus formal wage employment covers a relatively small share of total employment. Typical for developing countries is self-employment and unpaid family work (ILO, 2018). Hussmans (2004, p.2) defines labor in the informal sector as

"Employment in the informal sector includes all jobs in informal sector enterprises or all persons who, during a given reference period, were employed in at least one informal sector enterprise, irrespective of their status in employment and whether it was their main or a secondary job."

Minimum wage regulations should intend to protect low-wage labor. Some countries have minimum wages which cover specifically targets unskilled and low-paid workers and informal labor (Rani et al., 2013). A study by the ILO (2013) reviewed 151 countries and territories and concluded that approximately half implements a national or regional minimum wage system. The other half implements systems with multiple rates, varying by industry and/or type of work. The percentage of wage earners covered by minimum wage legislation is higher in countries with the national minimum wage regulation. Besides the low coverage, many countries have weak enforcement of minimum wage legislation, due to lack of transparency and communication, weak labor inspection and sanctions, and restricted collective bargaining and associating freedom of trade unions (Rani et al., 2013). Measuring compliance and interpretation is challenging since data is incomplete or lacking, especially for lower economically developed countries (Rani et al., 2013). Agricultural and domestic workers are most often excluded from legally set minimum wages (Rani et al., 2013). In developing countries, agricultural workers are among the groups that experience the highest prevalence of poverty. This is striking, as about 50% of the employment in West-Africa is in agriculture, of which virtually all workers are informally employed.

2.3. Stakeholder ownership

Fernandez-Stark et al. (2012) point out that clustering sector activities can stimulate efficiency and quality improvement of production in local contexts. It has the potential to enhance local embeddedness of social responsibility which is often top-down governed by global firms. Developing country producers often feel little ownership in the CSR activities that are vertically implemented, which therefore enables unrealistic adaptations to the supply chain in local contexts. Adaptation is therefore not always sustainable once the pressure of global value chains loosens (Lund-Thomsen and Nadvi, 2010). Stakeholder representation has become a major characteristic in CSR by its integrative nature in both contextual and pragmatic ways. According to Crowther et al. (2018) stakeholder representation enhances processes of accountability and transparency. The consideration of local stakeholder

participation within global value chains can lead to multiple benefits, as power might shift between value chain, local embedding of business operations increases and information exchange increases, leading to local problem solving (Gereffi and Fernandez-Stark, 2016). Stakeholders in business operations support the controlling of local knowledge creation and discourse, but more importantly, there is an ability of contextualizing big data, thus providing the 'why' to phenomena and contribute to identification and solution generation of challenges locally. This reduces chances of particularism between organizations and institutions, based on available big data rather than qualitative input (Crowther et al., 2018). Analyzing stakeholder influences is helpful in gathering insights into how stakeholder representation can be used effectively. While stakeholder analysis originates from management theory and political and policy sciences and, it is also used in development approaches (Brugha and Varvasovszky, 2000). Considering living wage methodologies in international supply chains, development approaches come into play, which are often implemented through formula approaches in which international organizations play a role. They often use the available data on for example household expenses and minimum wage, in order to identify the gap between the legally set minimum wage and living wages (Smith et al. 2017).

The ownership of the living wage methodology by trade unions and other local stakeholders in wage improvement is emphasized within the Anker Living Wage Methodology, this was for example presented in a Living Wage Benchmark study in the Fairtrade banana supply chain in the Lower Volta region in Ghana by Smith, Anker and Anker (2017). Stakeholders including trade unions were actively involved in the living wage methodology in order to set a benchmark and identify a wage gap. There were two roles for stakeholders identified; first to be a stakeholder in living wage appraisals within the value chain, thus contributing to legitimate estimations. Secondly, by their potential role in translating living wage estimations in social dialogue within the sector of focus (Smith et al., 2017). Smith et al. (2017) also argue that in any path towards wage improvement, producing companies and other actors within the supply chain should also be committed to a collective bargaining process of wage setting.

2.4. Trade unionism and living wage fostering

Birchall (2001) studied potential strategies for trade union and cooperative action for the organization of workers in informal sectors. Trade union strategies in the informal sector are particularly effective in the presence of a social movement, often stimulated by international support. This is enhanced by joining forces at local, national, and international level, yet organizational capacity and funding is a condition. Interestingly, patterns of consorting with cooperatives are identified in different developing countries, to collide forces and create synergy through the focus on both income-generation and labor protection. This can be identified as a non-traditional collaborative structure (Birchall, 2001). The presence of a social movements is relevant for informal sector strategies of trade unions, as this pairs with social construction such as gender within the informal sector. Women organizations have shown successes in very remote areas where "it was not thought possible" (Birchall, 2001, p. 27) and are a popular target for funding programs of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as confirmed by Mitter (1989).

2.4.1. Proliferation and fragmentation

A phenomenon of especially French-speaking African countries is fragmentation and proliferation. On behalf of the International Labor Organization (ILO), Laurijssen (2010) has studied pluralism phenomena in French-speaking Africa and emphasizes the development and dangers of proliferation during the past decades. Pluralism in French-speaking Africa originates in two developments, namely diffusion of the colonial model and later on, as an instrument to offset state control or undemocratically inflicted trade union monopolies. One of the causes of such fragmentation is the misinterpretation of the ILO Convention No. 87, which is the "*Freedom of association and protection of the right to organize*". This convention facilitates proliferation of fragmentation, yet it should not be used to justify it. Proliferation

worsens the bargaining position of trade unions in many enterprises and economic sectors, due to competition amongst trade unions. Strategies towards unification are important, first of all to improve this bargaining position, but also by combining resources and experience. Ways to do so are for example to create structures at the lower levels of the trade union pyramid, by connecting branch unions to federations and confederations, to channel activities through an inter-union platform, also called *intersyndicale*, and through ethical codes on good practices (Laurijssen, 2010). Laurijssen (2010) adverts that for unification, assistance of ILO and International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) is essential. The ITUC is a global network of trade union confederations, which promotes democratic and solidarity principles in the fight for a decent living, healthy and safe working environment and the elimination of discrimination and exploitation. It provides capacity building to national trade union confederations and promotes unification of activities through intersyndicales (ITUC, n.d.).

2.4.2. Institutional view on collective bargaining

Collective bargaining for decent wages is traditionally a key activity for trade unions. Two schools of thought on the relationship between labor market institutions and economic performance can be identified (Hayter and Weinberg, 2011). These include the views of *distortionists* and the *institutionalists*. The first views collective bargaining agreements as a disruption of the natural balance of the labor market, while the latter sees collective bargaining as a way to advance social and economic objectives. Principally, the collective voice has an equalizing effect on the distribution of wages within the sector of focus. To do so, trade unions need to be democratic, in solidarity to their members and have the ability to objectively formulate wages towards employers and across industries (Hayter and Weinberg, 2011).

Yet, in developing contexts, collective bargaining institutes are often underdeveloped. This gives room for the institutionalists school of thought (Hayter and Weinberg, 2011). An institutionalist approach centers around the role of institutions in determining economic behavior, such as the adaptation of living wage. Unions might create labor aristocracy by representing workers who are empowered to associate and collectively bargain, while other more vulnerable groups of labor are more in need of representation. This worsens the divide between members and non-members, fueling informal employment and inequality. Hayter and Weinberg (2011) have studied this in developing countries and only found very limited evidence. Due to the general fragile bargaining institutions in developing contexts, Hayter and Weinberg (2011) identify the need for encompassing institutions in order to negotiate for better wages for workers. A first way to do so is the extension of memberships to informal workers or organizations specifically focused on representing informal labor. A second manner of fostering inclusive development is through focusing on the interests of all workers, facilitating consensus around development priorities and coordinating wage policies. This can be done through tripartite structures and institutions of social dialogue.

For living wage fostering, Miller and Williams (2009) identify a 'formula approach' and a 'negotiated approach'; a 'formula approach' referring to methodological approaches to adopting a living wage clause as part of brands and retailers code of conduct. The 'negotiated approach' is an approach to tailoring the definition of a living wage to real circumstances of the locality, opening up room for consultation and the involvement of trade unions. This is supported by the Anker Living Wage Methodology (Smith, Anker and Anker, 2017), the latter seeing it as part of the living wage formula. Miller and Williams (2009) identify from the apparel industry that the 'negotiated approach' is focused on the supplying company, without necessary clear incentives of from the value chain. Claims might include cost of living, comparability with prevailing wages, productivity and ability to pay under transparent circumstances. A potential risk includes union avoidance, which puts extra pressure on trade unions to build new strategies for collective bargaining.

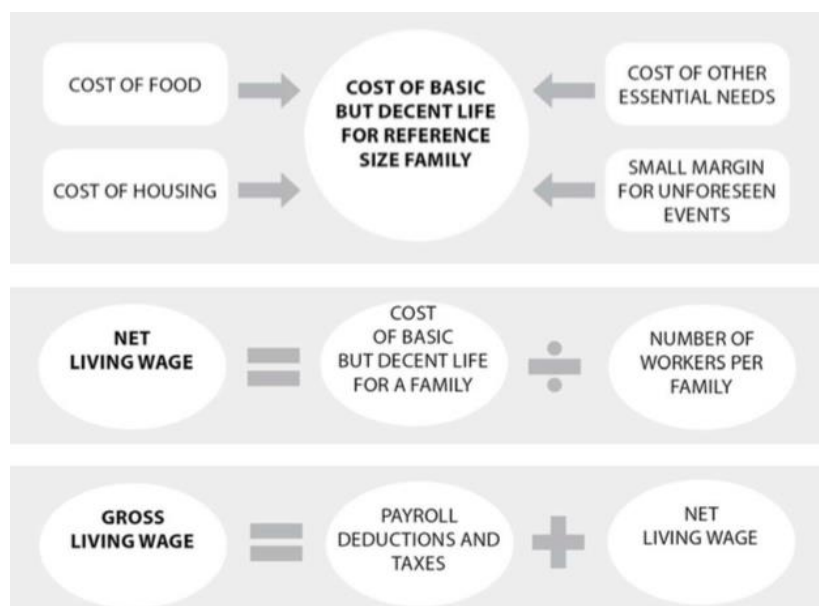
2.4.3. Moral economic thought

Although not specified in SDG 8, fair remuneration is part of the ILO Core Conventions. This has been translated by different scholars including Martha and Richard Anker to the concept of 'living wage'. This is based on moral economic thought as opposed to (neo)liberal economy (Stabile, 2009). Neo-liberal thought is actually a centuries-old idea, since it was also referred to in *The Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith in 1776. Internationally acceptance is a more recent development. Since 20th century the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 23.3) and the ILO conceded that remuneration of work should cover a decent standard of living for workers and their families (Anker, 2011). The ILO (n.d.) uses the Minimum Wage Fixing (No. 131; 1970) and one specifically for agriculture (No. 99; 1951) to indicate that minimum wage should constitute a satisfactory standard of living for the workers and their families. Yet, a minimum set wage (also called SMIG) is often not sufficient to meet basic needs of workers. In such contexts, living wage methodology can bridge the gap (Smith et al., 2017).

The Anker and Anker Living Wage Methodology defines living wage as "remuneration received for a standard workweek by a worker in a particular [time and] place sufficient to afford a decent standard of living for the worker and her or his family. Elements of a decent standard of living include food, water, housing, education, healthcare, transport and other essential needs including provision for unexpected events." (GLWC, n.d.). It includes five key principles to estimate a living wage, including (1) transparency, (2) normative basis, (3) time and place specific, (4) internationally comparable and (4) practical and modest cost (Smith et al., 2017). The net living wage is the number of workers per family divided by the cost of basic but decent life for a family. Living wage can include non-monetary items when applicable, for example in the agricultural sector; these reduce the costs of other items in the calculation (GLWC, n.d.). The methodology encompasses the examining of wage levels in different labor situations, including standard employment, temporary or seasonal labor, and labor per piece rate.

Figure 4 presents the components of a living wage estimate. The components involve national data and estimations family composition, payroll deductions and taxes, cost of housing and food, international set guidelines for dietary intake, and estimates of cost of other essential needs and savings.

Figure 4: Living wage construction (GLWC, n.d.)



The principle of *transparency* touches upon the consultation of local stakeholders for a credible living wage estimation; regardless of whether or not local employers feel that they can pay this living wage

(Smith et al., 2017). This is especially important in developing contexts, where minimum wage legislation does not always comprehend with living standards. The role of local stakeholders has not received prominent attention in other literature (Anker, 2011; Smith et al., 2017), although the adoption of living wage approaches has significantly increased by industry multi-stakeholder initiatives in the garment sector, for example through Asia Floor Wage and the FWF Wage Ladder. In the agricultural sector, where wages are amongst the lowest of all sectors, living wage is also reaching international agendas and are often coupled with certification schemes (Smith et al. 2017). Examples are Living Income Community of Practice, focusing on smallholder farmers, the Dutch IMVO Covenant Voedingsmiddelen, a food industry covenant involving agreements on sustainability and living wage, and the Global Living Wage Coalition, a collaboration with foremost scholars Richard Anker and Martha Anker, publishing fourteen studies on the application of living wage in agricultural supply chains.

2.4.4. Public reasoning for a living wage

Living wage as a concept of moral economic thought has references with philosophical approaches such as the work of Amartya Sen's work on Capabilities (Sen, 1999). Stabile (2009) identifies living wage as a means for capabilities to better function in society as workers. An absence of living wage poses negative externalities on others; such as reducing the workforce by exploitation, which leads to economic inefficiency. This also relates to Keynesian thoughts of wage-led growth, assuming that economic growth happens through pro-labor distributional policies, by the creation of a wealthier workforce and increasing consumption (Lavoie and Stockhammer, 2013). Schrage and Huber (2018) have zoomed in living wage conceptualization and implementation of living wage from a substantivism perspective on development, using the Capability Approach as developed by Amartya Sen (1999), and further developed by Nussbaum (2000). The Capability Approach "provides a normative view of what a good life entails" (Schrage and Huber, 2018, p. 353). This is interesting, taken that 'living' within the living wage concept is per geographic location context-dependent. While the Anker Methodology generalizes components of food, housing, other essential needs and savings, Schrage and Huber (2018) argue that living wage should be viewed more as an abstract notion, through the philosophical notion of 'capabilities' of the individual. The Capability Approach recognizes 'work' as a major component of a good life and is a powerful functionality for achieving individual freedom. Three aspects of work can be identified, namely the income aspect, production aspect, and appreciation aspect. People should have the freedom to choose the type and duration of work. The capability to work provides instrumental freedom (remuneration, new goods, services, resources) and constitutive freedom (meaningful work, appreciation, purpose, experience, knowledge) which should interplay, influencing the individual's set of capabilities (Schrage and Huber, 2018).

The Capability Approach supports the contextualization of living wage, as the living standard is central in its appraisal (Schrage and Huber, 2018). To discover which capabilities are necessary to be fulfilled by a living wage, some aggregation of individual capabilities is needed, supplemented with means for implementation. Through public reasoning, workers have a chance to indicate their individual preferences regarding the capabilities they find relevant in a given context. Essential in this are transparency-enhancing and participation mechanisms, which consult with local representatives and stakeholders, to perform 'public reasoning'. By the implementation of living wage, living wage should improve education, efficiency, and productivity of workers, but also unionization and bargaining power. In the liberalization of markets in developing countries (where wages find equilibrium through market processes), living wage approaches are especially important in their contribution to the process of empowerment and support of collective bargaining. Public reasoning is both a means and an end. The 'means' refers to the workers' acceptance of a standard and knowledge of their own wage-standard, and through representation of workers it is an end, by having a voice in creating a decent living (Schrage and Huber, 2018).

2.5. Trade Union Renewal

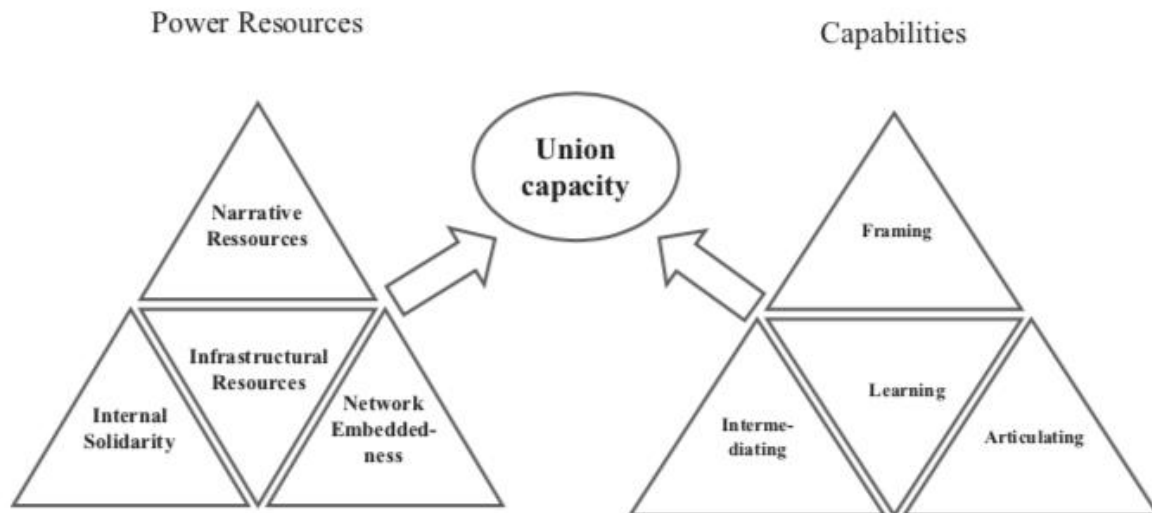
The above theory has identified different arguments for contextualizing living wages. Locally embedded interventions are more sustainable overtime, due to shared sense of urgency and local knowledge of the target group. It also increases knowledge exchange about the local context and challenges with external actors (Degnbol-Martinussen and Engberg-Pedersen, 2003). For creating ownership of concept and methodology of living wage at trade unions, a vital factor is assessment of the current sense of urgency. This is essential for the empowerment of trade unions in wage negotiations and social dialogue, as well as skills in adopting living wage methodology. Trade unions are usually representing the needs of formal labor who are paying member fees, yet agricultural supply chains often involve informal labor, including the Beninese cashew production sector. Vital is to discover what capacities are needed to align interests of formal and informal labor and for participation in living wage strategies. Lévesque and Murray (2010) provide a framework to identify the power resources and strategic capabilities of trade unions and find opportunities aimed at capacity building of unions in the globally changing employment context. This changing context considers an increase in competition, more flexible employment forms, and globally shattered production units which are challenging labor representatives (Lévesque and Murray, 2010). The framework focuses on both power resources and strategic capabilities, together forming trade union capacity. Power resources include internal solidarity, narrative resources, infrastructural resources and finally network embeddedness. It encompasses the horizontal and vertical links in which trade unions operate in order to build broader spaces of solidarity and is connected with intermediating skills, a strategic capability, as union embeddedness different forms of networks, also requires new sets of intermediating capabilities (Lévesque and Murray, 2010). This is especially relevant in partnerships with trade unions and NGOs. Considering this power resource is of high relevance for wage improvement strategies; due to local value creation requires proactive sector collaboration, thus involving vertical and horizontal links on the formulation and application of living wage (Lévesque and Murray, 2010).

The strategic capabilities are the most 'visible' trade union capacities, also referred to as 'resourcefulness' of trade unions, while power resources serve as the underlying empowering force. It should not be compared with philosophical treatment of the word 'capability' in referral to living wage and economic development, as discussed by Schrage and Huber (2018), Amartya Sen (1999), and Nussbaum (2000). Strategic capabilities of trade unions indicate a pragmatic ideology in organizational and institutional literature, pointing to the engagement of actors in learned and stable patterns of collective identify, in which they interact with other actors to attain their objectives and advance their effectiveness (Lévesque and Murray, 2013; Sassen, 2006). Strategic capabilities are especially relevant, because they present the available skills for using resources to improve organizational effectiveness. Strategic capabilities involve the *intermediating* capability of the union and the union leaders. This means the manner in which union leaders manage conflicting demands. The second is *framing* and refers to the ability to maneuver strategies that enable the union to shape regimes within and beyond the workplace. Thirdly is *articulation*, referring to setting a realistic agenda balancing different levels of action, both vertical and horizontal. Finally, *learning* denoting to ability to learn within the union and diffuse the acquired knowledge. The latter is relevant for acquiring new practices like living wage (Lévesque and Murray, 2010).

Trade unions possess a degree of capacity to create collective identity, which has strong links with the degree of trade union power. Increasing collective identity, thus leading to trade union power renewal, can be done through the creation of ideologies, which provides a sense of social integration, creating links between workers and facilitating collective action. Meanwhile it serves as a mental map, feeding the strategic agenda of trade unions. Social movement theory indicates that infrastructural resources (material conditions) do not necessarily and automatically lead to successful action, as the attachment of meaning to the material conditions are needed too. Lévesque and Murray (2013) label the product of

these processes as narrative resources. The Trade Union Capacity Model of Lévesque and Murray (2010) is presented in figure 5.

Figure 5: Trade Union Power Resources and Strategic Capabilities (Lévesque and Murray, 2010, p. 14)



Narrative resources include values, shared understanding, stories and ideologies that aggregate identities and concerns. The narrative resources lead to frames of understandings and actions, and lead to a sense of efficacy. They closely relate to strategic capability to frame the narratives. Therefore, union renewal requires both power resources and strategic capabilities. For effectivity, “narrative resources and framing have to fit into a broader pattern or configuration of union capabilities” (Lévesque and Murray, 2013, p. 18). Trade unions need their different capabilities to use their narratives effectively. There are three lines of analysis of narrative resources according to Lévesque and Murray (2013) in trade union renewal. The first is repertoires of collective action or repertoires of contention, thus mobilization of new repertoires of collective frames of reference trigger new repertoires of action, which is therefore dialectical. The second is the emphasis on resources. The availability of different types of power resources and the disparities in that explains why a trade union is able to transform and adapt its narrative resources to the changing environment. The power resources are path-dependent or fixed; and an actor can normally access and mobilize it. Trade union leadership plays a major role in framing the narrative resources for mobilizing of trade unionists and workers. Framing refers to ability to craft frames of reference that define and legitimate repertoires of action. For trade union renewal in a changing context, this requires forming an inclusive agenda which has a broader social goal. This process is dynamic and entails ‘agency’. Agency links with ideas of both the Anker Living Wage Methodology and the Capabilities Approach to Living Wage implementation, since these methodologies encompass notions of stakeholder consultation, transparency and public reasoning mechanisms. Such mechanisms require mobilization of audiences.

Lévesque and Murray (2013) draw on the work of Snow et al. (1986), who describe frame alignment processes that influence the micro-mobilization strategies of social movement actors. These frame alignment processes include:

- Frame bridging links unconnected frames (of different types of actors or communities). This frame refers in a sense to seeking new collaborations for the expansion of the narrative.
- Frame amplification (empowering) entailing the reinforcement of core values and norms. This means framing core values and norms through new tactics of narrating.

- Frame extension involves the enlargement of issues to potential constituents or supporters (displacing the boundaries of a primary frame of reference). This indicates a narrative of seeking support, which requires an exchange of resources or other supplies.
- Frame transformation encompasses the replacement of old understandings and values by new meanings, either in relation to a particular domain of activity or more generally. Clearly expanding the social project, identifying issues which are a development of old core values and understandings or the appearance of new and relevant issues, thus developing the core strategies.

Through identifying the types of frame alignment for trade union renewal, a sense of autonomy and distancing in the participation of a larger struggle is needed. An indicator for this is relative autonomy, which refers to the understanding of local realities but being able to frame it on a larger context and the role of its campaign in a wider context (Lévesque and Murray, 2013).

2.6. Conceptual framework

The previous sections have discussed different theoretical notions regarding living wage implementation. Living wage implementation in literature seeks embedded pathways of value chains through corporate responsibility and business accountability. Essential is stakeholder ownership in approaches as a way for sustainable living wage fostering. Local ownership can be enhanced by transparency and accountability mechanisms in which trade unions as local stakeholders can play a proactive role. This has led to a selection of relevant themes which are defined in the table below.

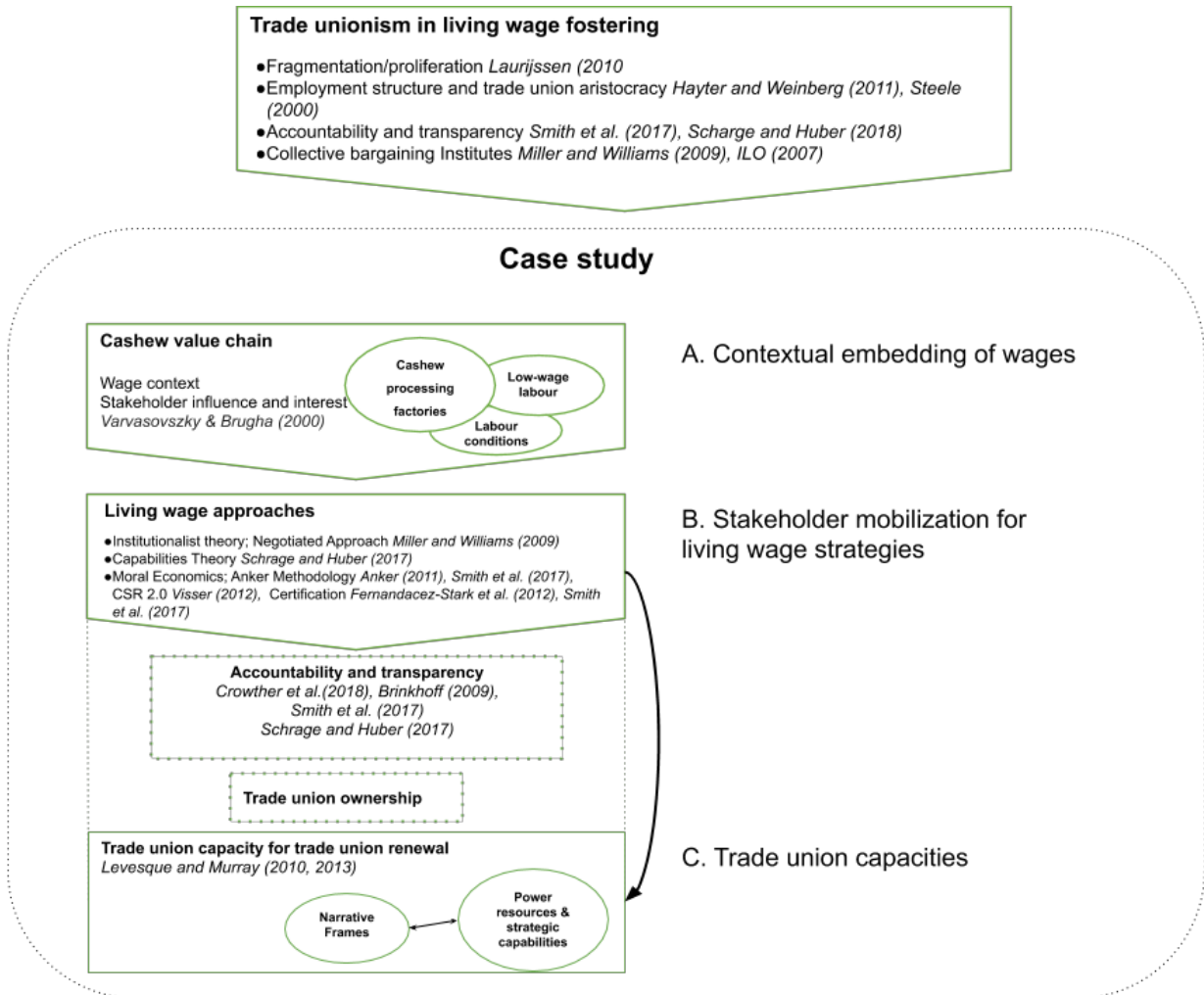
Table 1: Definitions of research themes

Theme	Definition
Contextual embedding	Fair wages are at the core of ILO Conventions and perceived as a basic human right. Wages as part of labor rights will be considered in the context of the Beninese cashew value chain. This includes current labor conditions and employment challenges in cashew processing. Understanding wage-setting supports the identification of living wage strategies.
Cashew value chain	Relative value of chain activities of cashew production from beginning to end, including consumption and disposal. Due to the limited scope of this research, the focus is on the phases from conception until selling (Gereffi and Kaplinsky, 2001).
Labor in informal sector	“Employment in the informal sector includes all jobs in informal sector enterprises or all persons who, during a given reference period, were employed in at least one informal sector enterprise, irrespective of their status in employment and whether it was their main or a secondary job.” (Hussmans, 2004, p.2)
Stakeholder analysis	Through a stakeholder analysis, the positions of actors within the case study domain are captured for stakeholder mobilization towards a development strategy (Brugha and Varvasovszky, 2000)
Living wage	“Remuneration received for a standard workweek by a worker in a particular [time and] place sufficient to afford a decent standard of living for the worker and her or his family. Elements of a decent standard of living include food, water, housing, education, healthcare, transport and other essential needs including provision for unexpected events.” (Global Living Wage Coalition, n.d.)

