

Democratic governance in the developing countries: DIAL, six years later

Democratic institution building has always been high on the agenda in development economics. Yet economists have only recently come to see it as a fully fledged part of their research programme. The Arab Spring confirmed the urgent need to make serious inroads in this area and led the international institutions, including the World Bank, to officially acknowledge it (Zoellick, 2011). DIAL was one of the pioneers in this field, taking up the issue in its targeted surveys on governance and democracy (the first in Madagascar in 1995). The international lessons drawn from these surveys were presented in this newsletter in 2006 (See *Dialogue* No. 24). In this article, we look back over our main contributions to this area of research since. We focus on three main issues: elections, the analysis of corruption and confidence in the institutions; and statistical measurement and surveys.

Traditionally, the link between democratic governance and development has been studied at the macroeconomic level using country data (cross-section or panel). For example, a recent study showed that elections do not always guarantee reform in developing countries (Chauvet & Collier, 2009). The quality of elections, their frequency and the political cycle are also vital to understanding the impact of elections on the chances of reform, especially in the most fragile institutional environments. Nevertheless, in response to repeated criticism of the econometric approach based on cross-sectional data, a growing number of studies have adopted micro-economic, comparatist methods, taking advantage of the availability of original individual survey data. Most of our studies are in this vein.

1. Political participation in the Southern countries

Elections are the main technology of democracy and most of the developing countries now regularly hold elections. Yet holding elections is no guarantee of political stability. Recent years have sadly illustrated the risks associated with presidential election letdowns. Young democracies need to ensure that elections are transparent and that they prevent illegal interference (vote buying and intimidation) and ethnic manipulation.

All of these challenges could jeopardise the democratic consolidation process. DIAL has conducted research in order to understand the determinants of political participation in the developing countries. We have studied a range of institutional set-ups, with a focus on Mali and Ghana (two young democracies in the process of consolidation), Madagascar (a country repeatedly hit by political crises) and Vietnam (one-party rule). This range of situations drives home the message that there is not one way or means of conducting the democratic processes underway.

Political participation in a young democracy: what role does migration play?

Mali embarked upon its democratic transition in the early 1990s and remains, to this day, one of the democratic success stories in Africa. However, its fragile nature can be seen from its very low voter turnout in national and municipal elections (barely 30%).¹ A recent DIAL study highlights Mali's positive democratic consolidation path from 1998 to 2009 (Chauvet & Mercier, 2012). Each election led to a higher voter turnout in the following election, suggesting that democracy was taking hold. Mali has a myriad of small political parties dominated by the historical ADEMA party (Alliance for Democracy in Mali), a sign of both its vitality and its fragility. However, voter turnout in the different elections we studied seems to be higher at municipal level where a number of lists/candidates stood for election. Yet our analysis also suggests that remoteness from the main roads is a demobilising factor in the elections. The study moreover finds robust connections between voter turnout and the level of education and income.

The crux of our analysis concerns the link between migration and voter turnout. Mali has a long tradition of migration focusing especially on other West African countries and France. Migration can influence voting behaviour in different ways. To use Albert Hirschman's *Voie*

¹ At the time of writing, the fragile nature of the process has just been dramatically confirmed by a military coup d'état.

– *Exit – Loyalty* terminology, emigration (*exit*) increases the most productive individuals' bargaining power (*voice*). The diaspora can also support political groups and social movements (*voice*).

What is more, return migrants have gained from their experience abroad and form a potential source of new practices and ideas. We are particularly interested in the role of return migrants in the political life of their country of origin. Our analysis suggests that municipalities with a high percentage of return migrants tend to have higher voter turnout rates than the others across all the elections we consider. We therefore believe that the return from migration is associated with democratic consolidation in the case of Mali.

Disenchantment and declining political participation in Madagascar

Madagascar has a number of points in common with Mali. Like Mali, democratic transition and consolidation in Madagascar also got underway in the early 1990s and continued for a decade (Roubaud, 2000). Yet their paths diverged in 2001 as Madagascar was hit by two major political crises. The latest crisis, dating from 2009, has still not been resolved. A comparison of the results of the two successive waves of *Afrobarometer* surveys (2005 and 2008) provided the first opportunity ever to really measure what people thought had changed in terms of democratic governance over this period and how this had affected their lives (Razafindrakoto *et al.*, 2008). The Malagasy were found to be very keen to preserve their civil liberties such as freedom of expression, the right to organise and freedom of the press. These opinions, already expressed in 2005, were even more strongly felt in 2008. The vast majority of the Malagasy people are also deeply attached to the general principles of democratic governance (against one-party rule, the excessive concentration of power and military intervention). However, beyond the matter of principles, the people were guarded about the actual practice of democratic governance. Although they were fairly satisfied with real civil liberties in the country, approximately one-quarter of said they were “not at all” or “not very able to express their opinions freely”. And a similar fraction felt that the specific kind of government in place is of little importance. This suggests a certain amount of disenchantment

with the political authorities. Even those who felt that democratic principles are actually applied often complained that democracy is far from perfect. This dissatisfaction with democratic governance is mirrored by a limited extent of trust in the political institutions.

The picture that emerges then is of a degree of disenchantment among the Malagasy people, resulting in a low level of interest in politics and limited public participation in this area. Barely half of the Malagasy interviewed said they had met with others to solve a problem in the course of the past year and less than 10% had contacted a politician about it. Less than 3% said they had taken part in a demonstration or a protest march. All of these types of participation had declined since 2005, marking the Malagasy people's relative political disaffection. In 2008, they were more critical of the economic situation, felt they had less freedom of speech and harboured more mixed feelings about democratic governance. All of these factors played a part in sparking the 2009 political crisis in Madagascar and formed a harbinger of the abuses of power by deposed President Ravalomanana at a time when the international community continued to sing his praises.

A mixed diagnosis for participatory democracy in Vietnam

Unlike most of the other developing countries, civil society is not legally independent of the political authorities in Vietnam. All associations have to be members of the Vietnamese Fatherland Front. In practice, however, these associations do have a certain amount of autonomy of action, which is constantly being redefined as they go. Neither is there a clear-cut case in Vietnam of less participation by the people than in other developing countries with more open political systems (Cling *et al.*, 2009). Firstly, despite the official principle of “democratic centralism”, the system's high degree of decentralisation gives real decision-making power to the local political echelons in the form of the people's committees and councils, which operate at the different administrative levels (province, district and commune). These bodies enjoy a huge amount of independence based on their still-potent historical legitimacy dating back to the war (profusion of grassroots initiatives). They have a great deal of autonomy and central government has a hard time imposing its views.

Secondly, Vietnam's practice of having the local authorities consult the people is unheard of in similar developing countries. The people have many, albeit supervised, opportunities to make their voice heard. The P135 programme, for example, which is a vast poverty reduction programme for ethnic minorities, emphasises the importance of the people's participation. An ad-hoc survey system was set up to evaluate this programme: half of the households concerned said they were consulted about this programme and two-thirds of them said they were satisfied with the results (Le Dang Trung *et al.*, 2008).

However, this positive diagnosis is not all black and white. A detailed analysis of the P135 programme's participatory process raises questions about the real possibilities for the people to help shape the decisions made, beyond the stated principles (Culas *et al.*, 2012). For example, the survey finds a huge difference between what the people say and what the commune leaders say. The commune leaders say that 90% of the households are consulted and actively participate. Yet social pressure is brought to bear by the way in which this participation works, such as voting through a show of hands and taking turns to speak at these meetings (the leaders state their views first, which makes it risky to take any other stance). This restricts the beneficial effects of this participation and obviously changes the diagnosis deduced from the raw figures. We therefore need to dig deeper behind these figures to analyse the real situation.

Political elite, electoral motives and the geographic allocation of public goods in Ghana

Ghana is another of those rare African examples of ballot-box alternation of power. We have conducted a study of the early period in the country's democratic transition – from 1996 to 2004 – in which we ask whether electoral motives govern the local allocation of public goods (André & Mesplé-Soms, 2011). Traditionally, political economy models focusing on western democracies test two alternative hypotheses: either the swing constituencies receive the most public transfers to swing the vote in favour of the ruling party, or the areas that staunchly support the ruling party receive these transfers out of recognition for their historical support (pork barrel politics). Our study dismisses both of these predictions in the case of Ghana. During

Jerry Rawlings' presidency, it was the districts that voted in the majority for the opposition party that received the most public goods. In other words, the most advantaged areas are the electoral strongholds of the opposition party leaders. We explain this finding by the fact that, during this period, Ghana was still a young democracy with remnants of practices lingering on from the former dictatorship period (Rawlings, after his non-democratic government, also became the first president of Ghana to be democratically elected). The government in place chose to curry favour with the charismatic opposition party leaders and buy peace by distributing public funds in their constituencies rather than run the risk of rejection of the electoral process or even a coup d'état.

2. Corruption and trust in the institutions

Cleaning up corruption is top of today's development policy agenda, so much so that it sometimes becomes confused with the broader field of governance, of which it is but one aspect. There is not one country in which corruption is not a key argument in the politico-economic debate and, consequently, in the power struggles and changes in power. And researchers have looked into this question (see Rose-Ackerman, 2006, for a summary). At the same time, trust (in people and institutions) is now seen as a decisive factor in democratic consolidation.² These two phenomena are linked and the role played by corruption is crucial in this respect. By sapping trust in the institutions, corruption undermines the running of the political institutions in the long run. A number of DIAL studies have studied these issues in depth.