Living wage approaches	Different conceptualizations of living wage and their identification of mechanisms for stakeholder involvement in living wage
Wage gap	Gap between legally-set minimum wage and a fair wage which is sufficient for the worker and his or her family.
Trade union renewal	The changes in historical foundations in which union power is embedded requires unions to renew their efficacy and agency. This is done by a pragmatic analysis of power (resources) and strategic capabilities (resourcefulness) (Lévesque and Murray, 2010; 2013). This is supplemented with trade union landscape phenomena (see below).
Trade union landscape	The trade union outlook and occurring phenomena in which trade union renewal takes place. Identified phenomena from literature include collective bargaining institutes (Miller and Williams, 2009; ILO, 2007), accountability and transparency (Smith et al., 2017; Schrage and Huber, 2018), fragmentation/proliferation (Laurijssen, 2010), employment structure, trade union aristocracy (Hayter and Weinberg, 2011; Miller and Williams, 2009)

Based on these theoretical notions, a conceptual framework has been constructed which links the selected case study to the relevant research themes and knowledge gap. The research question is built up by the elements of (a) the contextual embedding of wages, (b) the living wage opportunities through stakeholder mobilization, and (c) the capacities of trade unions, which leads to the research question *What is the potential role of trade unions (c) in fostering living wage strategies (b) in the Beninese cashew sector (a)?* Figure 6 presents the links in an effort to conceptualize the role of trade unions in living wage implementation.

Figure 6: Conceptual model (Authors' own)



3. Methodology

The following chapter will reason the choice of data collection and the analytical methods used for the case study which will rationalize conceptual framework (Saldaña, 2015). The theory discussed in the previous section has shown that different authors identify a role for local stakeholders in living wage approaches in developing contexts. The methodology discussed in the following sections will help in formulating a theory on defining the potential role of trade unions as stakeholders in living wage fostering. To do so, first a literature review on the trade union landscape in Benin will be presented, followed by case study findings. The case study research methods are mixed qualitative methods, including fact finding through secondary sources, supported by perspectives and narratives of local and international actors through interviewing. The modus operandi will be discussed by further elaborating on the research strategy, followed by the chosen data gathering methods and data analysis tools.

3.1. Case study selection

The case study was both deliberately chosen and for convenience (Saldaña, 2015); the first due to the momentum of Beninese cashew sector growth; currently it is on verge of structural development by

governmental efforts, attracting new processing factories along with employment. The case study was also chosen for convenience; the research activities have been facilitated by CNV Internationaal, which has an active professional network in Benin, which eases up the entry to the Beninese cashew sector for research activities. The position of CNV Internationaal was to support the research activities and outcomes neutrally, in fact meaning that cooperation and feedback from CNV Internationaal was provided without strings attached and research findings were not influenced in any way. The study therefore resembles a junior consultancy assignment including researcher's independence and objectivity towards a research assignment.

The time period of data collection within Benin was set at one month, which was feasible due to the immediate entry into the existing professional network of CNV Internationaal in Benin, the additional secondary resources provided by interviewees and other actors in the Netherlands and in Benin, and through expert interviews with Dutch consultants and companies in the Netherlands connected to the Beninese cashew sector. By intensively visiting different actors in Benin and conducting the relevant data gathering activities, the researcher was able to build professional connections, which could be maintained long-distance for additional data provision through online communication (Skype, WhatsApp, E-mail).

The complexity of embedded living wage strategies was structured by a stakeholder analysis and legislative, social and economic context. In Chapter 5, background of the case study is presented.

3.2. Stakeholder analysis

To generate knowledge about cashew value chain stakeholders and determine the sample for semi-structured individual and group interviews, an appraisal is done of all stakeholders involved within the sector. This contributes to understanding of the case study domain and identify actors and their positions within the cashew value chain of Benin efficiently. This was done through consulting the professional network of CNV Internationaal in Benin. The different relevant stakeholders for Beninese the cashew value chain were mapped, providing the opportunity to identify key players and their positioning on the role of trade unions in living wage fostering within cashew value chains. This supports the management and mobilization of support of key players for a specific goal (Gereffi and Fernandez-Stark, 2016).

To reduce individual bias, a wide range of key informants was selected. The key informants helped in transcending cultural positions and helped in revealing different ways of interpretation of the data gathered during semi-structured interviews. The professional and research experience of the researcher in different African countries, both East and West-Africa, enhanced cultural understanding. Additionally, there were no pre-defined relationships with interviewees, increasing objectivity of the stakeholder positions.

The aim of the stakeholder analysis is to gain insights into the attitudes towards *trade unionism in Benin and to identify actors for collaboration and active influence in living wage fostering*. The analysis both includes present and past positions: present for the current role of trade unions and other actors, and retrospective for potential caveats to conflicting connections during the past.

Stakeholder analysis is often used in policy formulation, also in other interventions and development strategies one can find its application (Varvasovszky and Brugha, 2000). During this case study research, secondary resources (reports of international NGOs: Dedras, GIZ, TechnoServe and African Cashew Initiative) are used to construct positions, interest and influence of stakeholders. The positions of trade unions are also included in order to capture their ideas on entering a new sector. To fill knowledge gaps on positions of stakeholders, qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and

expert interviews is used to interpret interest and influence within the cashew value chain, and to identify processes of decision-making and implementation.

3.3. Data gathering methods

The case-study nature of this research project provides the opportunity to use different research methods. Secondary sources were used to provide empirical evidence and contextual data for the case study. Semi-structured individual and group interviews and expert elicitation were conducted to contextualize the factual information and gaps in empirical evidence. The use of mixed methods leads to triangulation of data, which provides a better array of perspectives for analysis and representation (Saldaña, 2015). During this case study, different viewpoints were included: besides trade unions, government, international and local NGOs, cashew processing companies, local workers and producers were interviewed. Data is gathered through three types of data collection, which creates triangulation: semi-structured interviews, secondary sources and expert elicitation (Saldaña, 2015). Table 2 presents an overview of the research questions and concepts, the data collection method, the aim, the identified interviewees and the output is provided within a table. After Table 2, the data collection methods are further described.

Table 2: Concepts identified per research question, including research method, aim, interviewee and output

Research question	Research method	Concepts
SQ1. What is the contextual embedding of wages in the Beninese cashew sector?	Country information and documentation by stakeholders on a, b, c Expert interviews on a, b, c, d Semi-structured interviews (individual and groups) on b, c, d	a. Wage-setting in Beninese cashew sector b. Labor conditions in cashew processing (documentation by local stakeholders) c. Employment challenges in cashew processing d. Corporate social responsibility practices (documentation by local stakeholders)
SQ2. What are opportunities for wage improvement towards a living wage from a stakeholder perspective?	Expert interviews on a, b Desk research on documentation by stakeholders on a, b	a. Beninese cashew market (Kanji, 2004; documentation by local stakeholders) b. Stakeholder positions on trade union involvement in the cashew sector (documentation by local stakeholders)
SQ3. What capacities do Beninese trade unions have to effectively foster living wage?	Semi-structured interviews with trade unions on a and b Desk research on documentation by trade unions on a Expert interviews on a and c Desk research on scientific evidence on c	a. Trade union power resources and strategic capabilities (Lévesque and Murray, 2010) b. Trade union narratives and frames (Lévesque and Murray, 2013) c. Living wage approaches (Smith et al., 2017; Anker, 2011; Miller and Williams, 2009; Schrage and Huber, 2018; etc.)

3.4.1. Desk research: Secondary sources

Secondary sources were used to collect information on the context of the case study, thus the contextual embedding of wages and the Beninese cashew sector, and to fill gaps of empirical evidence on occurring phenomena (Verschuren et al., 2010). The secondary sources included two types of documentation. First, empirical studies on wage setting, trade unionism, employment in cashew and wage-setting in Benin. These studies support factual information and help in recognizing phenomena and themes for data analysis. Second, information found in documentation from cashew sector actors: government, cashew processing companies, international development actors (GIZ, TechnoServe, African Cashew Alliance, CNV Internationaal, Woord en Daad, ITUC, ILO), and local civil society (Dedras, Beninese trade unions). Documents of these actors were received after interviewing or found online. This type of documentation helped in confirming and supplementing data from interviews. This contributed to the triangulation of data.

3.4.2. Semi-structured interviews

Interviews were conducted to verify secondary sources and fill gaps in empirical evidence. Interviewing is an effective method for inquiring and documenting the perspectives, feelings, values, attitudes, opinions, and beliefs of individuals and groups about their personal experiences and society, adding up to factual data about their lives (Saldaña, 2015). The interviews conducted during this research were semi-structured, providing the opportunity to generate unexpected insights for further solicitation. An iterative interview technique (Saldaña, 2015) was used at first to create a repetitive discussion of phenomena, after which gaps were identified. Both individual and group interviews were held. Interview topics were coupled with the concepts mentioned in Table 2. In Appendix 1, an extensive table with interview topics and interviewees are provided. In Appendix 2, interview protocols can be found.

1. Contextual embedding of wages

- Wage-setting in cashew processing
- Labor conditions in cashew processing
- Employment challenges in cashew processing

2. Stakeholder analysis in cashew value chain

- Social responsibility in cashew processing
- Stakeholder positions on trade union involvement in the cashew sector

3. Trade union capacities

- Trade union power resources and strategic capabilities
- Trade union narratives and frames

3.4.3. Expert elicitation

Another interviewing method was expert elicitation, which is often used in policy research and ecology studies. Expert elicitation in this study seemed helpful for creating a helicopter view on the complexity of the cashew value chain (Drescher et al., 2013). Expert elicitation helps in guiding the research, transcending cultural positions of local perspectives and help in revealing different ways of interpretation of research data (Varvasovszky and Brugha, 2000). This also includes an objective view towards certain topics, which otherwise might influence norms, values and culture of interviewees which relate to religion, rural/urban setting, and so on.

Involvement of expertise is especially helpful in the construction of a stakeholder analysis, where an objective and global view is of essence to increase reliability of data. A diverse selection of key

informants was used, from different backgrounds and most without close connections in order to increase validity during expert elicitation. During expert elicitation, there is a change of guiding the interview towards a certain direction or to evoke personal positions. In order to increase validity, during interviewing and probing, anonymity and fictional examples were used to evoke expert reactions. This was especially helpful for a deeper understanding, but objective interpretation of stakeholder positions.

Due to different Dutch development programs in Benin, expert interviews are held in both The Netherlands and Benin. An overview of the experts and interview topics can be found in Appendix 2. The topics are based on themes from the conceptual model.

3.4.4. Sampling strategy

As discussed in the previous section, this case study was deliberately chosen and for convenience. The case-study was qualitative and mixed methods were in place. Given the demarcated case, non-probability sampling was used (Devers and Frankel, 2000). The case elicited theory on the active role of trade unions in living wage implementation in agricultural value chains. For practical reasons, the non-probable sampling suited the demarcated scope to create an in-depth sense of the situation and limited the number of interviewees and naturally leading to the identification of key actors and experts. A local professional network of CNV Internationaal was used to increase access to key actors in the field which are otherwise difficult to reach.

Expert elicitation is in place which compensates the lack of empirical evidence (Devers and Frankel, 2000) on trade union agency in living wage implementation in developing countries. Experts are purposively chosen, knowing some of their background and experiences with the topic of interest. With the selection of experts is explicitly chosen for CNV-connected and non-connected experts to increase the objectivity of the responses.

For other groups of interviewees, a combination of snowballing and purposive sampling was in place (Devers and Frankel, 2000). Principally, trade unions and value chain actors are chosen purposively, as online documentation is available on key actors and key trade unions in Benin (documentation on cashew sector by African Cashew Alliance and documentation on Beninese national trade union confederations by the Conseil National Dialogue Social). Upon the first set of interviews, snowball sampling was in place which helped in collecting more interviewees. These actors have connections to other actors in the field. This is also the case for cashew producers and cashew processing employees, which are harder to reach due to their localized position (Faugier and Sargeant, 1997). Through trade unions and other cashew stakeholders, connections could be made with producer groups and worker groups.

3.5. Reliability and validity of qualitative data

In qualitative research, scientific rigor is higher when integrity, authenticity, credibility and criticality are in place (Whittemore et al., 2001). The case-study nature of the research was suitable for introducing a new concept and verifying this with local expertise without (unethical) promises, due to semi-structured interviews, providing room for additional topics and the decision by the research to not discuss all research concepts. The variety of interviewees increased the credibility of interview data significantly. Unfortunately, secondary sources were not always adequate, since union documentation was in French and only hard-copy available, or unavailable at all. Additionally, data on the cashew sector, minimum-wage-setting and other national statistics were inconsistent. A critical attitude was needed to figure out which sources were coherent, confirming and supplementing with empirical evidence.

Most of the interviews were with local actors were conducted in French. Due to the limited French proficiency, a professional interpreter was hired through the local delegation of CNV Internationaal. The use of a translator is time-consuming, which sometimes limited the questions asked and direct, and sometimes challenged correct translations. The latter seemed minimal, as my French language proficiency was often sufficient for understanding the main points made. Most of the interviews are recorded in interview summaries, where important quotes were captured or checked after. Observations were also written down, which contributed to the general impression of attitudes of interviewees. Interviews in English and Dutch were recorded and transcribed. The interview summaries were saved in Word, iCloud and NVivo. Due to some technical errors, a few interview notes and the research diary in NVivo were diminished. Luckily, interview notes and observations were also taken on paper, which helped in restoring the digital notes.

The classic principle 'But first, do no harm' is my personal strategy in approaching potential interviewees and starting interviews. Primary data was gathered through interviewing. This leads to involvement of human participants. During every interview, the objectives of the research and research principles were explained. None of the interviewees presented rejection, a few trade unions requested the final thesis when finished. Anonymity was also checked. None of the interviewees requested anonymity specifically. While initially the idea was to refer directly to trade unions and other stakeholders within this case study, it was finally decided use to use pseudonyms during the narrative and frame analysis. Some statements were expressed with aggressive emotions and literally translated. Using real names felt like an intrusion of privacy and disrespect if emotions seemed unprofessional or negative.

Based on previous experience with data gathering in African countries, the research strategy involved small talk and the use humor in comforting people for in-depth questions. This approach seemed well appreciated, as most interviewees shared their personal stories and wished to keep in touch. The latter also helped in clarifying data and probing. This way of approaching interviewees was not always shared by the interpreter, who tended to communicate in an agitated way by asking blunt questions without building-up. This worked beneficial for people in respectable positions though, who admired the directness and liked to speak 'from man to man'. When a situation occurred where it causes annoyance, a new interview strategy was discussed and applied. Finally, the use of expert interviews helped in getting a better understanding of cultural barriers, attitudes and potential personal agendas of interviewees.

Gender neutrality was also highly considered. Previous research studies reveal that women mostly occupy the cashew production workforce. This was confirmed by empirical evidence. As such, female perspectives during interviews were particularly considered by specifying interview questions to the role and situation of women within the cashew sector and interviewing organizations that were actively involved with gender issues (e.g. access to finance, land ownership, group selling). Yet, no organization was found that specifically focused on women in cashew processing plants, except for the trade union UNION1, one of the key interviewees.

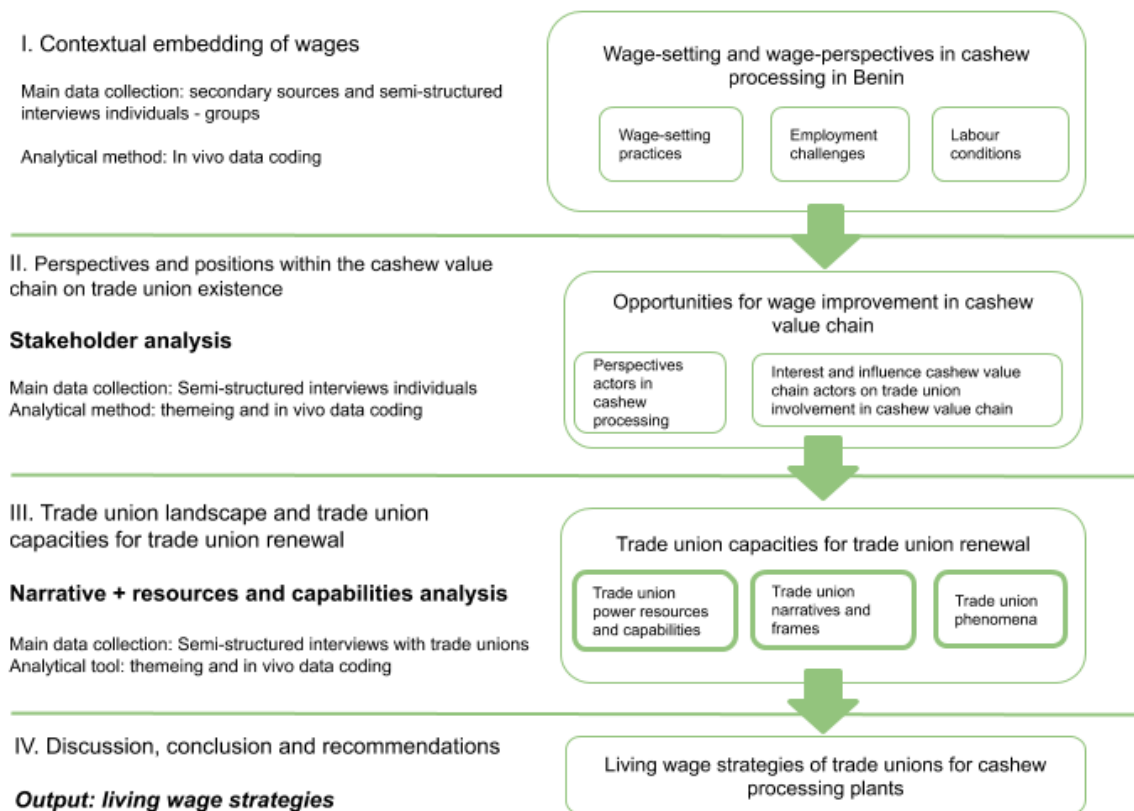
Finally, the consideration of wage gaps was limited and only a few grasps could be made on local perspectives on factory work and wages. At the start of the study, an international NGO was working on a living wage study within the sector. While agreements were made on data exchange. Unfortunately, the research data was not for external use which limited evidence on wage gaps. Due to the time-frame, data collection on local perspectives was limited to one month. Yet, contacts were established for further questions and interviews could be held from a distance through online media. Such creative ways of gathering data increase credibility of the qualitative data (Whittemore et al., 2001), since interviewing happens across different spaces and during different moments in time, rather than a one-time event, which increases the reliability of answers.

4. Data analysis

4.1. Analytical framework

An analytical framework was constructed which is presented in figure 7. It provides an overview of the relationships between the concepts, methodology and analytical methods. The analytical framework exists out of four research phases to which analytical tools were assigned. These phases resemble the phases of the research framework and the order of sub research questions (see figure 1). The concepts were coupled with the conceptual model. During the first phase, contextual embedding of wages is discovered through wage-setting and wage-perspectives. The second phase resembles the capturing of stakeholder positions through stakeholder analysis. The third phase involves a trade union capacity analysis, including power resources and strategic capabilities appraisal for trade union renewal. The different phases will be extensively discussed during the following sections.

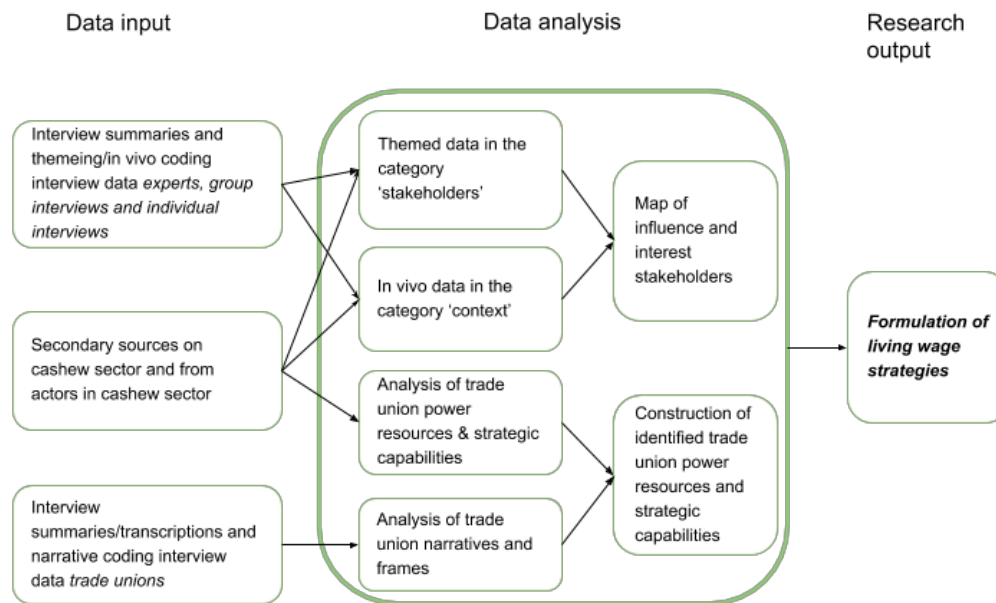
Figure 7: Analytical Framework (authors' own)



4.2. Data gathering

Three analytical phases are used during this research study, including contextual embedding, stakeholder analysis and trade union capacity analysis. Each tool required different types of data input and analytic methods. These are visualized in figure 8 and further elaborated on in the subsections below.

Figure 8: Flow diagram of data analytical process (authors' own)



4.2.1. Qualitative data coding

Qualitative data gathering was especially used for capturing stakeholder positions and trade union capacities. The data collection methods of expert elicitation and semi-structured interviewing has led to textual data, in the form of interview summaries, as local interviews are conducted using a translator. During data collection, the researcher was able to gather a few quotes. *A priori* coding has been applied on the qualitative data, of which themes and subcategories were predefined based on phenomena identified in the literature, and further developed into codes during the coding process. The coding method of *theming data* was used, which fits the deductive coding approach. Through theming data, phrases or sentences provided by the research participants are used to capture the meaning of an aspect of data (Saldaña, 2015). Saldaña (2015) points out that capturing a meaning in textual data can be done by capturing perspectives of interviews on a phenomenon. The viewpoints on *trade union involvement within the cashew value chain* contributed to the identification of positions of stakeholders on the cashew value chain and on trade union capacities.

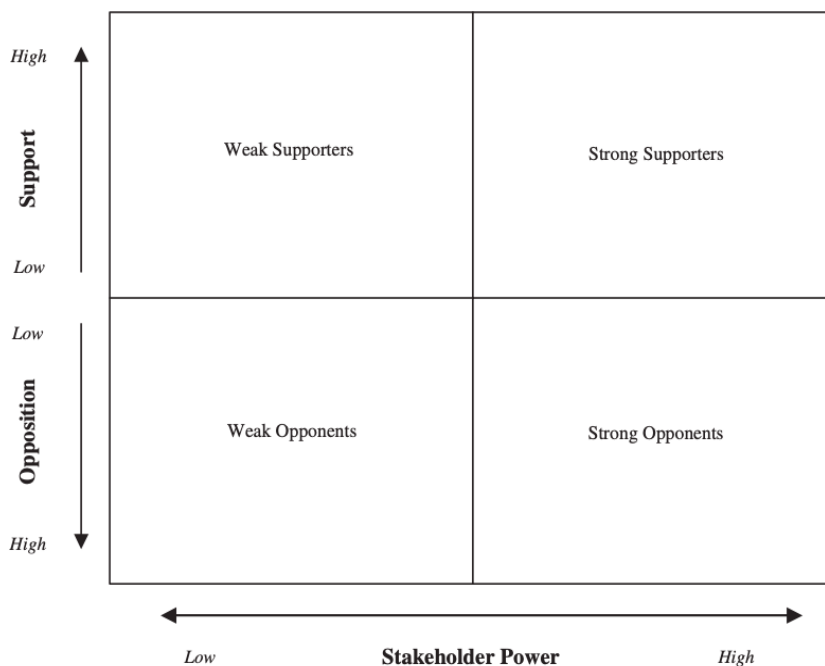
Contrary to other types of coding, theming the data is focused on underlying phenomena, thus in a sense, data is being analyzed while categorized and coded. This fits the *a priori* coding, as potential phenomena were indicated during the *a priori* code list (Saldaña, 2015). The coding process of the Qualitative Research Cycle of Hennink and Hutter (2010) is used and adapted to the concept of theming data. The code development is themed data supplemented with an in vivo coding process, for the inductive development of codes during the coding process (Saldaña, 2015). For coding, the program NVivo was used, in which 'nodes' were constructed; nodes are similar to categories under which codes can be grouped. For example, when *articulation* capability of trade unions was assessed, different types of dependent and independent articulations were found; these indicated the capacity and incapacity for adaptive strategies were found. The latter could especially be assigned to the code 'dependent on funding'. During the coding process, memos were made on recurring phenomena. During interviews, sometimes relevant observations are made. These are also included within memos as non-verbal observations as suggested by Saldaña (2015). An example is somebody avoiding a question by ignoring the question or yawning.

4.2.2. Stakeholder positions

During this case-study research, a stakeholder appraisal and analysis was conducted to interpret and analyze stakeholder positions based on interest and influence (Varvasovszky and Brugha, 2000). The analysis tool contributed to answering research sub question 3, by identifying interest and influence of stakeholders for mobilization in living wage strategies. This is visualized in the Analytical Framework and the flow diagram of the analytic methods.

The data input for the stakeholder analysis is constructed from secondary sources and interview summaries of individuals and experts. The interview summaries of both were in vivo coded towards the variable of *trade union involvement within the cashew value chain*, to identify stakeholder positions. The analysis was based on the initial selection of interviewees, identified by key experts and cashew sector documentation by Dedras (Eteka and Faaki, 2017) and the African Cashew Initiative (ACi, 2010). The analysis considers characteristics of the stakeholders regarding the involvement of trade unions in the cashew value chain, as a first step for living wage fostering. Interest of stakeholders is determined in forms of opposition, support and non-mobilization. The support or opposition of actors included in a project, policy or program highly decides the success or failure (Varvasovszky and Brugha, 2000a). Support or opposition is analyzed by the given perspectives and attitudes of interviewed stakeholders on trade union involvement within the cashew sector. Non-mobilization indicates both opposing and supportive arguments. Influence is captured by network density and financial decision-making within the sector (Oliver, 1991; Varvasovszky and Brugha, 2000). There are different ways to present the position in matrices and overviews (Bryson, 2004). A problem-frame stakeholder map as visualized in figure 9 will be used. This matrix is particularly supporting in developing problem definitions that help towards the formulation and finding the 'winning coalition'. It needs some context to the stakeholder positions, to understand the willingness for collaboration (Bryson, 2004). The contextual embedding analysis will help in this.

Figure 9: Problem-frame stakeholder map (Bryson, 2004, p. 39)



4.2.3. Trade union capacities

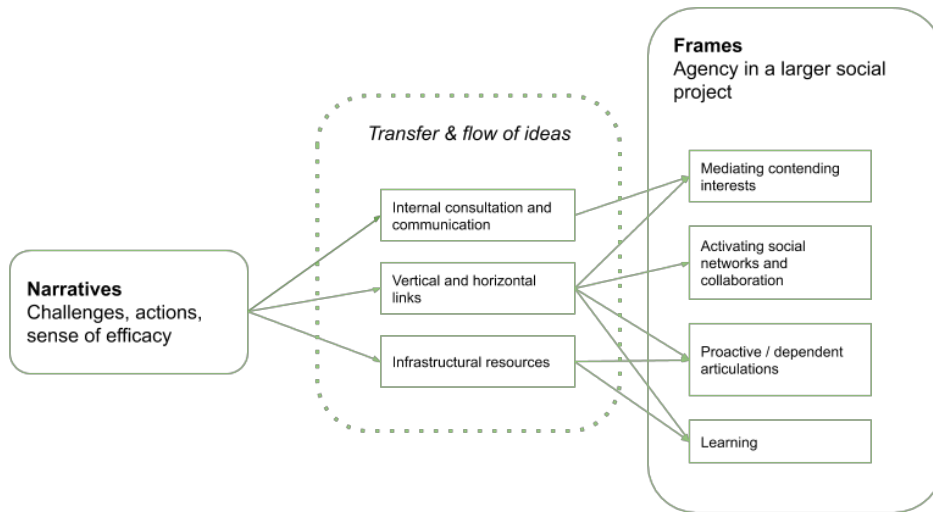
A next step within the analysis is the interpretation of the trade union landscape, which in this case-study refers to trade union capacities and phenomena in which trade unions are involved. Trade union capacities analyzed according to the Trade Union Capacities Model for trade union renewal (Lévesque and Murray, 2010) and Trade Union Narratives and Frames for trade union renewal (Lévesque and Murray, 2013). This part of the analysis combines data analysis methods for pattern construction. The data input are interview summaries of individuals, groups and experts. This was the only available option for data recording, due to the use of an interpreter. During this analysis, a mix of deductive and inductive analysis was in place. The capacities of trade unions are analyzed using inductively reasoning: the capacities will be first interpreted through direct interviews with trade unions, after which perspectives of cashew sector actors are used for comparison and secondary sources (when available) to confirm capacities (Saldaña, 2015). Probable conclusions will be mostly drawn, as empirical evidence is limited on trade union capacities in Benin.

Lévesque and Murray (2010, 2013) have identified eight trade union capacities relevant for trade union renewal in changing environments. These capacities have been conceptualized and led to an *a priori* category list, which will be elaborated after this subsection. After an initial round of coding, it appeared that frames and narratives needed more attention. As such, codes based on concepts in literature by Lévesque and Murray (2013) on framing and narrative resources were added. After a second round of analysis on frames and narratives, all general codes were once assessed, especially the ones with low references. After this round, codes were finalized and conclusively defined. This can be found in Table 3. The same codes were then used to analyze the secondary sources on trade union capacity and the cashew value chain; to fill in gaps and verify capacities and value chain characteristics found during interviewing. The coding scheme will be discussed in the following section.

4.2.4. A priori coding scheme trade union capacities

For the analysis of trade union capacities, two types of analysis are relevant. Lévesque and Murray (2010) discuss four power resources and four strategic capabilities. In a later publication, they elaborate on the importance of discourse analysis to identify narratives (part of Power resources) and frames (part of Strategic capabilities) (Lévesque and Murray, 2013). In Table 3, the Trade Union Capacities are defined and conceptualized with other literature, describing trade union phenomena in living wage fostering. These phenomena are derived from the Theoretical Framework. As discussed in chapter 2, Lévesque and Murray (2013) identify a space in which a transfer of flows and ideas exist, between the capacities Narratives and Frames. Figure 10 present these links. To avoid repetition, these links are further pointed out in Table 3.

Figure 10: Links identified between narratives, frames and other capacities (based on theory of Lévesque and Murray, 2013)



It was chosen to *a priori* develop categories and codes, and theme the data found on six Power resources (Internal Solidarity, Network Embeddedness and Infrastructural Resources) and Strategic capabilities (Articulation, Learning and Intermediating Capability). Data is gathered from trade unions directly and through perspectives of stakeholders. Narrative resources and framing capabilities, as separate capacities, are interpreted through narrative analysis, directly from trade union data. Phenomena and processes are identified in analytic memo's (Saldaña, 2015).

Table 3: *A priori* categories of trade union capacities

Category	Definition	Subcategories
Narrative resources	<p>Values, shared understanding, stories and ideologies that form identities and concerns, formed into frames of understanding, stories of victory and defeat. How the narratives lead to action, is part of framing (Lévesque and Murray, 2013).</p> <p>There are two salient power resources that increase the flow and transfer of ideas, information and practices which fuels the narrative resources;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - internal organizational resources: the presence of deliberative mechanisms - network embeddedness: the extent of vertical and horizontal connections the workplace union has with other levels of its own union, other unions, community groups and social movements. 	<p><u>The stories of defeat and victory</u>: the collection of stories of defeat or victory to present a sense of efficacy in union actions (Polletta, 1998)</p>
Infrastructural resources	<p>The infrastructural resources include resources in terms of material, human, organizational processes, policies and programs.</p>	<p><u>Seeking funding opportunities</u>: The acquisition of international funding for specific topics, e.g. gender (Birchall, 2001)</p>

<p>Internal solidarity</p>	<p>The availability of cohesive collective identifies and deliberative vitality</p>	<p><u>Internal unification processes</u>: the presence of internal unification processes and the absence of fragmentation and proliferation (Laurijssen, 2010)</p> <p><u>Internal solidarity</u>: showing solidarity to all union members in wage negotiations (Hayter and Weinberg, 2011).</p> <p><u>Public reasoning</u>: having public reasoning platforms or structures to aggregate capabilities relevant for the calculation of living wage (Schrage and Huber, 2018)</p>
<p>Network embeddedness</p>	<p>Horizontal and vertical links in which trade unions operate in order to build broader spaces of solidarity with other unions and within society. This is closely connected with intermediating capability (Lévesque and Murray, 2010)</p>	<p><u>Participation in external unification processes</u>: The presence in processes of collective action (Laurijssen, 2010)</p> <p><u>Participation in multi stakeholder networks</u>: participation in (sector-specific) networks to create new membership structures, for example amongst informal workers (Birchall, 2001)</p> <p><u>Entering platforms of social dialogue</u>: participation in social dialogue platforms and tripartite structures (Hayter and Weinberg, 2011; Laurijssen, 2010; Schrage and Huber, 2018)</p>
<p>Intermediating capability</p>	<p>The extent to which trade unions are able to balance conflict and cooperation. It includes the ability to activate social networks. Union embeddedness in different network levels requires intermediating capabilities. It therefore closely connects with the power resource 'network embeddedness' (Lévesque and Murray, 2010)</p>	<p><u>Unification processes</u>: the ability to deal with contending interests in trade union networks (Laurijssen, 2010)</p> <p><u>Interest alignment</u>: the ability to align interests of different employment groups, i.e. informal and formal workers (Birchall, 2001)</p> <p><u>Activating social networks</u>: ability to activate social networks with a specific purpose, for example women associations (Birchall, 2001)</p> <p><u>Mediating contending interests</u>: the ability to mediate different positions on social interventions (for example living wage) (Hayter and Weinberg, 2011)</p> <p><u>Collaborative action</u>: ability to foster collaborative action through public</p>

		reasoning and discussion on what a living wage entails (Schrage and Huber, 2018)
Framing	The union leader present autonomy by being able to shape proactive regimes within and beyond the workplace by using narratives. These regimes are action frames, often build on senses of efficacy, frames of reference, frame amplification, bridging, and extension, and relative autonomy to a larger social struggle (Lévesque and Murray, 2013)	<p><u>Providing a frame of reference</u>: the ability to provide an appealing narrative for specific trade union members, e.g. women (Birchall, 2001)</p> <p><u>Agency</u>: the ability to be transparent and accountable in a larger social project (Smith et al., 2017)</p> <p><u>Frame extension</u>: the ability to seek new collaborations for the expansion of the narrative and acquire new membership structures (Birchall, 2001)</p> <p><u>Frame transformation</u>: shifting trade union strategies from striking towards social dialogue (Laurijssen, 2010)</p>
Articulation	<p>Setting a realistic agenda with a temporal and spatial dimension. It balances different levels of action; top-down and bottom-up.</p> <p>The ability to formulate new strategies is a kind of bridge between narratives and frames (Lévesque and Murray, 2010)</p>	<u>Formulation of adaptive strategies</u> : the ability to articulate the trade union strategies for formal / informal labor between different levels of action (Birchall, 2001) and new strategies on living wage implementation (Hayter and Weinberg, 2011)
Learning	Acquiring knowledge and adopting it (Lévesque and Murray, 2010)	<u>Learning about and adopting new strategies</u> : the ability to acquire knowledge on new sectors and worker groups for living wage methodology (Hayter and Weinberg, 2011)

4.3. Research output

After an initial round of categorizing the interview findings, a definitive list of codes on trade union capacities is constructed through deductive coding. For the stakeholder analysis, a definitive list was constructed through in vivo coding, leading to categories, subcategories and codes ('nodes' in NVivo). The codes were grouped and analyzed per research question, which were further supplemented by literature after the two coding rounds. The final list of codes can be found in Appendix 3.

The research output is the formulation of living wage strategies for trade unions, which is build up by the three analytical tools: contextual embedding analysis, stakeholder analysis and trade union capacity analysis. The latter two are based on primary data sources and will be supported by using the Problem-Frame Stakeholder Map and the visualization of trade union capacity links. Word Clouds are also constructed in NVivo, representing relative use of certain words in codes and categories in order to identify important themes.

5. Case study context

The context of this case study research is the cashew value chain. Prior to the presentation of the case study findings, the minimum-wage setting, the cashew market and trade history in Benin provide a background to the case study results.

5.1. Labor Law in Benin

In Benin, since the introduction of the constitutional democracy in 1990, the Constitution recognizes the right to work and fair remuneration, equal access to education and employment, freedom of association and the right to strike (Balaro et al., 2015). In 1998, a Labor Code was introduced, regulating individual and collective labor principles, including organization in trade unions and employers' organizations, working conditions, and the minimum wage. With this Labor Code, the Labor Court, Labor Administration and Inspection, the National Labor Council, the Joint National Commission on Collective Bargaining Agreements and the Salaries and National Commission for Occupational Safety and Health were installed and regulated. The law restricts discrimination towards collective bargaining and freedom of association (Balaro et al., 2015). Some civil servants and public employees, agricultural, domestic and migrant workers are not legally protected within the Labor Code. In practice, legal protection is very limited since about 15% of total workforce is formally employed (Balaro et al., 2015). Organizing workers at federation and confederation level is regulated by a few conditions, including the minimum of five company-level unions within the same sector to form a federation, and the representation in at least three sectors to compose a confederation. While these conditions might enhance trade union effectivity by limiting fragmentation (Laurijssen, 2010), company-level unions and federations are restricted in their liberty to affiliate at national or international level (Balaro et al., 2015).

The ITUC Global Rights Index of 2018 presents violations of workers' rights. In practice, workers do not have access to their rights and are still victim to autocratic regimes and are unfair labor practices (ITUC, 2014). For example, one of the interviewees explained that about 15 years ago, a group of cashew processing workers was fired after organizing strikes at a factory. During 2017 and 2018, the National Labor Legislation was at issue. Changes were introduced without transparent participation with social partners or international labor law. This included a change in legally set length of employment contracts, allowing fixed-term contracts. At the end of 2017, another law was approved by the Beninese Parliament which amended the General Statute of the Civil Service to prohibit striking by specific groups of civil servants, including health workers, paramilitaries and judiciary. This was declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court. The Court recommended the National Assembly to keep the right to strike, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. This led to a march of trade unions, protesting against the violation of freedoms, the failure to respect commitments of the National Charter of Social Dialogue. In return, a newly installed Constitutional Court abolished the right the strike for health workers, paramilitaries and judiciary in June 2018. In September 2018, the striking law was renounced, limiting striking to ten days per year and banning student union activities. During this time, a union leader was also imprisoned after a demonstration (Bayer, 2018).

5.2. Trade unionism in Benin

While the fight of unions is now towards the dishonor of democratic features such as freedom of association, the right to strike and the promotion of social dialogue, in the past the trade union landscape of Benin was characterized by political turmoil of autocratic regimes and the democratic transformation between 1960 and 1990. Trade unionism has been a major contributor to emancipation of Beninese people. This started with an active pan-African multi-unionism, struggling for independence in the 1950s (Balaro et al., 2015; Bierschenk, 2009), leading to trade union activism similar to other Francophone African countries (Laurijssen, 2010). After multiple coups during 1960-1972, a single-union period

started which was subject to the Marxist-Leninist period between 1975-1990 (Bierschenk, 2009). The UNSTB was assigned as the single autonomous trade union confederation (Heilbrunn, 1993). In secrecy, other trade unions started to arise. Together, the UNSTB and these unions took part in the coordination of the mobilization for democracy (Bierschenk, 2009; Heilbrunn, 1993).

The democratic transition started in 1989 in Benin as part of a 'third wave of democratization', engaging multiple African countries (Huntington, 1991). This wave was characterized by nonviolent resistance against the existing autocratic regime of Mathieu Kérékou (Bayer, 2018). Contrary to different other African countries including Uganda, Namibia and Rwanda, Benin was more susceptible to a democratic transition, in virtue of the value given to the National Constitution, both by the highly respected Constitutional Court and the commitment of civil society (Bayer, 2018). This especially included trade unions, who were often highly reactive to political successes. The reactivity of Beninese trade unions is also observed in other African Francophone countries, which is often paired with fragmentation and proliferation of unions (Laurijssen, 2010). Yet for Benin, the number of national trade unions limited to seven national confederations to date (Balaro et al., 2015), indicating a general capacity in democratic deliberative structures as opposed to trade union fragmentation. Since the fight for independence in the 1950s, trade unions have focused on worker welfare, but also moved beyond this traditional role and focused on social issues. The power of Beninese trade unions has significantly increased through the start of the *intersyndicale* by the confederations COSI, UNSTB and CSPIB in 2012, unifying their activities and creating a stronger bargaining position (Bayer, 2018; Balaro, Dossou and Ammoussou, 2015).

5.3. Civil society in Benin

Characterized as civil society organizations, trade unions have played a key role in the democratic transition of Benin. To date, they present considerable influence at national level based on the current development of reciprocal processes, such as the *intersyndicale* and the bargaining capacity of trade unions. Different national trade union confederations indicate to represent both formal and informal labor, thus covering a variety of population groups. This requires internal deliberative processes and intermediation skills, as needs and interests among both groups differ in terms of protection and legislation. Informal employment requires different strategies due to the lack of government intentions to protect vulnerable employment, except for a tripartite National Informal Economy Forum which functions minimally. There were intentions to provide access to national health insurance, but these have been suspended (the National Health Insurance; RAMU). Union coverage is about 13% of the total employment, which is relatively high for a West-African country. This is 63% formal workers. There has been a significant increase in union memberships from informal sectors. Due to privatization of the public sector, there was a drop in formal labor memberships of trade unions during the 2010s. This led to an influx of informal labor memberships, especially from women (Bayer, 2018). This can be explained by efforts of unions to involve workers from trade (especially women). Trade unions also attracted members from the transport and agricultural sectors (the latter especially agricultural producer organizations) (Kaag, 2017).

The civil society can be seen as the operating arena of Beninese trade unions, referring to a space of contending interests of public organizations where the state mediates (Kaldor, 2003). In Benin, there is a notion of strong citizenship, indicating a strong sense of belonging and citizen engagement (Bayer, 2018). It has been said that Benin "may even have become West Africa's most vibrant civil society" (Magnusson, 2001, p. 10). Although in some debates regarding Africa, civil society mostly refers to NGOs by the lack of other functional organizations (Bierschenk, 2009). Benin is different from this debate, being characterized by networks of NGOs, associations, trade unions and other groups (Magnusson, 2001).

Besides the relatively high trade union coverage, there is a relatively high voter turnout, absence of electoral violence and organizational fraud (Bierschenk, 2009). This might be unequally distributed with rural areas, since interviewees during this case study indicated a strong divide between urbanized and rural areas in terms of trust towards legislation and the government in general. Notwithstanding, the associational sector is flourishing in both rural and urban areas. There are associations with long standing history, dating back to colonial times. A more recent flow of associations started during the Marxist-Leninist period (e.g. student unions, trade unions, professional organizations). Especially since the democratic renewal, the largest stream of associations was conceived: trade unions, local development associations and NGOs, cultural associations, and agricultural producer organizations established (Bayer, 2018). This was perhaps the result of a high appreciation for civil rights and a democracy after a suppressed regime (Bayer, 2018). In 1999, 3000 NGOs were officially registered in Benin (Bierschenk, 2009). The high number of NGOs and associations in Benin indicate a kind of resourcefulness; Bierschenk (2009) points out that objectives for starting NGOs were related to find contracts and funding within the aid business. Aside from such motives, NGOs often present links with politicians or civil servants (Bierschenk, 2009). These links work two ways: on the one hand, such links have helped NGOs to enter networks and increase effectiveness. On the other, such links gave politicians a certain legitimacy and respect as servants of civil society. Because of these political links, NGOs are sometimes hardly autonomous (Bierschenk, 2009), yet this depends on the nature of the 'deal' made. Some trade unions seek political support for specific issues and using political links effectively can indicate a strong sense of autonomy.

5.4. Economic development and democratic quality

Economic development since the democratic transition has stayed low in Benin. Low earnings, low productivity and bad working conditions common. Urbanization rates increase, similar to other West-African countries including Senegal, Togo, Mali and Sierra Leone, but lower than the highly developing Nigeria, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire (Bayer, 2018). Education enrolment seems to be increasing, but there is a huge gap observed in the skills of students and labor requirements of formal sector jobs. This pushes a lot of youth to informal jobs and increases vulnerability due to lack of legal coverage (Balaro et al., 2015). The low economic development is linked with Benin's external orientation and its sensibility to global tendencies, including development cooperation. The country has also been highly vulnerable for external shocks, including economic shocks of its neighboring country Nigeria, due to the intensive (informal) trade relations (Bierschenk, 2009; Bayer, 2018). The investment climate stayed low, leading to a rentier-state situation. This refers to a country which does not gain revenue from taxes of economic activities but is for example structurally dependent on development-aid (Bierschenk, 2009). Due to a political conflict in 2010, efforts for privatization during the 2010s and restrictions on collective bargaining, democratic quality has been challenged, worsened by cases of corruption and patronage. Although this affected the institutionalization of civic democratic institutions, including social dialogue on the labor market, it created a negative effect on labor aristocracy in Benin (Bayer, 2018). Trade unions expanded their areas of focus to informal employment where vulnerable employment is higher (Rani et al., 2013).

In 2016, efforts to improve social dialogue led to a National Charter of Social Dialogue, the Conseil National du Dialogue Social (CNDS), between government, the National Employers' Association and six from the seven national trade union confederations. There was also a legal reform on collective bargaining, leading to limitations in contractual procedures and restrictions on strikes. As a reaction, trade unions organized strikes throughout 2017 and 2018. The restriction on striking has been reversed since 2018 and Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) are evolving, which apply to public sectors. The Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI) presents improvements in institutionalized democratic processes, indicated by the *political transformation* indicator of 7.85 out of 10 in 2018 (Bayer, 2018). The *Economic Transformation* is still considerably lower (5.00) but has potential to increase,

based on the structural reforms. Perhaps the installation of the CNDS and inter-profession structures for agricultural sectors will contribute to formalization of informal sectors such as cashew and an increased economic dividend on the long-run (Bayer, 2018).

5.5. The cashew market

On the global commodity markets, RCN is one of the most valuable processed nuts. It is a luxury product, and hosts high-quality requirements, such as safety, hygiene, and improved working conditions (Kanji, 2004). For local producers, it is an important cash crop and for developing countries it has to potential to create employment through processing and create export revenue. Globally, 33 countries produce RCN, of which sixteen are African (FAOSTAT, 2017). Since recent decades, RCN has received growing attention from national and international groups. The nut was cultivated in Mozambique and India from 1578 until the late 1980s. After this period, it took its turn in West Africa (Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Guinea Bissau), Tanzania, South West Asia (Vietnam and Cambodia), the Philippines, Indonesia, and Brazil (ADF, 2000). Currently, India, Vietnam and Brazil are the largest producers. In Africa, Côte d'Ivoire is the largest producer. Over the last six years, production has significantly increased in Africa, while in Asia a decline was observed; especially since the 2012/2013 cashew season. The global annual production was 4,010,179 tons between 2010-2015. Since 2015 supply is lower than demand. In Benin, between 120,000-135,000 tons are produced currently (Eteka and Faaki, 2017). In terms of processing, also India (1.37 million tons), Vietnam (780,000 tons), and Brazil (280,000 tons) are the largest, but followed by Tanzania (25,000 tons of nuts) and Côte d'Ivoire (20,000 ton). In terms of export, Africa dominates the market. Of the top 10 global exporters in the last seven years, nine are African. Côte d'Ivoire is now the world's leading exporter of cashew nuts. Benin is the fourth exporter (115,000 ton), after Côte d'Ivoire (670,000 tons), Guinea Bissau (204,500 tons), and Tanzania (182,000 tons). India and Vietnam are the largest importers (92%) (Ton et al., 2018).

The march of Vietnam into the international market of cashew since about fifteen years and the competition between cashew producers, has led to a fall in international prices for processed and raw cashew nuts. At the same time, Europe and the USA demanded higher quality requirements. Local value-adding and buyer-driven nature of cashew nut supply chain have negative effects on wages and working conditions (Boillereau and Adam, 2007). This especially affects women, because women occupy a major part of the workforce. Due to the work positions, like sitting and squatting in the peeling sections or standing for long periods in the cutting sections, women often suffer from back strains and reproductive complications (Kanji, 2004). Studies from other cashew processing countries indicate weak bargaining positions of workers. Cashew processing is employment generating and the poor working conditions are accepted, since people are in need of income (Kanji, 2004). This has also been observed in Benin and Côte d'Ivoire recently (Ton et al, 2018). Cashew enterprises use the advantage of gender inequalities, assuming that women were secondary earners and easier accepted low-wage labor and lower quality jobs due to traditional submissive roles (Kanji, 2004).

5.6. Benin's cashew sector

As a figure of speech, the Beninese cashew sector is being launched from a jumping board. As part of the *Program d'Action du Gouvernement 2017-2021* (PAG) the economy is under structural reformation towards a liberalized market economy. The first priority agricultural crop, cotton, and the public utility sector are being privatized. RCN is the second prioritized agricultural product, which is also subject to structural reformation plans, aiming to create a larger market force. The PAG aims to upscale production from 400 kg RCN to 750KG RCN per hectare in 2021, installing 60,000 extra hectares of cashew orchards and restoring 100,000 hectare (Ton et al., 2018). Contributing to the general welfare is the aim is to increase domestic processing 50% in 2021 (this was 5% in 2018) and increasing the cashew apple

processing and improving marketing and export system.¹ This will create employment significantly in processing units. Production enhancement is stimulated by increasing technical support to farmers by the government, for example by a pilot project in the development of irrigation systems and giving training on formalization and regional legislation for harmonization of business (the Organization for Harmonization of African Business Law, the OHADA legislation). The governmental ambitions might be unrealistic. Further harmonization at regional level could increase feasibility, but this requires a more active involvement of the Government level (Ton et al., 2018).

Marketing strategies include increasing taxes on the export of raw cashew nuts and setting a baseline price for a kilogram RCN. There are also tax exemptions for processing units and free-trade areas do apply, which fall under the Economic Community of West-African States (ECOWAS). The ECOWAS has fifteen member states and applies to all dimensions of economic activity, for example industry, agriculture, commerce, social and cultural codes. Part of the ECOWAS member states also form a monetary union, under the West-African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA). The ECOWAS stimulates cross-border regional investment through private sector law harmonization in the Community Investment Code and increasing the flow of information among societal groups such as rural populations, women and youth organizations, and civil society organizations (Von Uexkull, 2012). Another policy which stimulates cashew processing policy in Africa is the OHADA, a common law installed in 1993 which includes 16 countries in Africa, of which 14 are Francophone. The law was enforced to increase modernization and harmonization in business amongst the member states, increasing the foreign investment and economic integration of Africa (Enonchong, 2007). This has attracted both African and non-African investors in cashew processing, including Afokantan opened in 2006 (Dutch; started with manual processing), Tolaro Global followed in 2010 (American). NAD and Co started in 2010 (Beninese), followed by Kake in 2011 (Beninese; not in function in the year 2018). Fludor opened in 2016 (Nigerian), and ANI in 2018 (Beninese) (Ton et al., 2018).

Part of the PAG involves tax reforms, including one on the exportation of RCN. This is an incentive for domestic processing, although these taxes are not reinvested in the cashew processing industry. Private investments have commenced significantly, based on the significant increase in processing. These included a new factory in Porto-Novo, called ANI, a second plant of Tolaro in Parakou, an expansion of Fludor in Bohicon, a new factory in Djougou, Donga Treasure, and the involvement of the Swiss company Gebana, specialized in organic and fair-trade produce, planning to start a small factory in Djougou. There was a total capacity increase of 15,000 tons in 2016 and 12,000 tons RCN processing in 2018. This creates a humongous amount of extra employment within the processing industry: in 2018, 1,000 ton RCN (semi-) mechanically processing created employment for about 105 employees, of which a major part was directly involved with processing phases of RCN. This means that only in 2018, at least 1260 jobs (Ton et al., 2018) were created and perhaps hundreds of indirect jobs.² During an interview with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fishery it was emphasized that the Government does not intend to intervene with working conditions unless labor in cashew processing is formally-employed. Formalization of the sector is facilitated through reorganization of the Interprofessionale Filière Anacarde (IFA) (Cashew Nut Inter-Professional Association) and the Fédération Nationale des Producteurs d'Anacarde du Bénin (FENAPAB), the national body of all cashew producer organizations. For further development of the sector, Benin has become member of the African Cashew Alliance (ACA) which has about 130 member companies and the International Cashew Advisory Council (ICAC), created in 2016 to develop cashew sectors in member countries.³

¹ Fiche signalétique sur le Program National de Développement de la Filière Anacarde, Ministère de L'Agriculture, de L'élevage et de la Pêche, République du Benin, March 2018

² Interview with TechnoServe Benin (21.01.2019)

³ Fiche signalétique sur le Program National de Développement de la Filière Anacarde, Ministère de L'Agriculture, de L'élevage et de la Pêche, République du Benin, March 2018

5.7. International institutions in the Beninese cashew sector

At government level and local level, different international actors provide technical support to the sector which are especially focused on cashew production enhancement. Motives differ, which are based on the nature of the development agenda of the country of origin. The German Development Agency, GIZ, is a forefront external cashew support agency in West-Africa. In Benin, GIZ is present amongst other through the ComCashew. ComCashew is a multi-stakeholder initiative of private and public actors (Ton et al., 2018). In Benin, ComCashew is involved with research, strategy development, production, processing and marketing in cashew. Another highly active support agency is the American NGO TechnoServe. TechnoServe is largely funded by the USAID and USDA, was part of the African Cashew Initiative as implementing partner. TechnoServe has a large cashew support program called BeninCajù. Within BeninCajù, TechnoServe partners with the Catholic Relief Services (CSR), the Federation of Cashew Producers (FENAPAB), and the NGOs Dedras and CRADIB. Other support programs include the PROFI program (2016-2019, Belgium-financed), Cracking the Nut (2016-2021, Dutch-financed) and the NGOs Woord en Daad (Dutch) (Ton et al., 2018), which provide support to the processing plant Afokantan.⁴ A final program is the Civic Engagement Alliance (CEA) (2016-2020), which Dutch-financed. The CEA is a multi-stakeholder lobby and advocacy support program, in which ICCO has the lead, and collaborates with amongst others CNV Internationaal and Woord en Daad. In Benin, CEA focusses on stimulating dialogue within the cashew sector among stakeholders and between the sector and the Beninese government.⁵

Given this context, the following chapter will present the case study findings.

6. Case study findings

This chapter presents the empirical findings of the case study research activities in Benin. It zooms in on the potential role of trade unions in living wage fostering in the cashew value chain of Benin. This is done through analyzing stakeholder positions and opportunities for mobilization and assessing the capacities of trade unions for trade renewal towards living wage fostering. This chapter first focuses on the Beninese cashew sector and wage-setting and labor conditions in cashew processing. This is followed by a stakeholder map of stakeholder positions and identified mobilization opportunities. Finally, trade union capacities are presented.

6.1. Wages in cashew processing in Benin

Wages as part of labor rights will be considered in the context of the Beninese cashew value chain. This includes current labor conditions and employment challenges in cashew processing. Understanding wage-setting supports the identification of living wage strategies. First, wage-setting in Benin and labor conditions in cashew processing are presented. After this, cultural dispositions on wages and rural economic trade-offs are deliberated.

6.1.1. Minimum-wage setting in Benin

In Benin, about 74% of the employed people live below a daily US\$3.1. Rising income inequality is observed, since a wider middle class starts to exist. Although data differs, a major part of the workforce operates in the informal economy (80%-90%) and are not protected by labor market regulations including the minimum wage, formal health and pension schemes (in this study referred to as 'social

⁴ Interview with Trade and Development Group (12.03.2019)

⁵ Interview with Civic Engagement Alliance Benin (21.01.2019)

security'). Population growth is the highest in West-Africa; more than half of the population is under 18 (Balaro et al., 2015). About 60% of the population lives from subsistence farming and cash crops in rural areas (FAO, n.d.). The Ministry of Agriculture aims to formalize Benin's largest sector, agriculture, through structural reformations. The Ministry emphasized that it will also focus on working conditions once the sector is formalized. No policy reforms are found that address the creation of decent employment⁶. Due to traditional attitudes towards women and subordinate roles, many women are not part of the formal labor force and girls are kept from education⁷. It is estimated that women receive 73% of men's wages (Balaro et al., 2015).

Benin has ratified the ILO Minimum Wage convention in 1960. The General Collective Labor Agreement in Benin is applicable to enterprises in the private and para-public sectors in and states that *"no salary may be lower than the guaranteed minimum wage fixed by decree taken in the Council of Ministers on report of the minister in charge of the work after a reasoned opinion of the National Council of Labor"* (translated from French). The actual minimum wage or Guaranteed Minimum Wage (SMIG) was installed in 2006 at 28.000 West African CFA (48 US\$), increased to 31,625 CFA (54US\$) in 2009 and finally to 40.000 CFA in 2013 (68.39 US\$). The minimum wage is per month and applied to a 40-hour workweek, and for agriculture to a 46-hour workweek (Wage Indicator, n.d.). According to the WageIndicator.com (n.d.), the SMIG is legally-set by Governmental bodies including the Ministry of Labor and Employment in collaboration with employer organizations, and the largest trade union confederations (UNION5, UNION4 and UNION2). Since 2006, the Government adjusts the minimum wage every three years, with steep increases between 2009-2014. The current SMIG is about 18% higher than the internationally set poverty line of 2015; this might be even less if updated to the current value of the dollar equivalent. Since 2014, the minimum wage has not been adjusted anymore. The Labor Code also states that employers who do not meet the legally set minimum wage, receive a fine of 14,000 - 70,000 CFA per violation, and a fine of 70,000 - 140,000 CFA and imprisonment of fifteen days - two months when violations repeatedly occur (WageIndicator, 2019; Balaro et al., 2015). No other data is available on wage studies or minimum wage machinery.

6.1.2. Labor conditions in Beninese cashew processing

Traditionally, harvesting, collecting and processing RCN were manually handled. Manually cashew processing is a time-consuming task and a very valuable source of employment. The first RCN processing facilities appeared in the late 1990s. Only in the past six years, semi-mechanized and mechanized cashew processing facilities started to appear. The delicate process of handling cashews was always done by women manually. Currently, also men become interested in processing jobs, especially in mechanical processing. From observations by Ton et al. (2018) it was found that men are more involved with heavy work, including loading, semi-automated mechanical work and management. Labor is physically intense and women especially face discrimination, health and safety issues and low payment. Discrimination relates to the difference in quality of jobs between men and women; as men tended to have higher quality jobs (operators and supervisors) and received higher wages as compared to women. Women are especially involved in shelling and peeling sections. Low wages of women lead to longer working hours compensating with the lower payment. The implications of long hours are severe on women due the combination of household tasks such as growing food, domestic work and child-care, which are not facilitated in terms of maternity benefits. Child care facilities for babies until the age of 1 is offered in most factories. Processing jobs are often bounded to the cashew season, as RCN generally needs to be processed quickly (Ton et al., 2018). The largest cashew processing factory in Benin pointed out that they provide work throughout the year to most employees.⁸

⁶ Interview with Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fishery Benin (01.02.2019)

⁷ Interview with The Hunger Project Benin (30.01.2019)

⁸ Interview with Fludor factory management (31.01.2019)

In Benin, it was also observed that health and safety were especially affected by poor ventilation and lack of protective clothing. The raw cashew nut shell has a soft and sticky structure, containing a dark reddish brown liquid. When peeling cashew kernels, a caustic liquid is released, called Cashew Nut Shell Liquid (CNSL), which burns hands. Generally, refined oils are used to protect the hands (Ton et al., 2018), but this is often not sufficient for protection.⁹ Daylight was limited, and hygiene seemed minimal in the sections before steaming and baking the nuts (the peeling and scoping sections where most women work). Ventilation was in both factories installed to reduce the small from the raw cashew nuts and reduce the temperatures. Some factories are significantly more modern; hygiene facilities started before the entrance of the processing sections, workers wore protective clothing, and rooms were more spacious and bright-colored. The latter factory also provided training in hygiene practice.¹⁰ Hygiene is an important factor in cashew processing, which affects both workers and the quality of processed cashew. An international NGO explained:

“The cashew nut is of high quality, due to its dryness and color. Yet there are some issues, which limit the lucrative business. This includes personal hygiene of workers in processing. Yet, what do you expect if you only pay 40,000CFA as a wage. People do not have resources for soap.”

6.1.3. Work ethos

Different interviewees elaborate on work ethos in Benin and specifically for work mentality in cashew processing, as a response to questions on general challenges and employment challenges in cashew processing. The following will elaborate on the empirical findings from interviews with the management and workers of the cashew processing plants, combined with findings from other relevant interviews, such as rural female producers, technical support actors, NGOs and the government. A Word Cloud has been constructed as a visual aid for the presentation of frequently used words regarding (employment) challenges. This Word Cloud is presented in Figure 11. There is a range of frequently used words, including *children, workers, local, productivity, village, rural, culture* and *mentality*. The following will elaborate on the findings that capture these frequently used words.

⁹ Interview with Trade and Development Group (12.03.2019)

¹⁰ Interview with Fludor factory management (31.01.2019)

40-60 KG per day. There are different tariffs, also depending on which department you work in. The following lists the piece rate prices of one of the factories¹⁸:

A = 180 CFA / KG = shelling

B = 200 CFA / KG = scooping and shelling

SB = 125 CFA / KG = scooping (only getting the nut from the shell).

The visited factories declared that the legally set minimum wage was paid. One of the factories later mentioned that the workers earn 1,500 CFA – 3,000 CFA per day. This indicates that also wages below the minimum wage are paid; if 1,500 CFA would be paid daily, and the factory operates five days a week, monthly income would start at 30,000 CFA.¹⁹ Measuring the productivity of employees depended on one supervisor per section within the factory and was productivity was judged based on a few categories of estimation, but not literally counted.²⁰ Workers could earn up to 80,000CFA (\$136) per month depending on productivity.²¹ A few workers asserted that workers earned about 30,000-50,000CFA on average, and income only increases when people stick around longer than a few months and are getting used to the work.²²

6.1.4. Cultural dispositions on wages

Income from factory-work is sometimes seen as a short-term solution. Income and expenses also link with 'compartmentalization'; meaning that groups of expenses are coupled with income-generating activities.²³ It is not uncommon that women are the breadwinner. This type of livelihood provision is coupled with rural community culture and seems to be preferred in rural communities, based on interviews with cashew producers, female producers and technical assistance actors and CSOs.²⁴ All comments on *income* were classified in a separate subcategory and were distributed over codes. The hierarchy chart presents the number of references per code.

¹⁸ Interview with Afokantan (25.01.2019)

¹⁹ Interview with Fludor factory management (31.01.2019)

²⁰ Interview with Afokantan (25.01.2019) and Fludor factory management (31.01.2019)

²¹ Interview with Afokantan (25.01.2019), Fludor factory management (31.01.2019), UNION1

²² Group interview Fludor workers (31.01.2019)

²³ Interview with TechnoServe Benin (21.01.2019)

²⁴ Group interview with the female producer group Medidji (05.02.2019) and cashew producer group Tchachu (24.01.2019), interview with TechnoServe Benin (21.01.2019), GIZ Benin (30.01.2019), CREDI-ONG (05.02.2019), ANAF (31.01.2019)

Figure 12: Coding references of the subcategory 'income' (constructed in NVivo)

Income			
Minimum wage is not sufficient	Rural income is higher	Short-term thinking	
	Village life pref...	Trade off fact...	Self-dependen...
Productivity dependency	Women are bread...	Wages are sufficient	Income...

The code 'minimum wage is not sufficient' is mostly referred to (19 references), followed by 'productivity dependency' (8 references), and 'Rural income is higher' (5 references). Other codes included 'Short-term thinking' (4 references), 'Trade-off factory work' (3 references), 'Village life preference' (3 references), 'Wages are sufficient' (2 references), 'Self-dependency is better' (2 references), 'Women are breadwinners' (2 references) and 'Income is insecure' (1 reference).

Different interviewees, especially CSOs, technical assistance actors and trade unions pointed out that the minimum wage was insufficient. A technical assistance actor stated:²⁵

“There are administration changes. Not all people with land are connected to formal structures. There are three categories for wages to be considered; minimum wage, middle-income wage and high-income wage. 40,000 is definitely not enough. Agriculture has living income principles; it is a blend of income.”

“A middle income should be about 250.000-300.000 CFA for a family in Bohicon (area of Fludor). In Cotonou it should be higher, about 300.000-350.000.”

Supposedly, current legally-set minimum wages was a multi-stakeholder decision and are updated every three years. This contradicts with findings from interviews. A former trade unionist explained that

²⁵ Interview with TechnoServe (19.01.2019)

in 1990 the tripartite structure in Benin agreed on a minimum wage of 40,500 CFA.²⁶ This was based on living expenses during that time. The president of the cashew inter-professional organization explained that about 25 years ago a survey was conducted on living expenses and based on that the SMIG was set around 40,000 CFA.²⁷ Since then, the SMIG was not been updated. According to two trade union leaders, the minimum wage should be at least 80,000 CFA, based on the survey held before installing the new minimum wage legislation in 2006. There are no records of trade union action towards the increase of the minimum wage. Minimum wages do not cover informal labor, including agricultural jobs. Cashew processing is found in a grey area. (Semi-) Mechanical processing is formalized, but workers are casually employed.²⁸

6.1.5. Rural economic trade-offs

The words *workers, local, village, rural, culture* and *mentality* seem linked, as most refer to the work mentality.²⁹ Recruiting processing workers was perceived highly challenging compared to other cashew processing countries. Employee commitment is perceived low and is explained by the preference for rural self-dependency is. Payroll labor interrupts this freedom, due to the commitment to a contract. Alternatively, people use factory work as a temporary or additional income stream, or livelihood strategy when there is a lack of alternative strategies. Rural lifestyle meant for workers and female producers more opportunities for combining income streams due to a mix of trading and other part-time jobs, taking care of children and household tasks.³⁰

Both cashew factories expressed their concerns regarding employee commitment and high employee turnover: one of them missed 20 out of 100 employees during the day of visit.³¹ Due to low commitment, employee turnover could vary between 30-70% on a yearly basis.³² The management of both factories visited asserted that productivity was highly affected as such. According to one manager, a potential solution was the provision of contracts in combination with a minimum wage increase to 50.000CFA for processing workers³³ which is to date uncommon in Benin (Ton et al., 2018). Administrative and management personnel are contracted and have social protection and health coverage.³⁴ In their search for processing workers, the same factory expressed their preference for attracting people from certain regions in Benin such as the Atacoura region, since the productivity and commitment were better, based on the fewer distractions by rural lifestyles and family obligations.³⁵ A cashew buyer could confirm the challenges with employee commitment and stated:³⁶

"I don't think they like the work or want to do the work. That might be it. It is perhaps not in their genes. I don't know. It is very difficult to define. A lot of people are unemployed in Benin, you can work in a factory and receive a reasonable day salary, but still people choose not to. And yes, the work is not great... I have been working for a week in such a factory as well. I was completely broken at the end of the day. I cannot say it is really that the work is really nice. It is though."

This quote indicates local economic decision making, which is based on the consideration of day salary and the quality of work. Findings from interviews with processing workers and female producers also

²⁶ Interview with Timotée Boko, BCPA (06.02.2019)

²⁷ Interview with IFA (30.01.2019)

²⁸ Interview with Afokantan (25.01.2019) and Fludor factory management (31.01.2019)

²⁹ Interview with Trade Development Group (12.03.2019), TechnoServe Benin (21.01.2019), Afokantan (25.01.2019) and Fludor factory management (31.01.2019), GIZ Benin (30.01.2019)

³⁰ Group interview with the female producer group Medidji (05.02.2019) and workers Fludor (31.01.2019)

³¹ Interview with Afokantan (25.01.2019)

³² Interview with TechnoServe Benin (19.01.2019)

³³ Interview with Afokantan (25.01.2019)

³⁴ Interview with Afokantan (25.01.2019) and Fludor factory management (31.01.2019)

³⁵ Interview with Afokantan (25.01.2019)

³⁶ Interview with Trade Development Group (12.03.2019)

pointed out a rural economic trade-off of payroll labor in Benin. This trade-off might be based on the local perception of wage-labor. During a group meeting with the female farmer group Medidji (not cashew, but a range of other crops) in Vallée du Sitatunga (Central Benin), a region in which cashew was also produced and processed, the women indicated that they preferred rural and autonomous work including farming, household duties and childcare over factory work. The cashew buyer, who is also involved with technical support to cashew processing factories in West-Africa, denoted:³⁷

“We didn't do any research on the tipping point of rural work to factory work; we consider it from the perspective of the costs of cashew processing that we can make in a factory to make profit. We also haven't looked into the wages of similar jobs in the region.”

During the interview with the female producer group Medidji a turning point appeared after probing about factory work. Sufficient wage made the decision for factory work negotiable. Part of the group suggested wages between 100,000 and 200,000 CFA that would draw them to factory work, next to options of part time work and transportation options to the factory. The suggested income of 100,000 to 200,000 CFA was based on a discussion of expenses. The spokesperson of the group explained:

“We manage it. But it is not enough. We have to use our money for many different things, especially for children. Their education, books, notebooks, photocopies. Then there is food, healthcare, solidarity to other families and funerals. A main challenge is health care. It is really expensive.”

A recent study on the cashew sector of Benin and Côte d'Ivoire also mentions funerals as a major family expensive, which is part of economic decision making (Ton, 2019). A group interview with cashew processing workers pointed out that women often choose this type of work, as other livelihood strategies were scarce; it was hard work, but the income was needed. Husbands were not always present and some of them were single-mothers.³⁸ These women also brought up that they appreciated the food canteen, and *“if you are not lazy, you can get what you want”*.

6.1.6. Compartmentalization

A technical assistance actor highlighted an interesting phenomenon which relates to economic trade-offs, namely that people in rural settings tend to *compartmentalize*. People face a number of expenses and try to couple these to streams of income. Factory work might be done to (temporarily) fix an income stream when a stream is removed or temporarily not present. It is therefore an active decision over other options, a quick-fix. The management of a cashew processing factory confirmed this in referral to problem-solving behavior:³⁹

“When they look for jobs, it is just to receive some money on a short-term. It is ‘problem-solving’ behavior; when they have a situation in which they need some extra cash, they will look for such a job. Work is not a priority, only in such a situation. During holidays, we also have a lot of students who need to earn some extra cash.”

Even the president of the national tripartite denoted:⁴⁰

“The companies that have the plants should improve the working conditions. Self-dependency is better for income than being employed in a plant. A lot of women are not willing to be employed by the plants.”

³⁷ Interview with Trade Development Group (12.03.2019)

³⁸ Group interview workers Fludor (31.01.2019)

³⁹ Interview with Afokantan (25.01.2019)

⁴⁰ Interview with Conseil National du Dialogue Social (18.01.2019)

Self-dependency seems to relate to feelings of freedom and distrust within the government, based on expressions by different actors.⁴¹ Formalization of the sector is one of the key objectives of the government and should especially happen through organizing producers into cooperatives. This creates a tension at the farmer level, where producers are not feeling the urge to organize to improve group sales and pay taxes. Often, farmer cooperatives start up as bottom-up movement, where farmers want to gain a better position in the selling of crops.⁴² An international NGO stated:⁴³

“People should have real conversations with workers. This is an advice. If the mentality is towards a strong organization, things are different. And living wage is feasible.”

Generally, the desire to be recruited for factory work is low and there is competition over other income-generating activities. The cashew buyer referred to this by elaborating about the trading mentality in West-Africa and that the sea-access of Benin and its port in Cotonou also increase opportunities for trade.⁴⁴

“It depends on how the people are, Benin is originally more a trading country; it is not landlocked like Burkina Faso, and you see people busy with trade. It seems that there is more interest in trading, like the petrol trade on the side roads from Nigeria, than working in factories. Even if you look at similar jobs, than factory work would have the same remuneration as compared to agriculture. But still they choose for other jobs than factory work.”

6.1.7. Gender distribution

Women represent 80% of the workforce in the cashew sector. Interviews were held with actors directly involved with cashew production, processing, trade unions and other relevant actors for the sector. Despite the relative presence of women in the sector, the vulnerable position of women became increasingly apparent during the course of the research activities. Consequently, CSOs focused on women empowerment and a female producer group were approached for a more in-depth understanding of the position of women in agriculture. The findings were coded under the subcategory 'gender'. The codes are presented in the hierarchical chart in Figure 13.

⁴¹ Group interview female producer group Medidji (05.02.2019), TechnoServe Benin (19.01.2019), ANAF (31.01.2019), CREDI-ONG (05.02.2019)

⁴² Interview with GIZ Benin (30.01.2019)

⁴³ Interview with TechnoServe Benin (19.01.2019)

⁴⁴ Interview Trade and Development Group (12.03.2019)

Figure 13: Coding references of the subcategory 'gender' (constructed in NVivo)



The code 'Women don't have access to finance' occurred mostly (15 references), followed by 'women don't have access to land' (9 references) and 'self-dependency is better for women' (8 references). Other codes include 'women are mostly involved within cashew', 'women are submissive' (6 references), 'women need more skills', 'women are breadwinner' (4 references), 'women need more autonomy', 'the position of women is improving', 'husbands need to be involved', 'women are not aware of their rights' (3 references), and 'family planning is a problem' (1 reference).

Gender imbalance starts at the first stage of the cashew chain, namely cashew production in rural areas. The general disadvantages that women face in rural environments, include the lack of access to finance and land. That is why self-dependency amongst women is highly promoted by CSOs. Through self-dependency, women are able to use their entrepreneurial skills and create multiple streams of income. This is needed, as in some areas, women contribute more than men to the total household income. The female farmer group Medidji denoted that about 85% of the household income was provided by women. Men occasionally contributed when they would find jobs in the city.⁴⁵

Despite this female breadwinner-role, the patrilineal tradition is in place. Men are considered natural leaders.⁴⁶ Women are considered submissive to their husband and hence do not have the possibility to express themselves.⁴⁷ The spokesperson of the female producer group Medidji stated (while there were some men sleeping on the background on their motorcycle and a bench):

"It is culture and tradition. Women can never take leadership. Women are born submissive and men are born leaders. Women rather stay home. Men should rule, even when they sleep"

⁴⁵ Group interview female producer group Medidji (05.02.2019)

⁴⁶ Group interview female producer group Medidji (05.02.2019)

⁴⁷ Interview with AKB (28.01.2019)

By further probing, the spokesperson argued:

“Men have ruling power. Even if the power is not concrete. Women are more powerful though, since they are breadwinner. If they come home, they will find their mother, not their husband.”

As a result of male-favored laws, women tend to become involved with a range of part time jobs and low-wage labor in the cashew sector. In cashew production, men are cashew park owner and women work as cashew collectors, intermediaries and processors. This means that as collector, women buy raw cashew kernels from their husbands and other family members to trade.⁴⁸ In the next stage, women are also widely represented, especially in the low-quality jobs of processing, including shelling, peeling and sorting. The average worker in factories is young and low-educated. A large part might be widowed or single-mothers, thus are fully breadwinner (GIZ and ACi, 2012). Women are expected to combine household tasks and childcare while working full time in processing. Cashew processing management perceive family planning as a problem and is not willing to facilitate maternity leave, but daycare for babies until the age of one is facilitated. At one factory, family planning was educated.⁴⁹

6.1.8. Conclusion

This section aimed at answering the sub question *What is the contextual embedding of wages in the Beninese cashew sector?* The findings present that coverage of minimum wages in cashew processing is high, but compliance is low. The Ministry perceives compliance-mechanisms as part of formalization of the cashew sector. Cashew processing factories maintain their own wage and labor policies, but there is a social attitude observed. Strong links between cultural dispositions on wages and work ethos are present. Employee commitment is linked with rural perceptions of factory work. This includes the loss of independency and low income. Rural livelihoods and income generation are valued and factory work is an active economic trade-off by women. Interestingly, women are breadwinner in some rural settings and compartmentalize household income and expense streams, and are responsible for other household and child-caring tasks. Hence, they are perceived as submissive. Gender imbalances are also projected in cashew processing factories, where women especially occupy low-quality jobs. A large proportion of the workforce are widowed or single-mothers, who are not able to make economic trade-offs freely. Factory management is looking for ways to recover the losses from the high employee turnover and low commitment, conversations with workers have not taken place.

6.2. Wage improvement opportunities from a stakeholder perspective

After presenting findings on the context of wages in the cashew sector, current social responsibility efforts in cashew processing will be discussed. Stakeholders increasingly gain an integrative role in corporate social responsibility and have the ability to contextualize data, contributing to accountability and transparency processes (Crowther et al., 2018). The consideration of trade union involvement in the cashew value chain will follow, which activates wage improvement opportunities, based on current social policies and mobilization strategies for cashew value chain stakeholders. The perspectives of cashew processing actors and the positions of cashew value chain actors are analyzed following a stakeholder analysis. The positions capture opposition or support towards trade union involvement within the cashew value chain and are formulated through interest and influence. The findings are based on secondary sources from cashew value chain stakeholders and a combination of the a priori category ‘trade union involvement’ and in vivo codes.

⁴⁸ Group interview with cashew producer group Tchachu (24.01.2019)

⁴⁹ Interview with Fludor factory management (31.01.2019)

6.2.1. Corporate social responsibility

At least three large cashew processing plants in Benin have social responsibility adopted in their business operations, especially in forms of philanthropy and extra facilities on site.⁵⁰ These plants aim at stimulating the local economy and work closely with farming communities.⁵¹ Two of them also use certification (Moringa, 2017).⁵² All facilities aim to cater employment and commitment of workers.⁵³ These facilities include transport service, daycare facilities for the newborns of women, and health care services. The health care services were provided for workers who became sick or injured during work⁵⁴ as indicated by one of the interviewees: *“There are sometimes accidents with hands and eyes, people can be treated within our clinic.”* One of the cashew factories was building accommodation, to host new workers during their first month of work, and for women who worked evening shifts and wouldn't be able to travel home. Another factory also offered meals two times a day and filtered drinking water.⁵⁵ This same factory also constructed boreholes in some villages and had a food program: around Christmas, the factory would distribute a few meal bags with cookies, rice and other dried products. The factory also celebrated Independence Day and other holidays.

A difference was noticed among processing factories in efforts to embed in local networks. The largest processing plant campaigned for mentality change at the local government level, which aimed at increasing employee commitment. This cashew processing factory was in operation since 2016 and recruited employees through local agencies. After their operations started, they soon experienced that workers stayed home without further notice. Through the recruitment agency, the management discovered that husbands denied their wives to work in processing. The factory manager stated:⁵⁶

“Because in this society, in this area especially, women are not working. The husbands do not allow the women to work full days. It was difficult for the men to leave them to work. In the beginning we faced that husbands prohibited the women to go to work after their first week of work. Fludor worked with local government on the issue in Bohicon and explained that it could help for development locally [families, women, economy]. Husbands were invited to see the work. At some point the husbands started to understand the work after such visits.”

Since half a year, the factory also started collaborating with a national trade union and moved training facilities to the villages where most workers lived. These examples show that the factory management saw locally embedding as a way for finding solutions for operating issues. A smaller processing factory who also expressed concerns of employee commitment, had troubles gaining trust amongst employees and suppliers of RCN.⁵⁷ This factory used to have a bad image, which was based on perceptions of 'capitalistic behavior' and non-involvement within the community. This affected relationships with producer organizations and their communities. Due to better price agreements and regular community visits, the image improved.⁵⁸ Another cashew processing factory was known for its local visibility. For example, they took part in local fairs to promote their products and were open for factory visitors.⁵⁹ Workers of the latter two factories are not (yet) represented by trade unions.

⁵⁰ Interview with Fludor headoffice (28.01.2019), Fludor factory management (31.01.2019) and Afokantan (25.01.2019)

⁵¹ Interviews with Afokantan (25.01.2019), GIZ Benin (30.01.2019), Trade and Development Group (12.03.2019)

⁵² Interview with Afokantan (25.01.2019)

⁵³ Interviews with Afokantan (25.01.2019), Fludor factory management (31.02.2019), GIZ Benin (30.01.2019), Trade and Development Group (12.03.2019)

⁵⁴ Interview with Fludor factory management (31.01.2019) and Afokantan (25.01.2019)

⁵⁵ Interview with Fludor factory management (31.01.2019)

⁵⁶ Interview with Fludor factory management (31.01.2019)

⁵⁷ Interview with Afokantan (25.01.2019) and GIZ (30.01.2019)

⁵⁸ Interview with GIZ Benin (30.01.2019)

⁵⁹ Interview with GIZ Benin (30.01.2019) and Kees van 't Klooster, PUM Consultants (25.02.2019)

6.2.2. Influence of Beninese trade unions in the cashew sector

One Beninese trade union confederation is involved in the cashew sector and a few others claim to cover other agricultural sectors. Representation of producers is becoming increasingly common, especially through producer organizations. Since privatization measures in 2010, trade unions have become focused on collaboration with producer organizations. This has allowed them to combine forces locally and recruit informal trade union members.⁶⁰ Usually, trade unions are concerned with promoting the rights of their members. As for the informal sector, this is a subordinate interest based on the lack of rights for informal workers, as well as their inability to fully pay membership fees.⁶¹ Workers in cashew processing are in a somewhat grey area; unclear is the actual presence of written contracts and payment is not according to the minimum wage, but per piece rate. Yet, this does not withhold UNION1 from starting a collaboration with the largest cashew processing plant, as of Autumn 2018, aimed at increasing employee commitment,⁶² and UNION1 and the national producer representative FENAPAB, to sensitize producers to formalize by leasing farming equipment.⁶³

These examples provides UNION1 the opportunity to acquire positive authority in the sector. Influence is still limited, since links are not existing with other plants and the distrust of producer organizations, expressed during interviews with the national producer organization, a regional producer organization, and multiple technical assistance actors.⁶⁴ Also the limited collective bargaining freedom and involvement in the minimum wage machinery challenges the influence of trade unions.⁶⁵

During an expert interview with CNV Internationaal it was mentioned:⁶⁶

“When we go to a country, we talk with a confederation. And these confederations, as part of their job, they talk with at the government, thus with the Ministry of Social Affairs, himself. If get the time to have a conversation, you can gain a perspective on that level on the economic development of a country and what the state of the trade unions is. An NGO will not have this opportunity. Your counterpart is by definition the Minister of Social Affairs. The chair of the confederation talks with the employers in the different sectors.”

Besides the referral to political links, the quote also denotes that trade unions have higher political participation than NGOs, thus more potential for political influence. A few trade unions emphasized that their influence at national level has been reduced since the new presidency of Thálon, in 2017.⁶⁷ This is related to the policy changes of the right to strike, limiting striking to ten days per year.

6.2.3. Stakeholder positioning on trade union involvement

This section will elaborate on the penetrability of the cashew value chain for trade unions, by analyzing the positions of stakeholders. Stakeholders are identified through expert elicitation and secondary sources of cashew value chain actors, including the African Cashew Alliance (ACi, 2010) and Dedras (Eteka and Faaki, 2017). This resulted in a selection of stakeholders, which are presented in Table 4 and can be divided over micro-level (locally operating companies and organizations), meso-level (actors

⁶⁰ Interviews with UNION1, UNION3, UNION2 and ITUC (01.02.2019)

⁶¹ Interviews with UNION1, UNION2, Kees van 't Klooster, PUM Consultants (25.02.2019), ITUC (01.02.2019), BCPA (15.01.2019)

⁶² Interview with Fludor headoffice (28.01.2019) and UNION1

⁶³ Interview with UNION1, group interview with cashew producer group Tchachu (24.01.2019)

⁶⁴ Interview with GIZ (30.01.2019), The Hunger Project Benin (30.01.2019), ANAF (31.01.2019), TechnoServe Benin (19.01.2019)

⁶⁵ Interviews with UNION1, UNION3, UNION5, UNION2

⁶⁶ Interview with Jan Ridder, CNV Internationaal (20.03.2019)

⁶⁷ Interviews with UNION5, UNION2, UNION1

with a specific range) and macro-level (nationally operating companies, organizations, ministries and international) of the Beninese cashew sector (ACi, 2010; Eteka and Faaki, 2017).

Table 4: Interviewed cashew stakeholders

Type of stakeholder	Level
Trade union confederations	Macro; national level
International trade union networks	Macro; international level
Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fishery	Macro; government level
Producer organizations national and regional	Meso; specific range
Inter-professional organization cashew sector	Macro; national level
Cashew processing companies	Micro; local level operation
Cashew buyer	Meso; specific range in Benin and other West-African countries
Technical assistance actors (assist in sector development, lobby for sector development and inclusive value chains)	Meso; specific range of operation
Civil society organizations (CSOs) (lobby for sector development and social projects)	Meso; specific range but mostly local operation

The conceptual idea of trade unions entering the cashew value chain as catalysts for living wage fostering might create opportunities or evoke reactions from other stakeholders active within the value chain. Therefore, it is important to capture the perspectives of stakeholders on trade union involvement regarding the cashew value chain. A hierarchy pie in NVivo was created, which presents the responses of fifteen stakeholders and five trade unions to *trade union involvement within the cashew value chain*. This is visualized in figure 14.

Nine stakeholders expressed that trade unions can be involved within the sector as a contribution to the formalization of the sector; especially with the formalization of producers and the organization and formalization of informal workers in cashew processing. This is interesting, since trade unions usually focus on wage labor and not on self-employed producers.⁶⁸ Different actors identified the skill of trade unions to educate producers and workers about their rights and to sensitize them towards formalization, for example through memberships of farmer cooperatives (also referred to as 'producer organizations') and collective bargaining for better working conditions including contracts for casual labor.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Interviews with Civic Engagement Alliance Benin (21.01.2019), Dedras (24.01.2019), UNION1, AKB (28.01.2019)

⁶⁹ Interviews with Civic Engagement Alliance Benin (21.01.2019), Dedras (24.01.2019), UNION1, AKB (28.01.2019)

Figure 14: Coding references of the subcategory 'trade union involvement in cashew value chain' (constructed in NVivo)

Perspectives on involvement cashew value chain		
Producers formalization	Not capable	Distrust of reasons
Informal workers organization and formalization	Interference	
	Focus on processors	

About 40% of the comments opposed the *involvement of trade unions in the cashew value chain* and these were provided by five actors, of nineteen interviewed stakeholders. This presents a strong attitude against the involvement could be observed. The comments made, implied general incapability of trade unions to represent agricultural sectors and having hidden agendas. A general distrust was also expressed towards the funding sources of trade unions and potential political connections linked to these sources.⁷⁰ It was also pointed out that trade unions are an interference within the sector, due to their unfamiliarity with the sector. The comments were especially made by stakeholders involved with the representation of agricultural producers, both male and female. Some examples of these perspectives are presented in the following comments:

*"The current trade unions do nothing at all - they do not produce anything. They just take. It is not fair that they receive funding. Those trade unions do nothing and they don't know the field. We have no idea of what is going on."*⁷¹

*"From my own perspective, trade unions should not come all the way here. They don't know the local problems. They don't know anything about the daily experience. External trade unions should not come down here. We want to set up our own union/association. To talk at local levels."*⁷²

⁷⁰ Interviews with GIZ Benin (30.01.2019), ANAF (31.01.2019), CREDI-ONG (05.02.2019)

⁷¹ Interview with ANAF (31.01.2019)

⁷² Interview with CREDI-ONG (31.01.2019)

*"The sector is strictly regulated now. If trade unions should interfere, they should interfere at the government level, not locally."*⁷³

*"The cooperative is not connected to a trade union; yet there are connections now between Fenapab and [UNION1]. [UNION1] is the single trade union who has ever reached out to a producer organization (!) for collaboration. UNION1 has advised on equipment and formalization. UNION1 wants to speak on behalf of Fenapab and the others."*⁷⁴

These quotes indicate a certain misunderstanding of rural livelihood; almost a perceived distance towards the macro level where trade unions operate. The politics of trade unions also received annotations. This observed 'distance' might relate to past experiences with trade unions, but this could not be further identified. A general distrusting attitude towards companies and trade unions could also explain the comments, which was suggested during one of the expert interviews.⁷⁵ All interviewed trade unions were supportive of the idea of involvement within the cashew value chain including the national tripartite, Conseil National Dialogue Social (CNDS), some even inspired by the work of UNION1 and referred to the fact that they actually have to play a role in rural settings for example by the following comment:⁷⁶

"But it is not well organized at government level. Money was used for other issues. Trade unions have to play a role here. It is possible to change the mindsets."

The above has provided the positions of stakeholders towards *trade union involvement within the cashew value chain*. The findings present an identified task for trade unions in formalization strategies of the cashew sector. This finding will therefore be included within the further analysis of stakeholder positioning and the formulation of living wage strategies. To further analyze interests and influences used in processes of decision-making and implementation of living wage, and strategies for the management of stakeholder positions, stakeholders are mapped in the following subsection.

6.2.4. Stakeholder interest and influence

The influence of stakeholders was identified based on cashew value analyses by Dedras (Eteka and Faaki, 2017) and ACi (2010), and interview summaries. The analysis considers characteristics of the stakeholders regarding the involvement of trade unions in the cashew value chain, as the first step for living wage fostering. An overview is made of the interviewed stakeholders: their activities, their level of interest regarding *formalization of the cashew sector* and *trade union involvement within the cashew sector*, and their influence on decision-making processes within the cashew sector.

- The interest of stakeholders is determined in forms of opposition, support and non-mobilization. The support or opposition of actors included in a project, policy or program highly decides the success or failure (Varvasovszky and Brugha, 2000a). Support or opposition is analyzed by the given perspectives and attitudes of interviewed stakeholders on trade union involvement within the cashew sector. Non-mobilization indicates both opposing and supportive arguments.
- The influence is captured by a brief discussion on network density, including horizontal and vertical links, and financial support to projects and programs in a particular sector. The density of networks in which stakeholders are embedded enhances the circulation of norms, values and shared information; highly interconnected contexts can embed institutional norms and financial support, which requires implicit mobilization (Oliver, 1991; Varvasovszky and Brugha, 2000).

⁷³ Interview with The Hunger Project Benin (30.01.2019)

⁷⁴ Group interview with cashew producer group Tchachu (24.01.2019)

⁷⁵ Interview with Kees van 't Klooster, PUM Consultants (25.02.2019)

⁷⁶ UNION3

An attempt is made to identify relevant stakeholders within the cashew value chain of Benin and describe their interest and influence. In Appendix 4, the full analysis is presented and a compromised version is visualized in Table 5. The structure of the matrix table is based on the Stakeholder Model visualization by Varvasovszky and Brugha (2000, p. 5). National and international trade unions are also included within the overview and stakeholder map and will be further discussed in the next chapter to avoid repetition of perspectives. Two stakeholders might present a one-sided perspective and are marked with an *. The first includes the cashew buyer, who has an explicit CSR policy, thus might be more susceptible to considering trade union involvement within the chain. The second are the cashew processing plants that were interviewed; although they are quite embedded within Benin, they both have international investors and foreign management. This might not be representable for Beninese cashew processors.

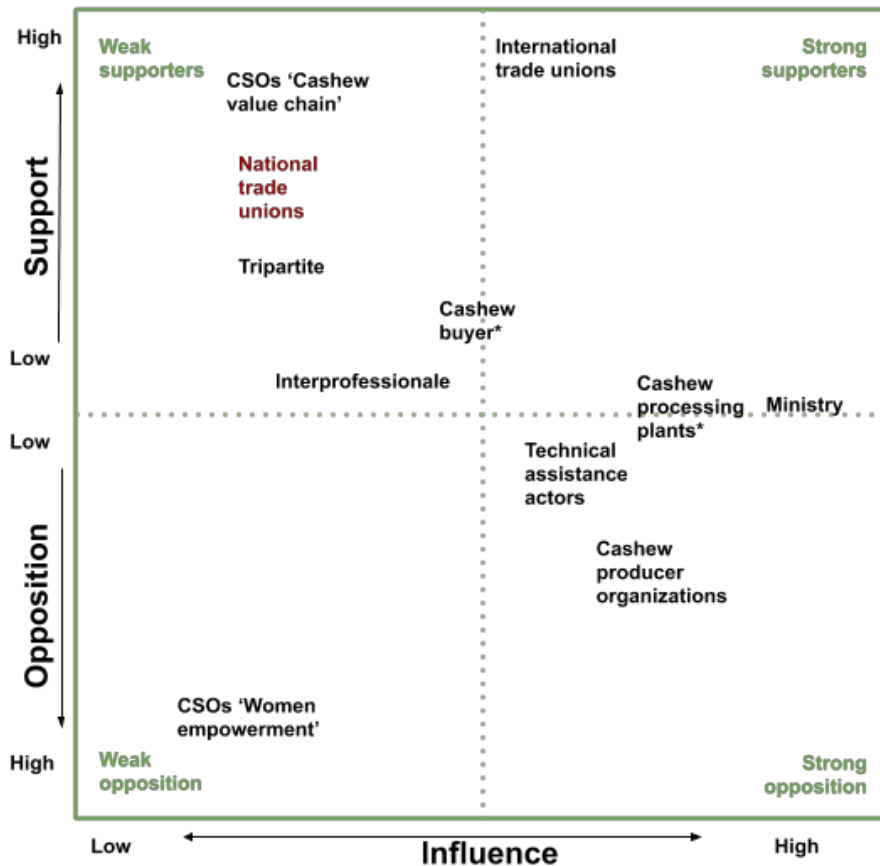
Table 5: Overview of stakeholder positions

Stakeholders Cashew Sector Benin	Stakeholder characteristics				
	Involvement in the issue	Level within cashew sector	Influence on the issue	Position in cashew sector	Interest of actor
National trade unions	<p>The president of the <i>intersyndicale</i>, UNION1, collaborates with producer organizations and processing plants, aims at formalization of sector and improve labor conditions</p> <p>Other trade unions are involved with general lobby and advocacy of labor rights in most sectors and are part of the <i>intersyndicale</i> (except one). Through the president trade union, they are interested in involvement within the sector</p>	Macro	Low-medium	Supportive	High
International trade unions	<p>CNV Internationaal and ITUC have affiliates / key partners in Benin. Labor conditions within the cashew sector are one of the priorities for CNV Internationaal and ITUC prioritizes formalization of agriculture and improved labor conditions</p>	Meso	Medium	Supportive	Medium-high
Government: Ministry of Agriculture	<p>The government has announced cashew as the second national crop and has formulated a Governmental Action Plan 2017-2021 to formalize the sector</p>	Macro	High	Non-mobilized	Low-medium

Interprofessionale: IFA	The IFA is the inter-professional organization of the cashew sector and aims at organizing and formalizing the sector	Macro	Medium	Supportive	Low-medium
Cashew producer organizations	Cashew producer organizations are principally bottom-up movements who support the Governmental Action Plan for the formalization of the cashew sector.	Meso	Medium-high	Non-mobilized / Opposed	Low-medium
Cashew processing plants*	The cashew processing plants provide employment and industry within Benin. Investors are both Beninese and international.	Micro	Medium-high	Supportive	High
Trade agency*	Invest in cashew processing companies, procurement of cashew and play a role in value distribution within the chain	Meso	Medium	Supportive	Medium
Technical assistance actors	Assist in sector development and formalization, lobby for sector development and fair value distribution. They are embedded in local and national networks	Meso	Medium-high	Non-mobilized	Low
Civil society: cashew value chain development	Lobby for inclusive value chains and civil society strengthening	Meso	Low-medium	Supportive	Medium
Civil society: rural women empowerment	Lobby for sector development and women empowerment	Micro	Low	Opposed	Low-medium

The description of stakeholder characteristics has led to a problem-frame stakeholder map presented in Figure 15 in order to visualize the positions of stakeholders (Anderson et al. 1999). Such a problem-frame is helpful in identifying problem definitions for living wage fostering by trade unions and to identify coalitions for living wage strategies (Bryson, 2004). The following will elaborate on the positioning of stakeholders.

Figure 15: Problem-frame stakeholder map with stakeholder positions (authors' own)



Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fishery

The government is having a keen interest in the cashew sector and introduced the Government Action Plan 2017-2021. The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fishery is in charge of developing objectives and strategies for production enhancement and increase domestic processing, two of which are to double domestic production and increase domestic processing tenfold by 2021. Formalization of the sector is one of its key strategies. The Ministry has identified the cashew inter-professional organization (IFA) as one of its mechanisms to do so, including the national cashew producer organization (FENAPAB).⁷⁷ The Ministry supposedly did efforts to include civil society within the development process. These efforts are perceived as inconsistent by CSOs and trade unions.⁷⁸ As for working conditions within the sector, during an interview with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fishery, it was pointed out that the Ministry is not intervening in working conditions within the sector as long as it is not formalized. The future might hold potential, especially working conditions and standards within processing plants.⁷⁹ This indicates some interest within the involvement of trade unions, but not in the near future. There is not a clear indication of opposition or support. As for influence, this is significantly higher than any other stakeholder. The Ministry is in charge of formulating sector policy, thus having an influence on decision-making processes at the national level. Ideally, trade union involvement within the sector will provide counter weight to political processes within the sector, which will request at some point reactions from the Ministry. Impact of the issue on the Ministry is therefore low-medium.

⁷⁷ Interview with Ministry of Agriculture and Fishery (01.02.2019), GIZ Benin (30.01.2019), FENAPAB (30.01.2019)

⁷⁸ Interview with Civic Engagement Alliance Benin (21.01.2019)

⁷⁹ Interview with Ministry of Agriculture and Fishery (01.02.2019)

Cashew inter-professional organization

The Cashew Nut Inter-Professional Association (IFA) is also seen as the cashew sector 'family'. It is supposedly the first in West-Africa in such a format⁸⁰ and it is a non-profit association founded in 2016. The IFA aims at facilitating dialogue and mediation between different actors within the cashew sector (producers, processors, exporters and buyers) and the government, thus a formalized social dialogue.⁸¹ Currently, the Ministry pressures IFA to improve its good governance, transparency and accountability, and to push its associated actors to formalize the cashew sector. This has especially impact on FENAPAB, the national producer organization, who is in charge of increasing the coverage of Beninese cashew farmers to 80% in 2021 (in 2017 estimated at 10%⁸²).⁸³ IFA is working together with FENAPAB on sector procedures. During the previous presidency some agreements were made, but this process had to start over again during the current President Thalon.⁸⁴ The focus of the current policy proposition is on protecting domestic processing through marketing, by limiting the number of buyers and create a system in which orders for RCN can be placed. Another proposition is focused on redirecting taxes into funding for the sector and formalization of the sector.⁸⁵ Although IFA is mediating and dialogue partner between sector actors and the Government, the Ministry presents IFA as an operating arm of the Government. Influence of IFA is limited to positions that align with governmental priorities and FENAPAB. Besides, IFA is especially focused on sector procedures and less concerned with socio-economic development. Support towards trade union involvement within the sector might increase when it significantly leads to formalization of the sector.⁸⁶

Cashew producer organizations

Besides numerous local producer organizations, also called cooperatives, there is national system of organizing cashew producers, thus small-scale farmers. The national level is directed by FENAPAB. FENAPAB covers four cashew producing regions, namely Atacoura-Donga (North-West), Borgou-Alibori (North-East), Collines-Zou (Central) and Plateau-Ouémé (South-West). Each of these regions has regional producer organizations and there are 34 community producer organizations. At the village level, there are 600 cooperatives, also referred to as CUPA.⁸⁷ FENAPAB collaborates with IFA on sector procedures and works closely with technical assistance agencies on production enhancement. Besides close connections in work, the president of the IFA is also Secretary General at the FENAPAB. Contrary to the IFA, FENAPAB has a profit motive, regulated by the West-African OHADA legislation.⁸⁸ The government's objective is 80% formalization of all producers affiliated with FENAPAB.⁸⁹ Between local producer organizations under FENAPAB, there is direct collaboration with processing companies Fludor, Afokantan and Tolaro.⁹⁰ FENAPAB also collaborates in programs of technical assistance agencies, including GIZ and TechnoServe, and CSOs focused on cashew sector development, including Dedras (Ton et al., 2018).

Noticeable are the strong feelings by producer organizations and technical assistance to producers locally on trade union involvement within the cashew sector as discussed in the previous section.⁹¹ The general attitude towards trade unions as interference within the sector might change over time. Contacts

⁸⁰ Interview with FENAPAB (30.01.2019)

⁸¹ Interview with FENAPAB (30.01.2019)

⁸² Interview with IFA (30.01.2019) and GIZ Benin (30.01.2019)

⁸³ Interview with Ministry of Agriculture and Fishery (01.02.2019)

⁸⁴ Interview with FENAPAB (30.01.2019)

⁸⁵ Interview with GIZ Benin (30.01.2019)

⁸⁶ Interview with Ministry of Agriculture and Fishery (01.02.2019)

⁸⁷ Interview with GIZ Benin (30.01.2019)

⁸⁸ Interview with FENAPAB (30.01.2019)

⁸⁹ Fiche signalétique sur le Program National de Développement de la Filière Anacarde, Ministère de L'Agriculture, de L'élevage et de la Pêche, République du Benin, March 2018

⁹⁰ Interview with GIZ Benin (30.01.2019), Afokantan (25.01.2019), Fludor (28.01.2019), Interview with Kees van 't Klooster, PUM Consultants (25.02.2019). Trade and Development Group (12.03.2019)

⁹¹ Interview with CREDI-ONG (05.02.2019); GIZ Benin (30.01.2019), The Hunger Project Benin (30.01.2019), ANAF (31.01.2019)

are established between UNION1 and FENAPAB, thanks to efforts of UNION1 to provide training to producers on formalization through local cooperatives.⁹² Some actors emphasize that trade unions should solely focus on processors.⁹³ These strong reactions might be explained by jealousy and distrust, on staff salaries and the manner of working by trade unions might also refer to a clash in development agendas⁹⁴, a phenomenon in developing countries (Brinkerhoff, 1999), which will be elaborated on under the subsection 'technical assistance'.

Similar to the relationship Government and IFA, FENAPAB is also pushed from above to formalize the sector. In usual circumstances, producer organizations are bottom-up movements of group selling by farmers and the national push is perhaps slightly unconventional.⁹⁵ Bottom-up movements possess political interest and have the power to mobilize actors⁹⁶. In case of FENAPAB, the government has a major interest in FENAPAB as vector for the formalization of the sector, thus FENAPAB aspires some influence. Also, FENAPAB has a large vertical network of regional, community and village level producer organizations, receives financial and technical support of (international) technical assistance agencies, and has interest in, and influence on processing plants. Direct agreements with plants are made in order to buy through regional organizations and local cooperatives, and there is the ability to provide in domestic processing or look for foreign buyers.⁹⁷ Producers seem eager to enter the international market including higher prices but against the risk of market fluctuations rather than participation in a more secure, but less profitable local chain (on the short term).⁹⁸ Bargaining power might increase when the sector formalizes further and the Ministry carries through plans for a national order system of RCN.⁹⁹ Producer organizations, especially at national level, can decide lobby against representation by trade unions locally, if this in the way of their sector development plans.

Cashew processing companies

During the past six years, semi-mechanized and mechanized cashew processing has been introduced in Benin by both Beninese and international owners. Afokantan opened in 2006 (started with manual processing) (Afokantan, 2019), after which Tolaro Global followed in 2010 (Moringa, 2014), NAD and Co in 2010, Kake in 2011 (not in function in the year 2018), Fludor in 2016, and ANI in 2018. The delicate process of handing cashews was always done by women manually. Currently, also men become interested in processing jobs, especially in mechanical processing. Usually, men are more involved with higher-quality jobs including semi-automated mechanical work and the management of (units within) the factory. A few processors have been exploring pre-financing of producers, but this has been considered a high risk in a setting of volatile prices, due to default of loan repayment (Ton et al., 2018).

Fludor (Bohicon, 115 Kilometers from Cotonou, capacity installed is 15,000 raw cashew nuts), Afokantan (Tchaourou, 59 kilometers from Parakou, capacity installed is 2,000 metric ton raw cashew nuts, soon adding another 1,000 metric ton), and Tolaro Global (Thourou, 9 kilometers from Parakou, capacity installed is 3,000 metric tons raw cashew nuts) present most links with other cashew organizations and companies, based on interviews¹⁰⁰ and sector assessments (ACi, 2010; Dedras, 2017; Ton et al., 2018). As mentioned in the previous section, employee commitment intervenes with production capacity. Principally, processing plants are the first step in formalization of wage labor.¹⁰¹ Fludor is the first processing company to start collaboration with a trade union, aimed at organizing their

⁹² Interview with UNION1, Dedras (24.01.2019), group interview with Cashew Producer Organization Tchachu (24.01.2019)

⁹³ Interview with ITUC (01.02.2019), FENAPAB (30.01.2019)

⁹⁴ Interview with Boko Timoté, BCPA (06.02.2019), ANAF (31.01.2019), CREDI-ONG (05.02.2019), GIZ Benin (30.01.2019)

⁹⁵ Interview with GIZ Benin (30.01.2019)

⁹⁶ Interview with Jan Ridder, CNV Internationaal (20.03.2019)

⁹⁷ Interview with GIZ Benin (30.01.2019)

⁹⁸ Interview with Trade and Development Group (12.03.2019), GIZ Benin (30.01.2019)

⁹⁹ Interview with Ministry of Agriculture and Fishery (01.02.2019)

¹⁰⁰ Interview with GIZ Benin (30.01.2019) and TechnoServe Benin (21.01.2019)

¹⁰¹ Interview with Conseil National du Dialogue Social (18.01.2019)

labor and increasing employee commitment.¹⁰² Tolaro Global works closely with FENAPAB and technical assistance agencies GIZ (Germany) and TechnoServe (US), Afokantan works closely with Dedras (CSO, funded by the Dutch NGOs) and Fludor receives technical assistance from TechnoServe. Fludor has Nigerian investors (TGI Group), Afokantan has Dutch investors (80% White Bird International, part of TDG, and 20% Incluvest).¹⁰³ Tolaro Global is part of Moringa, a philanthropic investment by the Swiss Edmond de Rothschild Private Equity (EDR PE) and the French ONF International (Moringa, 2014).

Influence of RCN processing companies also depends on their embedding in local networks and involvement with other sector organizations and institutions. The interest of cashew processing companies seems focused producing at full capacity, increasing profit and employment creation. This is dependent on factors of cashew kernel production, employment and national legislation (including taxes on raw cashew export and domestic reinvestment of taxes). Formalization can be of high interest therefore. The companies have an obvious influence trade union involvement and wage-setting, as they are in the position to set the bar for other cashew plants but are not really interested in higher operation costs as share of profit margin. They have significant influence on formalization, based on their first footstep towards industrialization in Benin, their connections on both local (producers and CSOs) and national / international (trade unions, IFA, FENAPAB, international investors, international NGOs), and their influence on domestic processing, a major interest of the Beninese government.

Cashew buyer

The involved cashew buyer invests in cashew processing companies, procurement of cashew and play a role in value distribution within the chain. There is collaboration with technical assistance agencies and CSOs, for example Afokantan and Tolaro Global. This specific cashew buyer also involved through philanthropy; it provides subsidy for local development through Afokantan. This contributes to investment in machinery. Only one cashew buyer was responsive during this case study research, therefore the scope is limited.

Technical assistance

Different development cooperation projects are involved within the Benin cashew value chain for the provision of technical assistance, especially the GIZ with ComCashew (Germany),¹⁰⁴ the Civic Engagement Alliance (CEA; Netherlands),¹⁰⁵ TechnoServe with BeninCajù and USADF (USA).¹⁰⁶ Funding for technical assistance is not always stable and coordination of activities seems absent, while the objective of cashew sector development is mutual.¹⁰⁷ This is perhaps due to the varying development agendas, as indicated by Christian Muenkner, GIZ:¹⁰⁸

“Not too many actors should be involved, especially since the approaches to the sector are differing; for example the Dutch (aid for trade) versus the German (development cooperation and empowerment). If you would look at Dedras, you would never know for sure if they are working on local empowerment or just want to present figures and ‘return on investment’. Dedras is Dutch-funded.”

Internationally-funded actors providing technical assistance have medium to high influence on trade union involvement within the sector, while their interest is low. Influence and interest can be coupled with funding and varying agendas of international agencies and donor countries (Brinkerhoff, 1999).

¹⁰² Interview Fludor Headoffice (28.01.2019), UNION1

¹⁰³ Interview with Trade and Development Group (12.03.2019)

¹⁰⁴ Interview with GIZ Benin (30.01.2019)

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Civic Engagement Alliance Benin (21.01.2019)

¹⁰⁶ Interview with TechnoServe (19.01.2019)

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Kees van 't Klooster, PUM Consultants (25.02.2019)

¹⁰⁸ Interview with GIZ Benin (30.01.2019)

Interest in sector formalization is high, and dependent of Beninese governance and interest within the sector and the general development agenda. It might therefore be that interest and positions are temporary.

Civil society

During the research activities, a few CSOs were interviewed to gather a sneak peak of gender roles, livelihood and culture and tradition in rural areas. Putting trade unions aside, the Beninese civil society actors seemed generally focused on relatively demarcated issues and often receive funding of international actors, such as CREDI-ONG (access to finance in Vallée du Situtangu), AKB (women empowerment in sheanut processing in Parakou), ANAF (access to finance for women in agriculture, centered in Bohicon), the Hunger Project (access to finance and women empowerment throughout Benin), Dedras (cashew sector development and relationships producers and processors), and CEA (international partnership with a program in Benin on civil society empowerment in cashew value chains).

The previous sub section discussing the role of technical assistance, lined out that agendas are varying even if the main objective is similar. This has also been observed with civil society organizations, with international funders. CSOs present a variety of perspectives on the involvement of trade unions in the cashew sector. Interest is especially low amongst CSOs focused on women empowerment in agriculture, perceiving trade unions as some kind of competition.¹⁰⁹ Amongst CSOs focused on sector development, the interest in trade union involvement and perhaps collaboration is significantly higher. Yet influence is limited, due to the micro level at which most operate and limited financial resources. Civil society actors have the tendency to diverge over time, due to changing international development agendas (Brinkhoff, 1999), which might lead to changing interest when favorable.

6.2.5. Conclusion

This subsection aimed to answer the question *What are opportunities for wage improvement towards a living wage from a stakeholder perspective?* Promoting workers' rights is complex and should not restrict livelihood opportunities of poor workers, nor increase labor costs. This means that choices of poor people are further reduced. Stakeholders of the Beninese cashew value chain have shown some flexibility in positioning, by indicating certain conditions for trade union involvement. Different stakeholders imply opposition for trade union involvement, for reasons of conflicting interests and distrust. Actors with some to high influence present to interest if in line with their strategies, such as formalization of the sector. For cashew processing factories and the cashew buyer, trade union involvement presents a kind of business case, based on the generated employee commitment and contribution to social values. The following will conclude the sector strategies for stakeholder mobilization, based on the findings.

Firstly, the organization of casual processing workers presents itself at first sight as a low-hanging fruit strategy: for cashew processing factories, employee commitment is a major topic of interest. Organization of casual workers has direct effects on production capacity, employee turnover, and revenue with the potential for reinvestment in wages. Yet, there are underlying processes that challenge the organization of workers, such as the lack of formal contracts, market competition for cashew marketing and processing, and perhaps disinterest amongst other (not interviewed) processing factories in Benin. Technical assistance actors denote that current level of wages in processing have serious effects on both livelihoods and quality of cashew processing. In Benin, some technical assistance actors and experts also depicted living wage from a value-chain perspective as part of inclusive value chains which can be safeguarded through certification.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with CREDI-ONG (05.02.2019), ANAF (31.01.2019)

Secondly, formalization has been frequently brought up and seems a key activity for all stakeholders. Opposed stakeholders with (some) influence even indicated *formalization* as a condition for trade union involvement. Formalization can happen through different ways as indicated by the stakeholders. An example is exchange of equipment and the provision of training. Transparency on intentions and funding is also perceived as important, because this is currently a source of distrust. Trade unions increase transparency on policies and programs and their funding sources, for example through online and offline media channels.

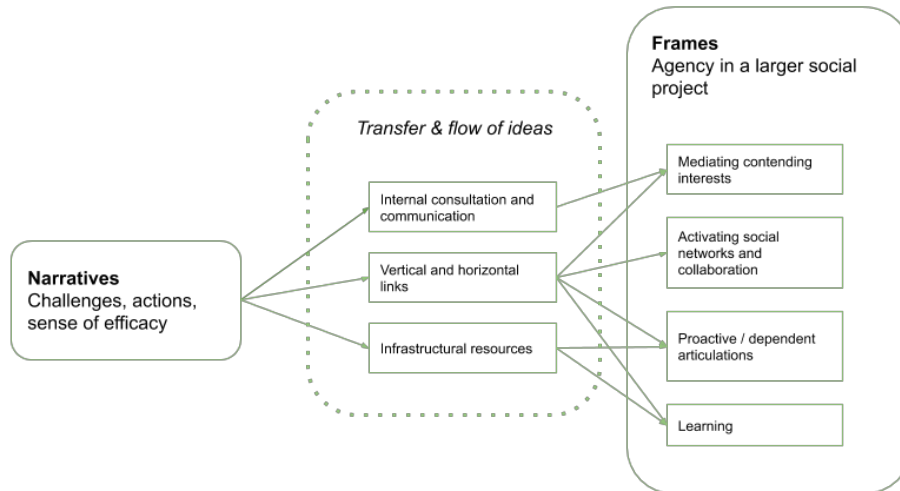
A final strategy are collective lobby which involves a multi-stakeholder strategy. Trade unions can seek collaborating structures with CSOs and technical assistance focused on the sector development and seek knowledge-exchange and unify in lobby activities for improved sector policy. Such policy should be especially focused on redistributive strategies including an order system for limiting foreign buyers, tax reinvestment for the sector, and protection of the marketing cashew marketing price. IFA, as agency which represents multiple perspectives, can play in role in empowering the lobby directed at Ministry level. Important stakeholders include the NGO Dedras, who is a partner of one trade union and focuses on formalization and organization of both producers and processing plants. This link can enhance the relationship between the two cashew actors. Also the processing companies Fludor and Afokantan play a role based on their interest in direct buying from cashew producers. Regional and national producer organizations and technical assistance actors represent a major part of the sector, especially through their voice on behalf of producers. Interest might increase when trade unions contribute to formalization and development in the sector, including equipment lease and training on formalization and sector policy.

6.3. Trade union renewal in Benin: power resources and strategic capabilities

Finally, the renewal capacity of trade unions is analyzed following the model of Lévesque and Murray (2010; 2013), with an elaborate notion of trade union narratives and frames. Trade union leadership plays a significant role in strategic capabilities, due to the ability to articulate autonomy. The latter is important in sensing agency, which is important for trade unions to participate in a larger social project. An analysis of trade union power and strategic resources is relevant to the wider debate on the decline of trade union power and the future of trade unionism. This decline plausibly relates to the inability of unions and their leaders to adapt to changing labor patterns globally. Such adaptation equals renewal of strategies, which can be explained through resources and resourcefulness of unions (Lévesque and Murray, 2010).

Trade union power increases when multiple capacities are identified and interplay (Lévesque and Murray, 2013). Trade union power resources mostly refer to the *resources* of a trade union and strategic capabilities indicate *resourcefulness* of unions. The latter is easier to diagnose and is especially found through analyzing trade union leadership. Power resources on the other hand serve as the underlying empowering force. During interviews with trade unions, some capacities were easier to observe than others. Even though narratives and frames were not significantly identified in literature on formula and negotiated approaches for living wage implementation (Miller and Williams, 2009), communicating through narratives appeared to be a major part of conversations with trade unions. Examples of narratives were trade union history and recent developments. Lévesque and Murray (2013) highlight the importance of capturing narratives and frames. Narratives and frames are connected through the transfer and flow of ideas, which result in the agency in a larger social project. The latter facilitates trade union renewal. This was presented in Figure 10, which is recalled below.

Figure 10 (recalled from Chapter 4): Links identified between narratives, frames and other capacities (based on theory of Lévesque and Murray, 2013)



Murray and Lévesque (2013, p. 1) state that “Any encounter with union activists releases a flood of stories that inform the way they think.” This also appeared the situation in Benin, where leaders are outspoken, rhetorically powerful persons. This indicated sense of identity and efficacy capacity. As such, a second analysis was done on the frame development and agency, as indications of trade union renewal. Besides *agency in a larger social project*, frames to be identified included frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation. Especially the latter two were distinguished.

6.3.1. Capacities of Beninese trade unions

During this case study research, semi-structured interviews were held with leaders or executives of five trade union confederations. Two sets of questions were applicable. The first framed general background and trade union activities (main activities and challenges, agricultural involvement and cashew sector involvement) aiming to capture trade union capacities. The second framed general challenges of the trade union landscape (collective bargaining, accountability and transparency, unification efforts, informal employment) in order to capture trade union behavior and attitudes, and trigger stories and frames. The latter will be elaborated in greater detail in subsection 6.3.2. and 6.3.3.

Table 6 summarizes internal solidarity, network embeddedness, infrastructural resources, learning, intermediating capacity, and articulation. This table is adapted from Lévesque and Murray (2013, p. 3-5 and p. 14), who present trade union capacities. In this case study, *infrastructural resources* are added, because links are observed with *articulating*. The *ability to identify the capacities* is also included, since not all capacities were able to be identified and should be weighted less based on the lack narrating evidence. Unfortunately, online secondary sources are very limited on trade unions, except for Beninese news articles, ITUC referral and websites (only one trade union has an accessible website). During interviews, documentation was requested. Availability of documents was limited to policy documents, which were in French. Due to the limited time frame, it was not possible to hire a textual translator for detailed translation of documentation.

Some interview data was sensitive, and the assessment of trade union capacities requires an objective and critical view. It was decided to anonymize the unions to UNION1 - UNION5. An extensive assessment of trade union categories and codes can be found in Appendix 5. Table 11 is a summary of the findings. It first lists the focus areas of the unions, international connections of the unions (indicating a wider frame reference), online media visibility (e.g. website, visibility in news items), and affiliation with

ITUC (indicating a wider frame of reference and commitment to democratic and solidarity principles). Next, trade union power resources and strategic capabilities are listed, indicating 'unidentified', 'low', 'medium' and 'high' occurrence. The trade union capacities are summarized below the table.

Table 6: Identified trade union capacities

Trade union capacity	UNION1	UNION2	UNION3	UNION4	UNION5	Ability to identify based on trade union narratives and frames
Focus areas	Started in 1992. Sectors of focus include health, education, national post, transport, agri-food, informal, construction,	Started in 1974. Fishermen, traders, motor taxis, barbers (hairdressers), and mechanics	All sectors within the public sector: Building, road construction architecture public work / public administration, primary education, vocational training, environment, technique, professors	Started in the 1990s.	Started in 1982. Public sectors and informal sectors of transport, truck drivers, and art / crafts	N/a
Associated international organizations	CNV Internationaal (Netherlands)	ABVV-FGTB and DGD (Belgium)	Unknown	FES (German), ABVV-FGTB and DGD (Belgium)	Unknown	N/a
Online media visibility	Yes; website, Facebook, website and online documents	Limited online documentation and news articles	Online news articles	Limited online documentation, online articles are present (ORTB, 2016) but the website is taken offline	Online news articles	N/a
ITUC affiliate (ITUC, 2012)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	N/a
Trade union members (ITUC, 2012)	129,470	51,000	Unknown	60,000	Unknown	N/a
Trade union power resource						

Internal solidarity	Unidentified	Low; lack of internal communication is identified	Unidentified	Unidentified	Medium; identification of internal committees	Low
Network embeddedness	High; high density of network resources, diverse linkages and proactive efforts to develop them	Medium; high density of network resources, some vertical linkages; no efforts to develop them further	Unidentified	Medium; high density of network resources and vertical links; proactive articulation for further collaboration	Low; actively distrust collaboration structures on horizontal structures. Vertical links are minimal; internal committees	Medium
Infrastructural resources	High; indicates different funding streams, works with different membership fee structures, presents democratic processes, is involved in informal sectors (including cashew) and has a wide range of social and trade union programs. Policies and programs can be found online.	Medium/high; has different membership fee structures. Is active in gradual transformation of informal economy (ITUC, 2017) and has a social program.	Low/medium; is working on member fee structures for informal sector and a social program	Low; experiences major funding challenges and therefore has not implemented most of its plans. Is active in gradual transformation of informal economy (ITUC, 2017). Indicates that it has different communication channels which are adapted to illiteracy and women.	Low/medium; is experiencing funding issues, lack of training, has different communication channels, and focuses on agriculture and has social programs.	Medium; not all aspects could be identified (material, human, organizational, policies and programs)
Trade union strategic capability						
Intermediating	High; activates different social networks, by being part of agricultural partnership (cashew), health care	Low; is actively part of <i>intersyndicale</i> , but prefers striking	Medium; is part of <i>intersyndicale</i> , prefers debating over collective striking	Medium; Approaches internal networks for funding, is part of the <i>intersyndicale</i> , prefers	Low; trade union isolates itself from unification of activities, refuses to collaborate	High

	programs, lobbies for collective action, and leads unification of activities in the <i>intersyndicale</i>	over debating		debating over collective striking (ABP, 2018b)	with companies, prefers striking over intermediation, but seeks assistance from international networks.	
Articulating	High; articulates proactive ideologies and activities and connects networks to their own and <i>intersyndicale</i>	Medium; relies on government but articulates proactive strategies towards the informal sector organization	Medium; relies on tax policies regarding formalizing strategies, but is presenting informal sector strategies	Low; relies a lot on funding and memberships	Medium; relies a lot on government, but this empowers the union to also formulate strategies for education, healthcare, and women rights as a countervailing movement	High
Learning	Medium; is extending its frame by getting into the field and learn	unidentified	unidentified	unidentified	Low; is known for its lack of training	Low

There are significant differences amongst trade unions; the first interviewed trade union UNION1, also president of the *intersyndicale* in Benin, indicated relatively strong power resources and strategic capabilities (except the unidentified *internal solidarity*). It seems the largest union in member count, is ITUC affiliate and is the only trade union that has a functioning website on which extensive documentation is provided on its organizational structure, policies and programs. The visibility in the media increases transparency of trade union activities, but also increases opportunities for participation in a larger social project, due to the relative high accessibility and visibility of the union.

Unlike most other unions, UNION1 does not elaborate on stories, but rather pragmatically articulates the challenges faced, what their role must be and how collaboration with a variety of actors helps in implementing strategies. Articulating proactive strategies is important for the creation of solidarity amongst both formal and informal employees. This is strengthened by participation in sector-specific partnership structures, which are observed with UNION1, UNION2 and UNION4. Participation in multi-stakeholder networks enhances the transmission of ideas, due to ability to put sector-challenges in perspective and create frames of references for informal worker groups.

The intermediating skills of UNION1 are noteworthy and celebrated by other national and international trade unions interviewed. Effectiveness of unions increases significantly by active involvement in unification processes in horizontal networks and reduces chances of fragmentation and proliferation, a phenomenon in Francophone African countries (Laurijssen, 2010). UNION2 follows UNION1, and especially seems to have power resources (infrastructural resources and network embeddedness) but

is not able to use these to empower its strategic capabilities, especially intermediating skills. UNION 3 and 4 are weak in power resources, but have some intermediating and articulating skills. UNION5 isolates itself from collaborating and intermediating structures and settings including the *intersyndicale*, however this unions possesses strong narrative resources.

6.3.2. Power resource: Narratives

Encountering trade union activists opens a box of stories which represent the way of thinking of actors. This stock of stories engulf new trade unionists, evoking corresponding or rejecting reactions (Lévesque and Murray, 2010). The stories reflect values, projects, and repertoires of actions, either past or present. Past repertoires of actions are a representation of efficacy about the actions undertaken, which have a powerful influence on future actions. Narratives as a power resources can be seen as *fortifying myths*, which have an ideological element of accepting defeat. When political opportunities arise, trade unions sustain belief in their efficacy (Lévesque and Murray, 2010). The stories of trade union leaders help in identifying such fortifying myths as a power resource. These represent itself through values, projects and past and present repertoires of actions. Past repertoires of action come in the form of stories of defeat and victory. A disconnect between efficacy and the story might indicate a decline power, especially when fortifying myths remain focused on old habits and are not adapted to recent developments.

In Benin, there are seven national trade union confederations, of which six are connected to an *intersyndicale*, a national structure for intermediation and unifying of activities. Five trade unions were interviewed, four connected to the *intersyndicale*. The fifth national confederation distanced itself from unification of trade union activities. It had communist principles and was hence called 'le rouge'. *Le rouge* was one of the first Beninese union, founded in 1982 and supposedly the largest union in Benin during the past decades. Therefore, this union was included for analysis, as essential piece of trade union history. This union history was explicitly observed during interviewing UNION5, by a strong representation of fortifying myths. Other narrative resources included 'shared understandings': what do trade unions consider as challenges for trade unionism, and 'repertoires of action': what do trade unions consider as solutions to challenges.

Such narratives in forms of problem defining, repertoires of action and sense of efficacy indicate an increase or decrease in union power. An increase in power is identified by the connection made between these narrative resources. These are coupled with other trade union resources, including internal solidarity. Internal solidarity is linked to the mobilization of new repertoires lead to collective frames of reference, leading to new repertoires of action. New repertoires of action are enhanced by deliberative processes and network embeddedness. The latter relates to internal and external links of the union and the density of these links. Such links contribute to the transfer of ideas and to problem solving behavior.

A final power resource is infrastructural resources, especially leadership skills and other human resources, who need to be able to create frames that legitimate repertoires of action and present an agenda which is considered with a broader social project. During this analysis, the broader social project does not specifically refer to *living wage fostering*, but the ability to relate to broader social projects.

Shared understandings, repertoires of action and sense of efficacy

The analysis of the interview data has led to a collection of codes per category: shared understandings, repertoires of action and sense of efficacy. Shared understandings indicate the general challenges for trade unions in Benin, as perceived by the interviewed trade unions. Repertoires of action indicate expressions by trade unions that indicate an action that they are undertaking or will undertake towards solving challenges. The final category, sense of efficacy, indicate stories of victory and defeat and

expressions of self-confidence towards general challenges. The figure below presents the category 'narrative resources' and the subcategories that were mostly identified.

Figure 16: Hierarchical structure of narrative resources (constructed in NVivo)



Shared understandings

During conversations with trade unions, the question was asked “what main challenges do you experience as a trade union” and with cashew sector involvement “what are the main challenges within the cashew sector?” Not all trade unions started immediately with explaining the challenges, but first explained their trade union history to provide context to the perceived challenges. Most of the challenges identified were expressed by two unions. UNION1 especially presented itself with a social character, based on their narratives which often connected with social challenges and practical approaches. UNION2 presented itself as a wise and experienced trade union, by telling stories about trade unionism and democracy development in Benin, including past and present challenges.

First and foremost, *formalization* of workers was often referred to as a challenge. All trade unions affirmed this, and four out of five trade unions pointed out their involvement within informal sectors. Trade unions frequently use the word ‘sensitization’ regarding sector development, but also government lobby and mentality change. *Corruption* activated a lot of stories amongst different trade unions; it seems to be a topic that trade union like to buzz about, especially regarding other trade unions and the government. Despite the frequent mentioning of corruption, it is not perceived as a major threat. Trade unions are well aware of signs of corruption, by given examples including non-transparent communication within the union and to other unions, abruptly stopping collective activities (e.g. national strikes), and fuzzy membership counts.

UNION3 explained:

“when a confederation goes on strike, you will see that at some point the leader does not participate anymore. He might take a bribe of the government or employer to stop. You cannot see it and witness it. It is difficult to see.”

Pulling back from a strike by one union is confirmed as corruption by two other trade unions. This is interesting, since striking is not always perceived as a successful strategy by unions, indicated by the expression of UNION2:

“because of this strike and the misunderstanding, they are now looking at new strategies to bring the message across. That it is why we approach the social sectors, give assistance to workers, social strategies - we want social dialogue with employers. There are no strikes today and not in the future.”

Other identified general challenges include *living conditions*. When talking about challenges, narratives expand to the socio-economic situation of rural communities. This is for example expressed by the following statement of UNION5:

“Due to the economic situation and the high cost of living, children don't go to school. Many children stay at home or dropout and don't have alternative.”

The *position of women* was also brought up regularly. Four out of five trade unions interviewed asserted that the position of women is a challenge in society. They relate the position of women to a lack of access to land and credit, training and education, and vulnerable employment.¹¹⁰ The Deputy Secretary General of UNION4 has always been involved with committees focused on women empowerment, and currently promotes positive discrimination in business, collective bargaining of female traders and free education for girls.

Finally, *minimum wage* was an interesting topic discussed a few times. Trade unions are well aware of minimum wage challenges. UNION2 and UNION5 (who were both participating during the Beninese minimum-wage setting process in 2006) indicated that the minimum wage should have been 80,000CFA instead of 40,000CFA. They referred to a study leading up to the new minimum wage legislation in 2006. Challenges are framed towards dependency on legislation, meaning that proactive articulations towards the challenge are lacking, contrary to other challenges.

Coupling of narratives to wider agendas

Interestingly, not one Beninese trade union turned itself against the challenges and most of them were able to couple trade union activities to the shared understandings. These activities referred to national and international agendas, including the ILO and UN. Formalization and sensitization were mostly discussed. UNION1, UNION2 and UNION3 present strategies towards formalization. UNION2 explained:

“about 90% of the workers is informal and they contribute 70% to the GDP. Because of this situation, more and more trade unions are getting interested to focus on informal sector. More and more organizations today, for example UN and ILO, are here to reduce poverty. They have started to raise awareness and improve living conditions in the informal sector. That is the concern now.”

¹¹⁰ Interviews with UNION3, UNION4, UNION1, UNION5

UNION1 considered a multilevel approach and collaboration with sector stakeholders; its strategies were both directed at cashew processing plants and cashew producer organizations. Another strategy is *sensitization* within the sector, thus activating actors by trade unions. This was emphasized by UNION3, stating:

“The union is helping to formalize the informal sector. First of all, they create interest to trade unions to be involved within the sector. They sensitize the people within the sector. The economy is based on tax, that it is why it is important to formalize. After this we mobilize people.”

Sense of efficacy

Especially UNION5 and UNION2 tell stories of victories. These unions took active part during the democratic transition in the 1980s and this history is perceived relevant to understanding current challenges and trade union behavior. Stories of victory and defeat indicate a sense of efficacy.¹¹¹ UNION1 presents itself most involved with challenges and repertoires of action, but barely expressed stories of past successes as well as self-efficacy. This union's success is much more celebrated by others.

6.3.3. Strategic capability: Framing

Actors, especially trade unionists, have the ability to craft strategies enabling them to carve regimes within and beyond the workplace. The nature of their agenda is *proactive* and *autonomous*, based on their ability to frame their ideologies towards existing policies. Framing invokes the ability to form an inclusive agenda, potentially part of a broader social project, and their frame on the alter ego, thus 'we versus them' (Lévesque and Murray, 2013). Such narrative frames are essentially action and contention repertoires, and help in justifying new practices, mobilizing coalitions and generating collection action towards institutional change. A tricky element in this, is *change*, especially when narratives indicate positive efficacy, based on their past strategies. Such strategies have 'staying power', due to recollection of victory (Lévesque and Murray, 2013).

The skill to couple narratives and explain an overarching *frame of reference* is increasingly seen as key factor in union renewal (Lévesque and Murray 2010; 2013). This is also essential with actively involving national unions in international alliances, which clearly requires a broader scope on workers interests. A distinctive factor of defensive isolation, risk reduction and proactive solidarity in international alliances is framing. The use of local resources including networks and deliberative structures is therefore essential.

The narratives discussed in the previous subsection are coupled to frames. As compared to narrative resources, frames were only occasionally identified and creates a distinction in trade union power amongst the five trade union confederations. The foremost important frame is *agency in a larger social project*, since it indicates autonomy in social projects. This frame was identified, as well as *extending the frame*. Extending the frame refers to extending issues to potential opponents or supporters. *Transforming the frame* was also found, which refers to the restoration of old understandings and values to new meanings. This can be done through a particular domain, such as the cashew value chain.

Especially UNION1 indicated autonomous framing regarding social projects, because the UNION involved itself in the cashew sector, women empowerment, and health care. It also sought collaboration within agriculture (*extending the frame*) and was able to transform its frame, by overthinking new payment structures for informal sector members, which might be unconventional for unions. Frame

¹¹¹ Interviews with UNION5 and UNION2

transformation can be observed, where UNION2 replaced its core values of striking to a narrative of social dialogue to remain effective, by pointing out:

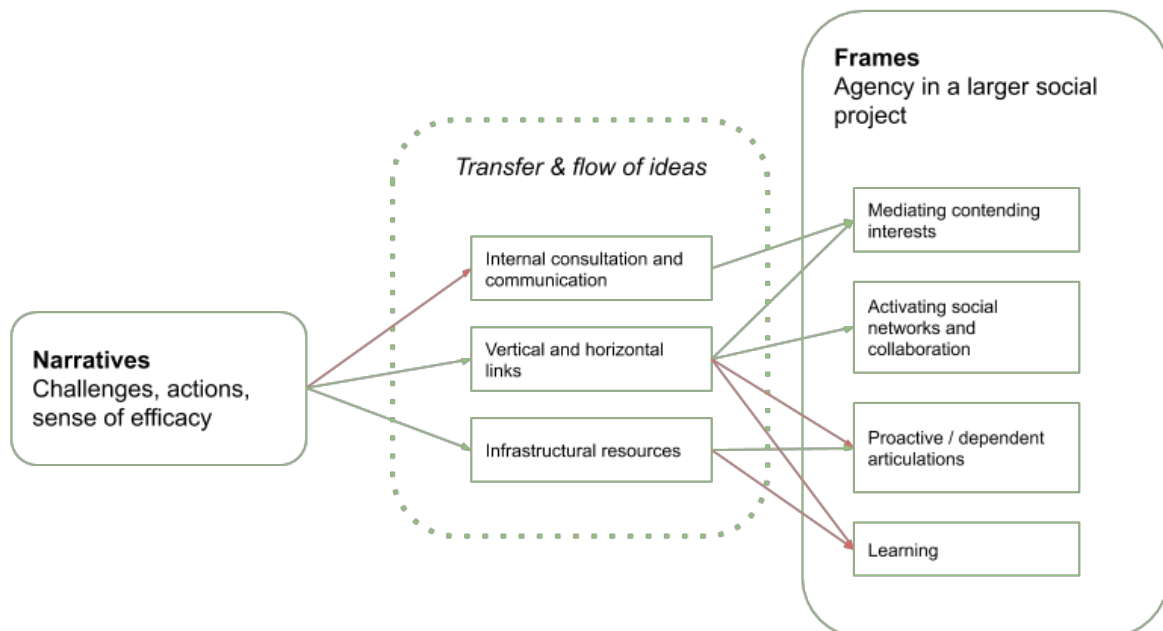
“Because of this strike and the misunderstanding, they are now looking at new strategies to bring the message across. That it is why we approach the social sectors, give assistance to workers, social strategies... We want social dialogue with employers.”

For extending frames, articulations of two unions, UNION4 and UNION5, were observed. These were dependent articulations, since these unions stated that their trade union activities were dependent on external funding and collaboration. UNION5 has expressed itself in the Beninese media, pointing out refusal for dialogue with the government and refusal for unifying of activities with other unions (ABP, 2018a). These expressions also occurred during the interview, when UNION5 stated that this union would not compromise with other unions and the Government. UNION4 committed itself in the media in 2017 and 2018 to training in collective bargaining and improvement of its communication channels. Yet, the website is taken offline and further information is lacking (Banout, 2018). The refusal for collaboration, dependency and perhaps empty commitments indicate lower autonomy.

6.3.4. Trade union power renewal

This section aimed at answering the sub question *What capacities do Beninese trade unions have to effectively foster living wage?* The above has presented insights into narratives and frames of trade unions. Based on the narrative and framing theory of Lévesque and Murray (2013), a new flow diagram has been made which presents the links that were identified between narratives and resources. Red lines demonstrate weak links and green lines demonstrate strong links between power resources and strategic capabilities.

Figure 17: Identified links between Beninese trade union narratives and frames (authors' own)



Narratives can be elaborate and involve to past and present challenges and actions. Unions see urgency and connect narratives with wider agendas, for example the national agenda, international agenda or ILO agenda. In Benin, a general 'social unionism' is observed. Through their narrative resources, trade union confederations have presented the skill to identify repertoires of action towards the identified

social challenges (in the form of shared understandings). However, narratives and frames do not always strike with efficacy. UNION1 presents self-confidence and relates frequently with repertoires of action and agency in a larger social project whilst no stories of victory or defeat are identified. Yet, some other unions and actors celebrate the success of UNION1, perhaps feeding future stories of victory. Concurrent is the fact that especially UNION5 and UNION2 tell stories of victory, sometimes connect their stories to current repertoires of action and transform their frame, but do not take autonomous positions, which affects their agency in a larger social project. Their lack of agency indicates weakness, since proactive articulation links with agenda-setting and trade union power. UNION3 and UNION4 both present proactive articulations (women rights strategies, informal sector strategies) and dependent articulations (dependent on funding, formalization dependent on lower taxes). The dependency limits the ability to articulate (newly developed) strategies for informal sectors, which require different levels of action. Female leadership of UNION4 enhances the frame of reference for female workers and connects with international development agendas, opening up (international) funding opportunities. For both UNION 3 and 4, there are no frames that present agency and frame transformation are not explicitly identified. A disconnect between story and efficacy has been observed and therefore a power decline.

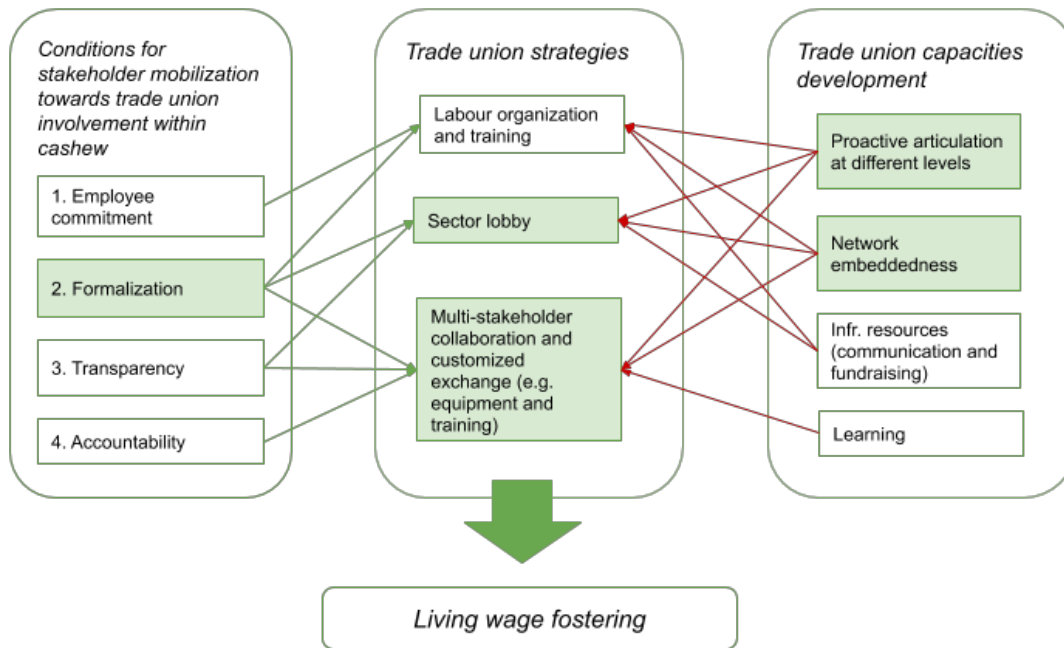
7. Conclusion: the role of trade unions in living wage strategies

Based on the existing living wage literature, a knowledge gap was found on the specific role and capacities of trade unions in living wage implementation. In response, this case study aimed at an analysis of trade union capacities for living wage fostering in the a developing country. To avoid value judgement, this research study intended to distance from defining 'living wage'. Focusing on trade union theory rather than calculating what a living wage constitutes led to unexpected outcomes. A lack of living wage means a wage gap between the minimum wage and a wage which support a decent life for the worker and his or her family. Collective bargaining by trade unions is provoked in contexts where legislation for wage-setting, coverage and compliance excludes low-wage and informal labor, which initially is the goal of minimum-wage setting (Christiaensen and Demery, 2007). Lobbying for living wages is different from the traditional activities of trade unions, such as bipartite and tripartite relationships since it requires agency in a larger social project (Miller and Williams, 2009; Compa, 2004; Snow et al., 1986). Trends of decreasing union power globally and increasing participation of Benin into the international cashew market highly challenges the situation, since powerful globalization dynamics put pressure on low-cost production by international competition on the cashew market. The urgency for collective bargaining for living wages is high and requires trade unions to renew their capacities to a changing setting.

The main research question was *What is the potential role of trade unions in fostering living wage strategies in the Beninese cashew sector?* In order to answer this question, stakeholder mobilization and trade union strategies within the cashew value chain are combined and contextualized to wage-setting in Benin. Based on the findings presented in Chapter 6, figure 18 has been construct, in which conditions for stakeholder mobilization and their links to trade union capacities are presented.

Trade union capacities that need renewal for living wage strategies are presented with red links. These trade union weaknesses are based on the trade union capacity analysis and perspectives of stakeholders. The boxes that are marked green, present the most appealing trade union strategies for living wage fostering, based on the case study findings.

Figure 18: Identified links between conditions, capacities and strategies of trade unions (authors' own)



Within this case study research, trade unions have proven a divide in capacities of intermediating, infrastructural resources, and narrating. Especially proactive articulation at different levels, network embeddedness, infrastructural resources (particularly communication and fundraising) and learning capacity need further renewal. Despite some disconnects between stories and efficacy, articulating and framing performed rather well, as well as the 'policy and program' components of infrastructural resources, which shows resourcefulness of unions. The pursuit of Lévesque and Murray (2010) for trade unions to become dynamic and proactive actors in changing employment environments is realistic in Benin. This is based on the agency and relative authority presented in narratives and frames of Beninese trade unions, concluded from the shared understandings and action frames. Almost twenty years ago Magnusson (2001, p.10) said that Benin "may even have become West Africa's most vibrant civil society". Characterized as civil society organizations, trade unions have played a key role in the democratic transition of Benin. At present, they have shown considerable influence at national level based on the current development of reciprocal processes, such as the intersyndicale and the bargaining capacity of trade unions, on top of the relative high union coverage in Benin. Unions have also shown strong framing skills by coupling frames of understanding to action frames. Moreover, different national trade union confederations represent both formal and informal labor. The latter increased significantly after a political turmoil, which affected the trade union landscape.

The response of unions towards the political landscape showed adaptability, based on their ability to transform frames of reference towards informal worker groups. During the research activities, Beninese trade unions generally showed agency in larger social projects rather than a pursuit of the single act of bargaining for labor conditions. Especially UNION1 has been able to continue the development of their new frames of reference directed at informal labor by their involvement with agricultural cooperatives and cashew processing plants. This requires internal deliberative processes and intermediation skills, since internal solidarity creation is needed for aligning interests of new forms of labor with the existing groups of focus (formal workers). Interests especially differ in terms of protection and legislation. The frame transformation towards informal labor characterized itself as a formula approach, since trade

union strategies were especially focused on collaboration rather than collective bargaining. The following will elaborate on the living wage strategies.

Notwithstanding, the involvement of trade unions in living wage strategies is complex, since a different role of trade unions is expected. If trade unions are involved as key actors in living wage implementation, this requires a context-specific approach for the creation of urgency and ownership of the methodology.

7.1. Labor organization and training

In order to organize informal labor groups for living wage negotiation, renewal of *proactive articulation*, *network embeddedness* and *infrastructural resources* (especially communication and fundraising) is crucial. Findings have shown that different stakeholders expect unions to focus on the organization of processing workers. National trade union confederations can provide training to local unions and workers in order to increase awareness on the wage gap between minimum wages and living wages, and the challenges of piece-rate income. This requires proactive articulation during training, to increase the sense of urgency of participants. Local understanding of opportunities for value redistribution within the sector, for example employee commitment, is crucial. A negotiated approach in which formula activities are aligned is most suitable. This combination contributes to a comprehensive view of the sector is needed at national trade union confederation level. Trade union representation for informal labor requires new narratives which are focused on rural settings. This will provide frames of reference for cashew processing workers, and alignment can be sought with their interests.

Labor organization is usually a main activity for Beninese trade unions. Yet there have been found opposing attitudes towards trade union involvement linked to negative perceptions of transparency and accountability. A first and foremost trade union capacity for development is *learning*. Learning capability will help unions to understand the needs of rural communities and workers and diffuse the acquired knowledge for understanding what wages are needed for a decent living. By the increased knowledge on rural settings, unions can take accountability in value redistribution and the justification of living wages. In order to increase trust amongst grass-roots organizations, transparent communication of trade union activities is very important. This can be done through a combination of channels, such as website and newsletters. Oral information provision is also important, to cater rural illiteracy, for example through voice messages in social media, radio broadcasting and local meetings. Local communication can be paired with interim results representation. Local communities are susceptible to direct results, which increases the commitment to unions.

Despite the relative strong articulation and framing skills of trade union confederations, a disconnect between the Beninese Labor Law and collective bargaining was observed. The law allows for company-level organization and the participation of social partners and trade unions the minimum-wage machinery. While trade unions lobbied for a decent wage during a national minimum-wage appraisal between 2000-2006, the legal minimum-wage outcome was significantly lower than estimations by trade union confederations. The research findings have shown that wages in the cashew sector are inconsistent and the contribution of wage to production is still unsettled. Cashew has been presented as a lucrative crop for both producers and processors. However, the processing industry is labor-intensive, and payment is per piece-rate, without a minimum-wage guarantee. There are investment plans for mechanization and automatization with positive effects on wages and the quality of work. The share of low-wage labor potentially reduces, but due to higher incomes, job creation happens in other forms which answers to an improved living standard (Lavoie and Stockhammer, 2012).

7.2. Sector lobby

In order to stimulate trade union capacity renewal for living wage fostering, strengthening collective bargaining is essential. The context on wage-setting has shown that labor conditions and minimum-wage compliance will only be taken seriously by the government when the sector is formalized. Yet, labor conditions does not only apply to payroll labor in cashew processing, it also affects the surrounding farmer communities. Therefore, the lobby for improvement of labor conditions and wages requires different actors to unify strategies to increase the pace of formalization and increases awareness on the urgency for higher wages and the acceptance of labor organization. Trade unions need to approach different stakeholders which are in the position to represent interests of the communities and participate within sector networks. It is crucial to find win-win situations in which trade unions are able to blend sector lobby. A sector-wide approach for lobby can increase bargaining power, enhances the collection of evidence for living wages and redistributive strategies for the current margins of cashew marketing. The bargaining position of trade union confederations in other sectors and their links with the Ministry of Labor and Employment and the tripartite is an interesting angle for producer organizations and CSOs to collaborate with trade unions. The latter is crucial for collaboration with international NGOs who might have conflicting development agendas and funding for specific sector issues.

The research findings on stakeholder positions draw attention to formalization as key strategy for sector development and value redistribution. While the focus was on wage improvement strategies, a dual approach can enhance the organization of labor and instigate collective bargaining. A large part of the sector is informal and the employment generating processing plants provide largely untapped potential in the organization of labor. A way to do so is the local organization of factory workers and introducing them to new membership structures. Due to perceived low wages, regular membership structures and fees are unrealistic. A trade union 'business model' is therefore mostly focused on smaller margins but a larger membership base, and perhaps the acquisition of international funding opportunities for formalization in agriculture. UNION1 has shown interest in new membership structures, if this stimulates sector development.

7.3. Transparency and accountability

To address issues of informal workers in a context with limited legislative support, expanding collaborations and activities for new employment groups is important. This especially includes diffuse memberships to embrace informal workers and informal workers' organizations affiliating with trade unions. Customized exchange of services, including contribution to independent activities of informal workers' organizations and ad hoc cooperation between trade unions and informal workers' organizations on specific issues, increases accountability of trade unions within the issue. This leads to an increased interest for mutual activities amongst sector stakeholders and hence the effectivity of living wage fostering.

Collaboration also stimulates understanding for differing interests, a search for common ground, and the creation of a worldview and adaptability. Altogether, this arouses relative autonomy, which is a strong indicator for trade union authority in sectors where trade union existence is uncommon. To address the oppositions of some civil society actors towards trade union involvement within the sector, a learning strategy might help in increasing trust of actual trade union capacities, to involve themselves within a new sector. Trade unions will need to transform their frames to new values and understandings, based on the acquired knowledge on the sector. This clearly expands the social project, by identifying new and relevant issues within the sector and contributes to narratives on living wage fostering which comprehends both trade unions and sector actors.

The agenda of the tripartite and international trade unions (ITUC and IUF) show high interest in strengthening of lobby and advocacy activities of trade unions and formalization of the agricultural sector. Trade unions can study best-practices in other West-African agricultural value chains and use

the acquired knowledge to sensitize other cashew actors in Benin. This is important, since compared to formal workers, political interest is lower for the improvement of wages amongst informal labor. Distrust towards the government was found amongst rural actors and producer groups. Collaboration with other sector advocates increases leverage for collective bargaining for improved Labor Law for agricultural sectors. Important is to emphasize corresponding interests of formal labor and cashew producers, including higher incomes, increased access to land and credit, increased access to health care and social security, and the benefits for economic development generally. Collaboration between trade unions and other sector actors should be at confederation level since affiliation at national and international level is restricted.

8. Discussion

8.1. Limitations of trade union capacity in living wage fostering

In literature, some living wage studies have distanced living wage conceptualization from economic rationality and see its implementation as part of business codes of conduct (e.g. Anker and Anker, 2017), while others deliberately emphasized Keynesian philosophy of wage-led growth (e.g. Lavoie and Stockhammer, 2012). It is not new that living wage faces an inner struggle for conceptualization, both in implementation and the defining 'living' (Schrage and Huber, 2018; Anker, 2011; Stabile, 2009). Such issues with conceptualization was also reflected by stakeholder positions during the stakeholder analysis. Especially international NGOs were very skeptical on the feasibility of wage improvement. Interestingly, the attitudes of cashew processing management (who are profit-minded) were opportunistic towards labor organization at factory level, knowing that this could lead to future wage negotiation. Living wage payment presents an interesting business case in which economic rationale can be found if there is willingness within the processing industry for investment in employees rather than equipment. Such Keynesian reasoning for living wage implementation has the potential to increase productivity, an increase in employee commitment, lower turnover and lower training costs (Werner and Lim, 2016). While market economists indicate that living wage payment is an interruption of the market equilibrium (Werner and Lim, 2016), there appears to be a logic for living wage payment when it is a long-term business case (Lavoie and Stockhammer, 2012). Perhaps the acceptance of cashew processing management towards labor organization is a result of some basic level CSR at company-level. This is strengthened with the relative collective bargaining power Beninese trade unions. Such factors present important determinants for living wage feasibility and emphasize the relevance of context factors in living wage approaches.

For pragmatic reasons, living wage approaches need some aggregation and methodology, since living wage negotiation at individual level is too ambitious obviously (Werner and Lim, 2016). During this case study, trade unions were central in living wage fostering and suited the active role of trade unions within the political arena of Benin. This was confirmed by the sense of urgency was especially found with the largest three trade union confederations (who were connected to international networks) and foreign cashew company owners. Due to minimal availability of secondary sources on Beninese trade union activities and resources, findings were somewhat aggregate on trade union renewal capacity. There was also minimal data on the wage gap in Benin, which incompletes empirical findings on stakeholders' attitudes towards living wage implementation in combination with the lack of wage gap data. The latter was expected to be available, because two studies on working conditions and living wage in the cashew sector were being conducted during the time of research. Finally, only access was given to the study on working conditions in cashew processing which confirmed my own observations.

In order to increase objectivity of the research findings, interviews were held with different value chain actors. Albeit that secondary data on Beninese trade unions was limited, interview summaries of trade

union narratives and frames were elaborate, and most phenomena and perspectives could be confirmed by interviewed cashew stakeholders and experts, which increases the reliability of the data. The research process was iterative: during the first interviews, phenomena were raised which were repeated during following interviews. This included *formalization strategies* and *gender roles*. The latter was further explored by purposively arranging interviews with a women group and women empowerment NGOs to gather a better understanding of the role of women in cashew processing. An extended stay would have given more in-depth local perspectives by the establishment of relationships with women groups and worker associations. Interview data from cashew processing workers is very limited and potentially biased, since one group interview was conducted at the compound of the processing plant. This has potentially limited the freedom to talk, due to a fear for losing the job when workers affiliated with a trade union. Such a fear is not uncommon during studies on labor and the implementation of ethical codes of conduct amongst suppliers (Barrientos and Smith, 2007). Whereas the body of data on local perspectives is somewhat cursory, findings on the work ethos are confirmed by women empowerment NGOs, different experts and the cashew buyer.

Due to the limited scope and time, the Trade Union Capacity Model, interviews were mostly held with trade union leadership in this regard. Part of the model, especially the power resources, are less visible and need in-depth assessment. With a limited time frame, strategic capabilities are easier to grasp (Lévesque and Murray, 2010). Therefore, internal solidarity (deliberative structures), learning and infrastructural resources were incomplete. This was also presented in the trade union capacity findings, indicated by 'ability to assess based on frames and narratives'. Most capacities could be confirmed by stakeholders. An example was *learning*. One CSO indicated that trade unions were not experienced with rural situations and should learn about the context before entering the sector. Recommended for the Trade Union Capacity Model is further elaboration on the indicators for assessing the trade union capacities and their applications in developing contexts.

Despite these hindrances, the case study findings have proven that considering trade unions as agents for living wage fostering through stakeholder analysis enhances embedding of living wage strategies. This is supported by Gereffi and Fernandez-Stark (2016), who imply that stakeholder participation in global value chains increases embedding and information exchange, which in turn leads to problem-solving. This has been proven by the identified role of trade unions in sector formalization. Formalization is perceived as key strategy for sector development and value redistribution by technical support actors and experts. While the focus was on wage improvement strategies, these were strongly linked with formalization as a first step in acquiring new memberships amongst processing factory-workers, which increases leverage for collective bargaining and pushes the government to improve its Labor Law specified for agricultural sectors.

8.2. Contribution to theory

Labor rights violations in developing countries have acquired two major approaches by international labor protection agencies throughout the past decades. The first is focused on adherence of government regulation, under the assumption that local legislation meets international labor conventions and is decently enforced. The second is organizing trade unions and collective bargaining for the protections of workers' rights. A third way has attracted attention meanwhile, providing a civil society alternative. This includes the implementation of codes of conduct, harnessing market power of informed consumers to interrupt abuses against workers (Compa, 2004). An intimidating variety of codes of conducts focused on workers' rights has entered the public policy arena since 1999, including the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI) Social Accountability 8000 (SA8000), Fair Labor Association (FLA), the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), the Workers' Rights Consortium (WRC), the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC), Fairtrade, and so on. These codes of conducts offer new methods for private-sector self-regulation, by using civil society diligence. Part of labor rights is fair remuneration for the worker and his/her family. Anker (2011)

argues that the problem of the actual implementation of living wages is its definition and due to the lack of a globally accepted definition, companies follow local minimum wages. Governments might not always properly consider workers' needs in minimum-wage setting, as potential negative implications of low wages on employment and economic development are part of the equation in considering worker needs and decent income. Methodology for living wage calculation could help identifying a wage gap and provide a basis for defending living wages by trade unions. The Anker Living Wage Methodology works towards a global benchmark for wage gaps and is increasingly adopted by companies and certification schemes. Yet the methodology itself might be representable for some countries (Anker, 2011) but it is harder for countries where populations are mostly informally employed and live and work in rural settings. In such settings, the distribution of income and expenses completely differ compared to more developed settings. In this case study, it appeared that women were in one region in Benin breadwinner and compartmentalization of income and expense streams was common. Saving would therefore have a specific goal, rather than saving and having an account for unforeseen costs, as implied by the Anker Living Wage Methodology. Notwithstanding, the internationalized discussion on living wage should not be slowed down, it rather needs a more embedded view, which was presented by this research study.

Besides the Anker Living Wage Methodology, living wage has been conceptualized in literature by different philosophies and ethical arguments. Examples are through a rights-based approach at the start of the past century by John Ryan (1869-1945) (Werner and Lim, 2016), a clause for social sustainability and cohesion (Waltman, 2004) and through moral economics (Stabile, 2008). An important consideration in the living wage debate is the vision on the real problem-owner.

The slow uptake of living wage in different countries is in essence the result of two camps supporting and opposing price floors for labor. While this case study focused on the ethics and opportunities for living wage implementation in a specific context, the following will elaborate a bit on the criticism for living wage adaptation to provide understanding to the rationale for its implementation through collective bargaining institutes such as trade unions. Similar to critique on minimum wage-setting, a group of economists favors the absence of price floors due to its disruption of the market equilibrium and the creation of a labor surplus. This would lead to unemployment, but also an increase in demand for high-skilled labor. Another argument which is perhaps shared by larger groups of economists, companies and even governments, is the fact that living wage disrupts competitive advantages (Werner and Lim, 2016). In some economies, low-wage labor is used as competitive advantage, like the garment industry in countries such as Bangladesh (Schrage and Huber, 2018).

Clearly, living wages have direct implications on labor expenses in business and this might affect competitive advantages. This stimulates the debate on whether living wage should be a business responsibility. According to Stabile (2009) there is a high externality factor for wage payment, which is solved by living wages. This is strongly linked with the role of companies in society. Low-wages favor 'incompetent employers', since they impose costs on a nation in terms of the capital stock of character, energy, intelligence and reproductive abilities. It tends to keep countries in a poverty cycle, by the significant reduced freedoms for a large part of the population. Companies are even referred to as 'social parasites' who are a cause for resource inefficiency. Low-cost production continues with low regards to actual demand for the actual goods being produced (Werner and Lim, 2016). Following the externality of effects low-wage payment by business on society, business have a large stake in responsibility for wage payment, even if legally-set minimum wages are followed. Werner and Lim (2016) suggest that living wage implementation should still be voluntary, because mandatory implementation imposes huge effects on competitive advantages and the national investment climate. But what is more important, respecting decent labor conditions or economic viability with no regards to human dignity? Government supplementation for living wage payment could avoid such a discussion. Conversely, government supplementation potentially further decreases the responsibility and accountability of companies, which suppose that business as usual can be continued and government takes responsibility for worker

dissatisfaction. Besides, the collective bargaining power of labor reduces towards companies (Werner and Lim, 2016).

This research follows a development perspective, thus considers wage-improvement as ethical rather than from a market economic perspective. By the lack of compliance and coverage of minimum-wage in developing countries, the need increases for a formula approach in which ethical supply chain governance pushes coverage and compliance for fair wage payment. This is mostly voluntarily and pushed by international NGOs and institutions and focuses on supply chain ethics (Miller and Williams, 2009) and involves codes of conduct, such as the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) clause. Voluntary adoption of living wage does have reputational benefits, and increased labor morale and social capital come into play. Positive side-effects include resource efficiency and an indirect competitive advantage linked to the company image (perhaps leaning towards a social enterprise?) and setting an industry-example for laggards (Werner and Lim, 2016). Such advantages of living wage are inspirational, but also limited to certain sectors where reputation is highly valued (Schrage and Huber, 2018).

Although minimum wages should not be confused with living wages, in some countries minimum wages are strongly embedded in society and have the ability to reflect the communal needs. Examples for such systems are automatic indexation of minimum wages and strong collective bargaining institutes in some countries (e.g. Australia and France). This is different in countries where neoliberal legislation is more common, weakening moral wage policies. A shift to neoliberalism has been observed in countries such as US and UK, which also seeps into international chain activities of US and UK businesses. In such countries, living wages are mostly voluntarily applied, for example by companies who see economic benefit in living wage adaptation through reputation and employee morale (Werner and Lim, 2016).

Yet different from legal standards for wages that business have to follow, living wage is controversial and emotive from the market perspective (Werner and Lim, 2016). This quite interesting, since living wage references already appeared in economic thought of Adam Smith, but also by earlier thinkers including Plato, Aristotle and St. Thomas of Aquinas (Stabile, 2009) and the destructive effects of low-wage labor was for a long-time acknowledged by policy makers (Werner and Lim, 2016). Now the social contract between government, business and civil society is changing, living wage is part of accountable business, which never should have been otherwise. The increasing nudging of private sector companies towards responsible and accountable business is actually just a matter of adherence and compliance to long-established bargaining processes in the business operation context (Werner and Lim, 2016). The current living wage debate has been especially pursued by economists, geographers, sociologists focused on labor studies, social policy scholars, and public health scholars focused on defining living wages and calculating wage gaps (Werner and Lim, 2016). Perhaps the discussion of living wage should move towards the global decrease in labor unionism and its implications on wage-setting. The global decline of trade unionism was already emphasized by Lévesque and Murray (2010), but links to living wage implementation become visible based on the case study findings and a bunch of recent living wage studies (especially focused on living wage campaigns in the US, UK and New Zealand) (e.g. Werner and Lim; Schrage and Huber, 2018, Anker and Anker, 2017).

For the consideration of business chain activities in developing countries, the support of collective bargaining institutes in codes of conduct might be an interesting opportunity for living wage implementation. It touches upon the concept of public reasoning by Schrage and Huber (2018) and Sen (1999). According to Schrage and Huber (2018) we cannot assume that work itself (thus in factories) significantly expands capabilities. The capability to work as a constitutive freedom might not be as important in such cases because work in factories is often the best option out of other bad options, it does not require high qualifications and the work is repetitive. Consequently, the instrumental freedom of wage and labor organization becomes more significant (Stabile, 2008; Schrage and Huber, 2018). Supporting local collective bargaining institutes touches upon criticism of two major living wage scholars

of the past century, John Ryan (1912) and Donald Stabile (2008), who see a pure market mechanism and the natural development of collective bargaining institutes in market economies as an unrealistic model, since there is not an equal power divide between employers and employees.

An elaborate focus in codes of conduct on the strengthening of collective bargaining mechanisms has potential for the local embeddedness of living wage methodology (Werner and Lim, 2016). Like fair remuneration, collective bargaining institutions support safeguarding human rights. They are most often legally protected in developing contexts, where a large part of production activities of supply chains take place. Although coverage and compliance for such laws might not be strong, it surely appears to be easier defined than the 'living wage'. Collective bargaining entails for example wage negotiation and freedom of association by trade unions, which is described in detail in Article 20 and 23 of United Declaration of Human Rights (UN, n.d. b) and part of the ILO Core Conventions (ILO, 2008). Collective bargaining mechanisms can be protected by international companies and throughout their supply chains, as international pressure to adhere is higher indicated by the UDHR and the ILO. International guidelines including the OECD Guidelines and the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) support collective bargaining in detail, in contrary to living wage (Ramasastry, 2015).

Strengthening of collective bargaining institutes as a way for living wage implementation (Werner and Lim, 2016) is an interesting angle for that matter. During wage bargaining it is important to consider what a 'living' means for workers, what the composition of wage to production is, and what the perception of processing work is (Figart et al. 2002). Labor organizations can help in the aggregation of living wage perceptions locally. This is currently done especially through normative approaches. The Anker Living Wage Methodology suggests a global calculation for household expenses (Smith et al., 2017) and western institutions have the tendency to use national statistics sources (e.g. HDI and nutritional intake) to determine what a 'living' wage should constitute. Such normative strategies are logical, since aggregation to some extent is needed. Through trade unions, the wage gap can be contextualized, and implementation embedded for different supply chains (Schrage and Huber, 2018). Strengthening trade unions leads to a fair public reasoning for what a wage locally should constitute.

8.3. Recommendations for further research

How can collective bargaining be supported for living wage implementation? Contrary to the Anker Living Wage Methodology (Smith et al., 2017), which suggests the role of trade unions for justifying living wage calculations, this case study has proven living wage strategies in which trade unionism is at the core of living wage implementation. It requires social unionism whatsoever, which means that trade unions find agency in a larger social project. Agency in a larger social project requires relative authority towards trade union challenges and participation in vertical networks. The agency in a larger social project goes beyond the 'bread-and-butter business unionism' which essentially focuses on securing higher wages and working conditions of workers (Compa, 2004).

Trade unions can start identifying opportunities for living wage implementation, through an appraisal of the focus sector. Such an appraisal identifies the perspectives of worker and community on living wages and follows with a map of stakeholder positions. Once an overview is made, collective strategies involving stakeholders can be made, creating a win-win for the sector and bargaining power at government level. The latter is extremely beneficial for other sector stakeholders, struggling with sector lobby. Often, trade union confederations closely collaborate with the Ministry of Labor and Employment, where a comprehensive overview of sector strategies can be lobbied for. The role of international companies is to identify resourceful confederations, which are invited for participation and ownership of living wage methodology. This can be done through involvement in supply chain activities, and the provision of (material) resources and training by the company. For international companies, identifying resourceful unions might be a challenge. Yet, this case study has found that unions have multiple strategies for presenting relative authority and agency in larger social projects. Correspondingly,

connections in vertical networks and affiliation with international trade unions are highly beneficial for the identification of democratic unions. Such networks include the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF). While ITUC affiliates work at national level, the IUF aims to create a countervailing power in local business activities of transnational companies.

Finally, further research can elaborate on tools for trade union involvement in living wage implementation. Also, agriculture formalization and trade unionism is an interesting coupling of phenomena and needs further investigation regarding local social and economic development.

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Appendix 1: Interviewees and interview topics

Semi-structured interviews

Interviewee	Interview topics	Interviewee
Individual interviews		
National trade union confederations	<p>Trade union capacities</p> <p>a. Main activities b. Main challenges c. Agricultural involvement d. Cashew sector involvement</p> <p>Trade union landscape</p> <p>e. Collective bargaining f. Accountability and transparency g. Unification efforts h. Informal employment</p>	<p>Calixte Adiyeton Programme coordinator, COSI 16-01-2019</p> <p>Nagnini Mampo Secretary general, CSTB 29-01-2019</p> <p>Antoine Sossou Secretary general, UNSTB 29-01-2019</p> <p>Basilie Koukoui Secretary general, CSA 22-01-2019</p> <p>Christophe Houessionon Secretary general, CSUB 22-01-2019</p>
Management of cashew processing plants	<p>a. Main activities in cashew value chain b. Main challenges and opportunities in cashew sector c. Wage policy d. Employment challenges e. CSR efforts f. Trade union representation</p>	<p>Fudor headoffice and processing factory (different sites) 28-01-2019 31-01-2019</p> <p>Afokantan processing plant and headoffice (same site) 25-02-2019</p>
Local civil society organizations (CSOs)	<p>a. Main activities in cashew value chain b. Main challenges and opportunities in cashew sector c. Trade union involvement within cashew sector</p>	<p>AKB 28-01-2019</p> <p>Dedras 24-01-2019</p> <p>ANAF 31-01-2019</p> <p>CREDI-ONG 25-02-2019</p>
Cashew producer organizations	<p>a. Main challenges and opportunities in cashew production</p>	<p>FENAPAB 30-01-2019</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Cashew sector development c. Livelihood circumstances d. Trade union involvement within cashew sector 	
International actors, such as technical assistance providers and development NGOs active within the cashew value chain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Main activities in cashew value chain b. Main challenges and opportunities in cashew sector c. Employment challenges d. Cashew sector development e. Trade union involvement within cashew sector 	<p>GIZ 30-01-2019</p> <p>ICCO/Civic Engagement Alliance 21-01-2019</p> <p>BeninCajù (TechnoServe) 21-01-2019</p> <p>The Hunger Project 30-01-2019</p>
Other actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Main activities in cashew value chain b. Main challenges and opportunities in cashew sector c. Employment challenges d. Cashew sector development e. Trade union involvement within cashew sector 	<p>the Netherlands Embassy in Benin, Trade and Development Group, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fishery 17-01-2019</p>
Collective bargaining institutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Main challenges in the cashew sector b. Employment challenges in the cashew sector c. Collective bargaining d. Accountability and transparency e. Unification efforts f. Informal employment 	<p>National Council for Social Dialogue (Tripartite) 18-01-2019</p>
Group interviews		
Cashew processing workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Labour conditions b. Wages c. Labour representation at the workplace 	<p>Fludor employees (n=5) 31-01-2019</p>
Cashew producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Main challenges and opportunities in cashew production b. Cashew sector development 	<p>Community producer group Tchachu (n=30) 24-01-2019</p>

	c. Trade union involvement within cashew sector	
Female producers (general crops)	a. Main challenges and opportunities in for female agricultural producers b. Employment in cashew processing c. Trade union involvement within agricultural sectors	Female producer Group Medidji (about 20 women) 05-02-2019

Expert interviews

Classification	Respondent	Function and organization	Interview topics
Local staff CNV	14-01-2019 06-02-2019	Boko Timotee Project manager, construction local CNV (BCPA), former CSTB unionist	a. Stakeholder influence and interest b. Trade union capacities
	Kafui Fiadjigbe 15-01-2019	Project manager cashew, local CNV (BCPA)	a. Stakeholder influence and interest b. trade union capacities c. Cashew value chain
International trade unions	Nicole Mathot 09-01-2019	Region coordinator Africa, CNV Internationaal	a. Trade union capacities b. Trade union landscape c. Cashew value chain and gender
	Esther Droppers 21-12-2018	Former region coordinator CNV Internationaal	a. Trade union capacities b. Trade union landscape c. Cashew value chain and gender

	Jan Ridder 21-03-2019	Region coordinator Africa and Asia, CNV Internationaal	a. Trade union capacities b. Trade union landscape c. Cashew value chain and gender d. Accountability and transparency
	Joseph Toe 01-02-2019	Programme coordinator, ITUC-Africa	a. Trade union capacities b. Trade union landscape c. Cashew value chain and gender d. Accountability and transparency d. Trade union involvement
International NGOs and technical assistance	Sebastian Dohou 21-01-2019	Program officer, ICCO / Civic Engagement Alliance	a. Stakeholder influence and interest b. Cashew value chain, cashew processing factories, low-wage labour c. Trade union involvement
Consultants/experts cashew value chain	Kees van 't Klooster 25-02-2019	Consultant, PUM	a. Stakeholder influence and interest b. Cashew value chain, cashew processing factories, low-wage labour c. Trade union involvement
	Peter Ton 28-02-2019	Consultant, Fair & Sustainable Consulting	a. Stakeholder influence and interest b. Cashew value chain, cashew processing factories, low-wage labour c. Trade union involvement d. Living wage strategies

Appendix 2: Interview protocols

Checklist

- Date:
- Recorded: yes - no
- Use of name (anonymity): yes - no
- Interviewee (title and name):
- Type of interview: individual - group - expert
- Interview group: Expert- cashew processors – stakeholders – cashew producers – processing workers – trade union leaders

Concepts

1. Wage context

- Labor conditions in cashew processing
- Employment challenges in cashew processing
- Corporate social responsibility practices

2. Cashew value chain / stakeholder analysis

- Cashew sector developments
- Stakeholder positions on trade union involvement in the cashew sector

3. Trade union capacities

- Trade union power resources and strategic capabilities
- Trade union narratives and frames

Interview questions: cashew value chain, wages and labor conditions and stakeholder positions

Set 1: management of cashew processing plants

1. Can you introduce yourself?
2. What are your main activities?
3. In what ways are you involved within the cashew value chain?
4. What are the main challenges and opportunities in the cashew sector?
5. What are major challenges within processing cashew?
6. What are major employment challenges in cashew processing?
7. Can you tell me more about the types of employment in this cashew processing plant?
8. Can you tell me more about the wages in this processing plant?
9. Does the company have a CSR policy and what does it constitute?
10. Are workers represented by trade unions? Why (not)?

Set 2: local civil society organizations

11. Can you introduce yourself?
12. What are your main activities?
13. In what ways are you involved within the cashew value chain?
14. What are the main challenges and opportunities in the cashew sector?
15. What are major challenges within processing cashew?
16. What is your perspective on trade union involvement in the sector?
If positive: in what forms can trade unions be involved?

Set 3: cashew producer organizations

17. Can you introduce yourself?

18. What are your main activities?
19. What are the main challenges and opportunities in the cashew sector?
20. What is the current development of the cashew sector?
21. What are major challenges within processing cashew?
22. What is your perspective on trade union involvement in the sector?
If positive: in what forms can trade unions be involved?

Set 4: International actors

23. Can you introduce yourself?
24. What are your main activities?
25. What are the main challenges and opportunities in the cashew sector?
26. What is the current development of the cashew sector?
27. What are major challenges within processing cashew?
28. What are major employment challenges in cashew processing?
29. What is your perspective on trade union involvement in the sector?
If positive: in what forms can trade unions be involved?

Set 5: Other actors

30. Can you introduce yourself?
31. What are your main activities?
32. What are the main challenges and opportunities in the cashew sector?
33. What is the current development of the cashew sector?
34. What are major challenges within processing cashew?
35. What are major employment challenges in cashew processing?
36. What is your perspective on trade union involvement in the sector?
If positive: in what forms can trade unions be involved?

Set 6: female workers (group)

1. Can you introduce yourself?
2. What is your family-setting?
3. Can you tell more about the labor conditions in the factory?
4. What are the wages? Do you feel that they are sufficient?
5. If you have a complaint, where do you go?
6. Would you prefer a factory union?

Set 7: cashew producers (group)

7. Can you introduce this producer group?
8. What are the main challenges and opportunities in the cashew sector?
9. What is the current development of the cashew sector?
10. What is your perspective on trade union involvement in the sector?

Set 8: female producers (group)

11. Can you introduce this producer group?
12. What are the main challenges and opportunities for female producers?
13. What do you think about employment in cashew processing?
14. Are wages sufficient for your livelihood? Why (not)?
15. What is your perspective on trade union involvement in the sector?

Interview questions: trade union capacities

Set 6: Collective bargaining institutes

16. What is your background?
17. What are your main activities?
18. What main challenges for trade unions?
19. Are trade unions involved in informal sectors and how?
20. Are trade unions involved in agricultural sectors and how?
If cashew involvement: what are their main activities within the cashew sector?
21. How do experience collective bargaining in Benin?

22. Is there corruption amongst trade unions and in what forms?
23. How do unions communicate trade union actions to members and externally?
24. Is there unification of activities and how?

Set 7: Trade union leaders (confederations)

25. What is your background?
26. What are your main activities?
27. What main challenges do you experience as a trade union?
28. Do you focus on informal sectors and how?
29. Are you involved in agricultural sectors and how?
If cashew involvement: what are your main activities within the cashew sector?
30. How do you experience collective bargaining in Benin?
31. Is there corruption amongst trade unions and in what forms?
32. How do you communicate trade union actions to members and externally?
33. Do you work together with other unions and how?

Closure

Do you have anything to add?

Can I write down your contacts for any follow-up questions that come to mind?

Appendix 3: Final coding list

Category and sub-category	Code	Files	References
Cashew value chain (SQ1)			
Cashew sector	Adding value	6	9
	Business opportunities	3	5
	Cashew growing and harvest	5	13
	Cashew sector development	6	9
	Certification	4	8
	Challenges for cashew sector	5	6
	Competition	3	5
	Conflicts	2	2
	Credits	1	4
	Disorganized	6	6
	Formalization	15	29
	Landownership	8	10
	Marketing cashew	7	17
	Other agri-chains	3	6
	Producer organization	12	25
	Seasonal	1	1
Gender	Family planning is a problem	1	1
	Husbands need to be involved	2	3
	Self-dependency is better for women	6	8
	The position of women is improving	3	3
	Women are breadwinner	3	4
	Women are mostly involved with cashew	5	6
	Women are not aware of their rights	3	3
	Women are submissive	4	6
	Women don't have access to finance	8	15
	Women don't have access to land	7	9
	Women need more autonomy	3	3
	Women need more skills	4	4
Legislation	Other legislation	7	12
	Labour law	6	6
	SMIG	3	3
	Tax	7	9
Private sector	Processing plants	5	5
	Profit	3	4
	Accommodation	1	1
	Capacity	5	7
	CSR	4	7
	Day care	5	5
	Employment creation	3	3
	Employee commitment	7	16
	Work ethos	14	27
	Working conditions	9	15
	Health services	2	2
	Hygiene facilities	2	2
	Investment	2	4
	Local visibility	2	3
	Meals and food	2	3
	Representation	6	8
	Training	1	1
	Transport	2	2
	Work shifts	8	21
Wage context (SQ1)			

Compartmentalization		2	2
Expenses		6	8
Income	Income is insecure	1	1
	Minimum wage is not sufficient	11	19
	Productivity dependency	4	8
	Rural income is higher	3	5
	Self-dependency is better	2	2
	Short-term thinking	3	4
	Trade off factory work	3	3
	Village life preference	3	3
	Wages are sufficient	2	2
	Women are breadwinner	1	2
Living wage feasibility		13	21
Stakeholders (SQ2)			
Cashew buyer		1	4
CSO Cashew		8	12
CSO Women empowerment		2	8
Female producers		3	10
Government		13	30
IFA		3	10
International trade unions		2	2
Networks	Partnerships	9	10
	Building relationships	2	3
	Links Dutch - Benin	6	10
	Links international NGOs and Trade Unions	2	3
Processing companies		11	17
Producer organizations		6	12
Technical support actors		6	8
Perspectives on involvement cashew value chain	Distrust of reasons	5	5
	Focus on processors	3	4
	Informal workers organization and formalization	8	10
	Interference	4	4
	Not capable	5	5
	Producers formalization	8	12
Trade union landscape (SQ2 and SQ3)			
Collaboration		4	5
Collective bargaining institutes		3	5
Decision-Making		1	2
Membership		10	17
Political links		6	11
Social dialogue		6	10
Training		1	8
Trade union capacities			
<i>Infrastructural resources</i>			
Human	Beninese trade unions have good leadership skills	1	1
	Lack of collective bargaining skills	2	3
	Lack of leaderships skills	4	4
	Lack of training	2	2
Material	Cooperatives memberships and support	2	5
	Decline of membership	3	3
	Funding challenges	3	4
	Membership structures for informal sectors	3	3
	The union with the most members receives government subsidy	1	2

Organizational processes	Democratic processes	3	4
	ITUC affiliates are organized	1	1
	Lack of transparency	2	2
	Transparent communication	5	5
Programs	Agricultural worker representation	2	2
	Evidence based research	1	1
	Giving training to women	2	2
	Lobby programme government	1	1
	Social program	4	10
<i>Internal solidarity</i>			
	Cohesive collective identities	0	0
	Internal consultation structures (deliberative vitality)	1	1
	Internal unification progresses	0	0
	Lack of internal communication	1	1
<i>Narrative resources</i>			
Repertoires of action	Access to finance	1	1
	Education	1	4
	Fight corruption	2	2
	Formalization	5	13
	Healthcare	1	3
	Sensitization	5	6
	Social dialogue efforts	3	3
	Women empowerment	2	2
Sense of efficacy	Self confidence in actions	5	6
	Stories of defeat	2	8
	Stories of victory	6	13
Shared understandings	Cashew production	2	2
	Collective bargaining capacity	3	3
	Corruption	4	10
	Formalization	6	12
	Living conditions	3	3
	Long-term vision	3	3
	Low quality healthcare	1	1
	Minimum wage	4	6
	Organization of cashew sector	1	1
	Poor access to finance	1	1
	Position of women	4	5
	Traditional mentality	2	2
<i>Network embeddedness</i>			
Horizontal links	Link with cashew processor	1	4
	Links with other CSOs	2	3
Social isolation		1	1
Vertical links	International trade union network	3	3
	Links with Minister	1	1
<i>Articulation</i>			
Dependent articulators	Dependent on funding	1	1
	Formalization is dependent on lower taxes	1	2
	Our strategies are dependent on members	1	1
	The government doesn't make commitment	2	2
Proactive articulators	Belief in trade union ability to change mindsets	1	1
	Belief in trade union ability to create commitment	1	1
	Cashew sector lobby	2	3
	Government lobby	1	2

	Informal sector strategies	2	3
	Starting new collaboration	1	2
	Women rights strategies	3	3
<i>Framing</i>			
Agency in a larger social project	Cashew sector	2	6
	Education	1	2
	Health care	1	1
	Women empowerment	1	1
Extending the frame	Seeking collaboration for funding	2	3
	Seeking collaboration within agricultural sectors	2	6
	Seeking collaboration within informal sectors for technical assistance	1	1
	Seeking good structure for social dialogue	1	2
Transformation of frame	New member fee structures for informal sectors	1	1
<i>Intermediating capability</i>			
Activating social networks	Participation in cashew sector partnership	2	3
	Participation in healthcare program	1	1
	Seeking assistance from international NGOs	2	2
Fostering collaborative action (e.g. unification)	Intersyndicale helps in unifying activities	3	3
	Lobby for collective action	1	1
	Participation in unifying activities	4	4
Mediating contending interests (dialectic)	Able to approach private sector companies	2	4
	Attitude against compromising of agendas	1	1
	Beninese trade unions are able to manage conflicts	1	1
	Don't have effective communication skills	2	3
	Don't speak the language of rural groups	1	1
	Intersyndicale helps in mediating contending interests	2	3
	Not willing to work with private sector companies	1	1
	Striking led to adverse effects	1	1
	Striking works	1	2
	The government interprets striking wrong	1	2
	Trade unions are reactive	1	2
	Tripartite structure helps mediating contending interests	1	1
<i>Learning</i>			
	Getting into the field	1	1
	Lack of training	3	5

Classification	Type	Activities	Interest	Stakeholder Interest							Total	Explanation	Strategy			
				General interest in formalization of cashew sector	A1: Potential	A2: Only in processing	A3: Yes in organization / formalization of workers (mobilization)	A4: Yes in formalization of producers (mobilization)	A5: No, distrust of intentions	A6: No, not capable				A7: No, interference		
Trade agency 1 (Trade & Development Group)	Cashew buyer	Buying cashew nuts from Africa, value chain development	Unknown	x		x							Medium	The buyer has influence on wage payment and principally does not have interest in higher operation costs which is an effect of trade union involvement, yet the buyer recognizes a relationship between wages and employee commitment.	Interest increases when trade unions can contribute to employee commitment	
Government: Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fishery	Government	Strengthening of the cashew sector, especially production enhancement		x										Low-medium	SMIG has not been updated since 5 years, which should happen every 3 years. Labour policy will improve when sector is formalized. The government did not give an perspective on trade union perspective within the sector, but sees trade unions as a stakeholder to be involved in consultation for sector policy.	Interest increases when trade unions contribute to formalization in the sector
CSO 2 'Women empowerment' (the Hunger Project)	International NGO	Women leadership, entrepreneurship, access to credit, family planning, in agriculture		x										Low	Interest in wage increase, but has a strong attitude towards trade union involvement	Interest increases when trade unions contribute to formalization and position of women is receives attention
CNV Internationaal	International foundation linked to the Dutch trade union confederation CNV	Strengthening of trade unionism in developing countries		x		x	x							High	High interest in increasing wages in the cashew value chain through trade unions, initiator of the research study therefore	Train cashew actors in Benin and support the key partner and other trade unions in cashew sector development strategies e.g. working conditions, wage improvement, and organization and formalization of workers and producers
CSO 1 'Cashew value chain' (CEA)	International NGO	Strengthening of local advocacy and lobby of CSOs aimed at enhancement of cashew and shea value chain		x		x	x							High	High interest in strengthening of lobby and advocacy activities of CSOs within agricultural supply chains, for example through trade unions	Can use best-practices in other agricultural value chains to educate cashew actors in Benin; writing policy proposals for sector development and the involvement of civil society in organization and formalization
ITUC - Africa	International trade union	Promoting and working towards decent work and labour rights globally through ITUC affiliates		x		x	x							High	High interest in strengthening of lobby and advocacy activities of trade unions and formalization of the agricultural sector	
Interprofessionals (IFA)	Interprofessionals	Management of the cashew sector through mediating and professional dialogue between sector actors and the government		x		x	x							Low-Medium	IFA organizes and formalizes the sector. IFA recognizes the role of trade unions in organization and formalization of workers and producers	Interest increases when trade unions contribute to formalization in the sector
CSO 1 'Women empowerment' (ANAF)	Local NGO	Improving and empowering living and working conditions of women in agriculture		x					x	x				Low	Has a strong attitude towards trade involvement within the sector	Interest might increase when trade unions focus on processing plants and contribute to better value distribution in the chain, which contributes to better position of women in agriculture
CSO 2 'Cashew value chain' (JEDERAS)	Local NGO	Support cashew value chain development, improving relationships between producers and processing plants		x	x		x							Medium-high	To improve relationships between producers and processing plants, formalization is one of the strategies. Trade unions can contribute to formalization	A partner trade union focuses on formalization and organization of both producers and processing plants. This link can enhance the relationship between the two cashew actors
Processing company 1 (Fludor)	Processing company	Processes RCN mechanically	Unknown			x								Medium	The company has influence on wages but is not really interested in higher operation costs (yet). The company faces some issues in employee commitment. Is starting a collaboration with a trade union to organize workers.	An intensified relationship with trade unions increases employee commitment and the bargaining power of cashew processing workers for higher wages
Processing company 2 (Afokantian)	Processing company	Processes RCN (semi-)mechanically	Unknown		x									Medium	The company has influence on wages but is not really interested in higher operation costs (yet). The company faces severe issues in employee commitment. Is generally interested in improving labour policy for increasing productivity and potentially interested in collaboration with a trade union for the organization of workers.	A collaboration with trade unions potentially increases employee commitment and the bargaining power of cashew processing workers for higher wages
Producer organization 1 (FENAPAB)	Producer organization	Representing cashew producers nationally		x		x			x					Low-Medium	The major aim of FENAPAB is to formalize the sector from a national level. If trade union involvement contributes to sector development and formalization, their involvement is acceptable. But there is a general distrust towards the intentions of trade unions	Interest might increase when trade unions contribute to formalization in the sector
Producer organization 2 (URPA)	Producer organization	Representing cashew producers in Central Benin		x				x						Low-Medium	The major aim of URPA (like other regional producer organizations) is to formalize the sector from a regional level. URPA collaborates with COSI and perceives this as beneficial for the formalization of producers. It is critical to involvement of other trade unions. No identified interest on wage workers whatsoever	Interest might increase when trade unions contribute to formalization in the sector
Technical assistance actor 1 (GIZ)	Technical assistance	Capacity building at all levels to cashew producers		x		x			x					Low	GIZ provides technical assistance to producer organizations at all levels (thus including FENAPAB and URPA) and distrusts the intentions of trade unions as well as their capabilities within the cashew sector. Yet, they see potential in the representation of workers within the sector.	Interest might increase when trade unions contribute to formalization in the sector
Technical assistance actor 2 (TechnoServe)	Technical assistance	Technical assistance in production, transformation, financial and policy to cashew		x					x	x				Low	TNS provides technical assistance to different actors within the cashew sector at all levels (including FENAPAB and URPA). TNS has a slight attitude towards trade union capabilities in general	Interest might increase when trade unions contribute to cashew sector development, e.g. through formalization
UNION1	Trade union	Lobby and advocacy of labour rights in most sectors, social projects in cashew sector locally and nationally, aims at formalization of sector and improve labour conditions		x		x	x		x					High	Has a high interest in formalization of the cashew sector and the representation workers within the sector. COSI focuses on both producers and processing companies. They are working on a factory union at FLUDOR and are interested in collaboration with Afokantian	Depends on analysis of trade union capacity
UNION2	Trade union	Lobby and advocacy of labour rights in most sectors		x		x	x		x					Medium	Has interest in formalization of the cashew sector and the representation workers within the sector. They collaborate with COSI through the intersyndicale. Concrete activities within the sector are unidentified	Interest might increase when being stimulated by other actors / incentives to increase involvement within the cashew sector
UNION3	Trade union	Lobby and advocacy of labour rights		x	x									Low-Medium	The union sees potential, but has no concrete activities or funds to become involved	Interest might increase when being stimulated by other actors / incentives to increase involvement within the cashew sector
UNION4	Trade union	Lobby and advocacy of labour rights in most sectors		x	x	x	x		x					Low-Medium	The union sees potential, but has no concrete activities implemented yet	Interest might increase when being stimulated by other actors / incentives to increase involvement within the cashew sector
UNION4	Trade union	Lobby and advocacy of labour rights in most sectors		x	x									Low-Medium	The union sees potential, but has no concrete activities yet	Interest might increase when being stimulated by other actors / incentives to increase involvement within the cashew sector
Tripartite (CNDS)	Tripartite	Promotion of social dialogue between employers, trade unions and government		x		x	x							Medium-High	The tripartite wants formalization and identified a role for trade unions in organizing workers, promote decent working conditions and labour rights, but also formalizing other parts of the chain	Unclear is how neutral the CNDS functions; no concrete results and challenges for the tripartite were discussed. Activities seem linked to Governmental interests in the cashew sector

Influence	Providing financial support	Links horizontal	Links vertical	Influence in decision-making processes of programs, projects and policies in wage	Explanation	Impact of issue	Explanation	Position
Operating level	x			Medium	Lead shareholder of Afokantan, responsible for general operation at Afokantan, directs subsidies to projects related to Afokantan, collaborates through vertical links locally and with international NGOs	Medium	Impact on labour policy and wage payment, thus general management and value of cashew company shares	Supportive
International	x			High	In charge for formulation of sector policy, including wage (negotiation) and collective bargaining	Low-medium	If not guided top-down, bottom-up approaches will lobby for improved sector policy, which will involve the political force of trade unions	Low support / low opposition
National		x		Low	Provides financial support and collaborates with other (international) NGOs and has both vertical and horizontal links, but influence range is locally focused and not significant for trade unions in cashew value chain	Low-medium	Impacts the income and working conditions of women in cashew processing and their families	Opposed
International	x	x		Medium-high	Part of CEA, has strong links with COSI, financially support and provide capacity-building in lobby and advocacy on national level, therefore work as counterweight to sector policy in minimum wage legislation and collective bargaining, can push social programs of national key partner unions	Medium-high	Social impact and trade union membership in Benin, impact regional management of trade union programs	Supportive
International	x	x	x	Low-Medium	Financially support and capacity-building in lobby and advocacy of civil society, operating range is especially rural areas, lobby at government level. Horizontal and vertical links are therefore identified	Medium	Impacts cashew sector development and the function of civil society in cashew value chain	Supportive
International		x		Low-Medium	Capacity building in lobby and advocacy of ITUC affiliates at national level, providing counterweight in formulating sector policy of collective bargaining and minimum wage legislation, influence depends on their skills in training affiliates. Links are vertical, with ITUC affiliates	Medium-high	Impact on labour conditions in informal sector and trade union membership in Benin, impact regional program	Supportive
National		x		Low-Medium	The management body of the cashew sector, functions as an operating arm of Governmental Action Plan to develop the sector. Needs to mediate contending interests of all major actors in the sector. Links are vertical, to other macro operating actors	Low-medium	Impact on formalization in the sector, thus the management of IFA, ...	Low support
Local		x		Low	Promotes the rights of women in agriculture, especially producers. It is a bottom-up movement with political links, but is not actively involved in cashew	Low-medium	Impacts the income and working conditions of women in cashew processing and their families	Opposed
Local		x		Low-medium	Local NGO which collaborates in networks with funding of international NGOs with interest in the cashew sector. Influence is especially locally, but is lobbying at government level, thus horizontal and vertical links	Medium	Impacts cashew sector development	Supportive
Local			x	Medium - High	Largest processing company which collaborates with a trade union. Has significant influence on company operations including wage payment and decent working conditions, is connected with export companies, has links with local authorities, thus vertical links. As long as legislation or other leverage is absent, can neglect trade union involvement	High	Impacts daily operations, wage payment and employee commitment	Low support
Local			x	Medium - High	Small processing company which is generally directed by of Trade & Development Group. In charge of daily operations and wage payment. Has especially vertical links. As long as legislation or other leverage is absent, can neglect trade union involvement	High	Impacts daily operations, wage payment and employee commitment	Supportive
National			x	Medium - High	National cashew producer organization, priority of Government in formalizing the sector. Has a large vertical network of producer organizations and has strong links with cashew processing plants. Receives funding from international technical assistance actors. Can decide lobby against representation by trade unions at national level	Low	Impact on formalization in the sector, but impact will be local	Opposed
Regional		x		Low - Medium	Regional cashew producer organization and support formalizing the sector. Is part of Fenapab. Has a vertical network in Central Benin with producer organizations and has links with cashew processing plants and COSI	Low-Medium	Impact on formalization in the sector, but impact will be local	Low support
International	x	x		Medium - High	International development agency which provides technical assistance to FENAPAB, regional and local cashew producer organizations. Has political links and collaborates with international cashew development organizations including ACA and TNS. Has intensive network therefore with horizontal and vertical links	Low	Impact on formalization in the sector, but impact will be local and specified to processing workers' and their families	Low-support
International	x	x		Medium - High	International development agency which provides technical assistance to cashew producer organizations. Has political links and collaborates with international cashew development organizations including ACA and GIZ. Has intensive network therefore with horizontal and vertical links	Low	Impact on formalization in the sector, but impact will be local and specified to processing workers' and their families	Low-opposition
National		x		Low-Medium	Key partner of CNV International, participates in networks with international NGOs interested in cashew value chain development, president of the national intersyndicale, links with Fudor. Links are therefore both horizontal and vertical	High	Development of new trade union programs and memberships	Supportive
National		x		Low	Low influence, no direct connection with cashew sector actors except COSI. Influence at government level through intersyndicale and tripartite. Especially horizontal links and internal vertical links with local federations and unions	High	Development of new trade union programs and memberships	Supportive
National		x		Low	Low influence, no direct connection with cashew sector actors except COSI. Influence at government level through intersyndicale and tripartite. Especially horizontal links and internal vertical links with local federations and unions	High	Development of new trade union programs and memberships	Supportive
National		x		Low	Low influence, no direct connection with cashew sector actors except COSI. Influence at government level through intersyndicale and tripartite. Especially horizontal links and internal vertical links with local federations and unions	High	Development of new trade union programs and memberships	Supportive
National		x		Low	Low influence, no direct connection with cashew sector actors except COSI. Has supposedly the largest share of trade union members. Especially horizontal links and internal vertical links with local federations and unions	High	Development of new trade union programs and memberships	Supportive
National			x	Low-Medium	National tripartite mediates between employers, employees and government and promotes decent working conditions, thus has to some extent influence on national wage legislation and sector policy. Has especially horizontal links, it operates with actors at meso level	Medium	Trade unions will lobby and advocate for improved sector and labour policy	Supportive

Capacity	Category	Code	Anonymization	Total	Conclusion	
Infrastructural resources	Material	Agricultural cooperatives membership and support	UNION1,2	2	Two trade unions have been able to connect with cashew cooperatives and support them in terms of equipment and training. These cooperatives are acquired as new members. It is part of a social program.	
		Decline in membership	General	General	All affiliates of ITUC face a decline in membership. This might have to do with privatization and new regional economic policy.	
		Funding challenges	UNION4, UNION1, UNION5	3	Some trade unions are eager to work on social programs, but are dependent on (international) funding.	
			Involved with membership structures for informal sector	UNION1, UNION2, UNION3	3	Trade unions point out that they have been naturally involved with informal sector. Cashew sector is rather new. Informal groups include traders, fishermen, motortaxis, barbers etc. There is an interest for new membership structures and fees accordingly.
			The union with the most members receives government subsidies	UNION5	1	Every four years, there are trade union elections. The largest union receives government subsidy. Elections have not been happening since 2001, and UNION5 claims to be the largest.
	Human	Lack of collective bargaining skills	General, UNION5	General	Different unions have a lack or minimal collective bargaining skills	
		Lack of leadership skills	UNION5	1	Some unions have good leadership skills, for example UNION1. But others can be incapable, which leads to separation within the union, for example CGTB (not interviewed)	
		Beninese trade union have good leadership skills generally	UNION1	General	Relatively, trade unions in Benin are recognized as organized and with good leadership skills	
	Organizational processes	Democratic processes	UNION1	1	UNION1 is democratically organized, both internally and externally (in intersyndicale)	
		ITUC affiliates are organized	UNION1, UNION4, UNION5, UNION2	4	The Beninese ITUC affiliates are well organized	
Lack of transparency		UNION5, UNION2	2	Some unions are doing well for some time, but have problems keeping up, for example in reporting.		
Transparent communication		UNION4, UNION1, UNION5, UNION2	4	Of five trade union, communication channels are identified. Common channels are radio, news letters, website (UNION1), even whatsapp voice message for illiterate (UNION4) and especially open office		
Policies and programs		Agricultural worker representation	UNION1, UNION5	2	Two trade unions identify the need to represent workers within agricultural sectors and have programs developed for that	
	Evidence based research	UNION1	1	UNION1 has done multiple studies and uses the data within its programs		
	Training to women on rights	UNION1	1			
	Lobby programme towards government	UNION1	1			
	Social programme	UNION1, UNION3, UNION2, UNION5	3	Different unions explicitly explain that they contribute to programs in education, women empowerment, healthcare and informal sector		
Internal solidarity		Internal consultation structures (deliberative vitality)	UNION5	1		
		Lack of internal communication	UNION5, UNION2	2		
Network embeddedness	Horizontal links	Links with cashew processors	UNION1	1	UNION1 is the first trade union who set foot in the cashew value chain in Benin; they have approached the largest cashew processing plant and are now working on setting up a union. As such, UNION1 can set an example for the industry.	
		Participation in cashew sector	UNION1	1	UNION1 is involved within a partnership within the cashew sector, with other CSOs	
	Vertical links	Participation in international trade union network	UNION1, UNION2, UNION4, UNION5	4	Four out of six national trade unions are ITUC affiliates	
	Social isolation	Links with Ministry	UNION1	1	UNION1 is lobbying at government level and has contacts with the Minister. Lobby is regarding cashew taxes reinvestment	
		UNION5	1	UNION5 avoids collaboration with other national trade unions, since the union does not want to unify certain activities. They only want to pursue their own agenda		
Intermediating capability	Activating social networks	Participation in cashew sector partnership	UNION1	1		
		Participation in healthcare program	UNION1-5	5	ITUC indicated that its members participated in healthcare programs, this was confirmed by two unions	
	Fostering collaborative action	Seeking assistance from international NGOs	UNION5, UNION4	2	These trade unions have bright plans but very much depend on international funding in their activities and therefore approach international communities	
		Intersyndicale helps in unifying activities	UNION1-4	4	This includes the physical space of bourse du travail, which helps unions organizing activities together	
		Lobby for collective action	UNION1	1		
	Mediating contending interests	Participation in unifying activities	UNION1-4	4		
		Able to approach private sector companies	UNION1	1		
		Attitude against compromising of agendas	UNION5	1		
		Beninese trade unions are able to manage conflicts	General	General		
		Don't have effective communication skill	General	General		
Don't speak the language of rural groups		General	General			
Intersyndicale helps in mediating contending interests		UNION3, UNION1	2			
Not willing to work with private sector companies	UNION5	1				
	Prefers intermediation over striking	UNION4, UNION1, UNION3	3	Difference in opinions about striking; divided UNION1, UNION4 and UNION3 versus UNION5 and UNION2		
	Striking works	UNION5, UNION2	2	Difference in opinions about striking; divided UNION1, UNION4 and UNION3 versus UNION5 and UNION2		
	The government interprets striking wrong	UNION5, UNION2	2	Difference in opinions about striking; divided UNION1, UNION4 and UNION3 versus UNION5 and UNION2		
Articulation	Dependent articulations	Trade unions are reactive	General	General	There is a tendency among trade unions in francophone countries to react on situations, rather than planning. The tripartite and intersyndicale help unions to plan, meet each others plans, etc.	
		Tripartite structure helps in mediating contending interests	General	General		
		Dependent on funding	UNION4	1	Passiveness	
		Formalization is dependent on lower taxes	UNION3	1	Passiveness	
		Our strategies are dependent on members	UNION4	1	Passiveness	

		The government doesn't make commitment	UNION5, UNION2	2	Passiveness
	Proactive articulations	Belief in trade union ability to change mindsets	UNION3	1	Idealism
		Belief in trade union ability to create commitment	UNION1	1	There is a difference between UNION1 and other trade unions observed, as UNION1 is especially expressing proactive articulations, while others are mostly focused on depended articulators
		Cashew sector lobby	UNION1	1	There is a difference between UNION1 and other trade unions observed, as UNION1 is especially expressing proactive articulations, while others are mostly focused on depended articulators
		Government lobby	UNION1	1	There is a difference between UNION1 and other trade unions observed, as UNION1 is especially expressing proactive articulations, while others are mostly focused on depended articulators
		Informal sector strategies	UNION2, UNION3	2	
		Starting new collaboration	UNION1	1	There is a difference between UNION1 and other trade unions observed, as UNION1 is especially expressing proactive articulations, while others are mostly focused on depended articulators
		Women rights strategies	UNION1, UNION3,UNION4	3	Three unions present active women empowerment strategies
Learning	Getting into the field		UNION1	1	There is a difference between UNION1 and other trade unions observed, as UNION1 is especially involved with learning about other sectors as compared to other unions
	Lack of training		General, UNION5	General	UNION5 is known for its lack of training
				1	There are fewer training opportunities, due to changing development agendas.

Capacity	Category	Code	Trade union confederation (anonymized)	Conclusion
Narrative resources	Shared understandings	Collective bargaining capacity	General, UNION 1, UNION2	Collective bargaining skills of trade union leaders are identified as a challenge, since they have been poor in the past. This is now receiving more attention through the <i>intersyndicale</i> .
		Corruption	General, UNION3, UNION5, UNION2	Corruption is a topic which trade unions seem to like to talk about, especially in regards to government and other trade unions. Yet, it is not perceived as a major challenge; as trade unions are well aware of signs of corruption. Examples are intransparent communication within the union and to other unions, abruptly stopping collective activities (e.g. national strikes), and nontransparent membership counts.
		Formalization	General, UNION4, UNION2, UNION3, UNION5, UNION1	All trade unions identify formalization as a challenge. Four out of five trade unions indicate involvement with informal sectors. Factors that play a role are traditional mentality, privatization, and tax. Attempts have been done in the past, an example is the 'irregularities' program. This was unsuccessful. Trade unions point out to believe in sensitization of the sector, lobby and mentality change
		Cashew production	UNION1	COSI is the only trade union who identifies production challenges of the cashew sector, including certified production and low productivity.
		Living conditions	UNION1, UNION5, UNION2	Three trade unions see living conditions of people as a challenge which needs attention
		Long-term vision	General, UNION4, UNION5	Short-term vision of Beninese people is a challenge in long-term planning. This is not only an issue for inhabitants, also for trade union behaviour. Trade unions can therefore be reactive on labour, rather than preventative.
		Low-quality healthcare	UNION1	
		Minimum wage	UNION1, UNION5, UNION2	Trade unions are well aware of minimum wage challenges. Two trade unions indicate that the minimum wage should have been 80.000CFA instead of 40.000CFA, based on a study leading up to the new minimum wage legislation in 2009. Challenges are dependent on legislation. No actions identified for approaching the issue
		Organization of cashew sector	UNION1	
		Poor access to finance	UNION1	
	Repertoires of action	Position of women	General, UNION3, UNION4, UNION1, UNION5	All unions except 1 see the position of women as a social issue
		Traditional mentality	UNION4, UNION2	
		Access to finance	UNION5	Aims to take action in providing credits to workers when there is no access. Especially informal sector.
		Education	UNION5	
		Fight corruption	General, UNION5	General; by unifying activities of ITUC affiliates. CSTB: at government level by filing complaints at ILO
		Formalization	UNION1, UNION3, UNION2	While all trade unions see formalization as a challenge, three trade unions present actions or strategies for formalization
		Health care	UNION1	
		Organize workers	General, UNION1, UNION2	Especially COSI and UNSTB see poverty reduction potential when organizing informal workforce. They identify (multi) stakeholder collaboration as a way to do so.
		Sensitization	General, UNION4, UNION1, UNION5	Trade unions associated with ITUC / the CNDS use the word 'sensitization' often and indicate a repertoire of action towards activating people to formalize, culture change, organization of workers, work rights.
		Social dialogue	General, UNION2, UNION1	One of the trade unions pointed out that striking has not been successful with the new government, since the President and employers feels threatened. This has led to tightening of legislation for striking (no documentation found to verify). Member trade unions of the <i>intersyndicale</i> see social dialogue as a new way to bring the message across on social strategies to employers and government.
Sense of efficacy	Women empowerment	UNION1	COSI is the only union who is currently expressing to work on women empowerment; at CSA these are only past actions.	
	Self-confidence	General, UNION1	ITUC expresses that Beninese trade unions are relatively skilled and can be successful in their actions	
	Stories of defeat	UNION5, UNION2	CSTB and UNSTB tell stories on defeats due to government and corruption.	
	Stories of victory	General, UNION5, UNION2	Especially CSTB and UNSTB a little tell stories of victories. They are the first trade unions of Benin and explain the past stories to explain the present and future of Benin. COSI is expressing barely any success, although they express that their involvement within the cashew sector has been working. COSI's success are much more celebrated by others.	
Framing	Agency in a larger social project	Cashew sector	General, UNION1	ITUC sees cashew sector, and agriculture generally, as a potential sector which needs influence of trade unions. COSI is the only trade union concretely discussing their role in sector transformation.
		Women empowerment	UNION1	Part of the social program of COSI
	Health care	UNION1	Part of the social program of COSI	
	Education	UNION5	Part of the social program of CSTB	
Extending the frame	Seeking collaboration for funding	UNION4, UNION5	Dependent on funding, therefore seeking collaboration	
	Seeking collaboration within agricultural sectors	UNION1, UNION2	Both seek collaboration within the sector to extend their frames of reference	
	Seeking collaboration within informal sectors for technical assistance	UNION5	Articulates dependency on technical assistance and funding, therefore seeking collaboration	
	Seeking good structure for social dialogue	UNION1, UNION2, UNION4	ITUC affiliates are seeking structures for social dialogue, for the mediating contending interests and unifying of activities	

	Transformation of the frame	New memberfee payment structures for informal sector	UNION1	COSI is open to new structures of membership administration and fees, thus transforms its current frame of reference in membership fees collection
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