Exploring the determinants of petty corruption

One paper explores the microeconomic mechanisms behind corruption based on the 2005 *Afrobarometer* surveys of 18 Sub-Saharan countries, a network to which the authors belong (Lavallée *et al.*, 2010). It studies a particular type of corruption, petty bureaucratic corruption, which entails paying bribes to minor civil servants in the hope of receiving preferential

² The decisive role of trust is not specific to the developing countries. See the study by Algan & Cahuc (2008) for the French case and associated criticism (Rodriguez & Wachsberger, 2009).

treatment (obtaining a coveted licence), speeding up administrative procedures (facilitation payments and speed money), avoiding taxes and sidestepping regulations (Rose-Ackerman, 2006). The article basically seeks to answer the following questions. Which individuals are most likely to use such practices? Who is asked to pay bribes? Who pays bribes? This distinction between asking and paying is rarely made in the literature. It tests whether civil servants target their victims based on their ability to pay, as suggested by a number of theoretical models (Kaufmann & Wei, 1999; Lui, 1985). This argument implies that the wealthiest – those with a job or those who are the most tolerant of corruption – should be those who are approached the most for bribes. The results obtained are interesting on a number of ways. Some of them bear out the literature, which is mainly theoretical or based on a country approach and on corruption perception indicators. Other findings contradict the literature. They confirm that women display different behaviour with respect to corruption, in keeping with a number of previous studies on this subject. Women are less likely to pay bribes to avert a potential problem with the administration and less liable to make undue payments in their contacts with government services. However, community (ethnic or religious) ties do not play a decisive role in the corruption phenomenon. This article also rejects the “efficient grease” theory, which holds that corruption has a positive impact by opening the door to otherwise inaccessible public services. Lastly, our study finds that the perception of corruption and the fact of having already fallen victim to this phenomenon are important factors in its frequency, as are attitudes to corruption.

How corruption affects trust in institutions and the informal sector's performance

Along the same lines, we analysed how corruption impacts upon trust in the political institutions in Africa based on waves 2 and 3 of the *Afrobarometer* surveys (Lavallée, 2006; Lavallée *et al.*, 2008). To be more precise, we tested a repercussion of the abovementioned “efficient grease” theory: if corruption is seen in a positive light as opening the door to public services, then the people should have more trust in them. Our findings clearly reject this theory. They show that corruption undermines trust, irrespec-

tive of the quality of the government services. Nevertheless, they do suggest that experience and perception of corruption have different effects on institutional trust.

Last but not least, our study explores the links between corruption and the informal sector in Sub-Saharan Africa (Lavallée & Roubaud, 2011). The late 1990s and early 2000s saw many analyses of connections between corruption and the informal economy. Ever since the paper by Johnson *et al.* (1997), the broad consensus has been that corruption and the informal economy go hand in hand. Most of the studies on this focus on the specific situation of transition by socialist economies to a market economy, since this process came with growth in informal activities. It was therefore vitally important to understand why businesses concealed all or part of their activities. Our study set out to extend this type of analysis to the African environment, where the informal sector is a key economic powerhouse and corruption is endemic. We took an original database covering all the *1-2-3 Surveys* conducted in the seven economic capitals of the West African Economic and Monetary Union from 2001 to 2003. Specifically, we used Phase 2 data on a representative sample of heads of informal production units. This paper then studies the reasons why businesses choose to be informal, their exposure to corruption and how corruption affects their performance. Our analysis of the determinants of corruption shows that the mechanisms in play in the informal sector are the same as those found in the formal sector. The largest businesses, in general, and transport sector firms, in particular, are more exposed to corruption. Our findings also suggest that corruption drastically reduces business performance.

Petty corruption in Vietnam: measurement and analysis to help lift the taboos

Working with the Transparency International team, the data collected in Vietnam to build the *Global Corruption Barometer* were analysed by means of time comparisons (2008-2010) and space comparisons (with other Asian countries). In a first time in Vietnam, the findings of a survey of the population's views of corruption were presented to the public. They revealed mixed feelings among the people: there is more petty corruption in Vietnam (especially in the health services) than in neighbouring countries,

and the Vietnamese feel that the phenomenon is growing. However, they acknowledge the effort being made by the authorities to combat this scourge and they are more inclined to show willing to take part in it (Razafindrakoto, Roubaud & Salomon, 2011).

At the same time, an analysis of data from a nationwide youth integrity and corruption survey turned up a wealth of information. This study forms a basis for youth policy making and monitoring to promote integrity and corruption education and awareness (Dang Giang *et al.*, 2011). One of the striking findings of this survey is the disparity between the importance placed on integrity from a conceptual point of view and how young people behave when confronted with corruption. Nearly 90% consider that corruption is unacceptable on the whole, but 32% see it as normal to “pay a bribe to a hospital worker to get better treatment”. In addition, 13% of young people admit that this practice is not proper behaviour, but are willing to accept it. The older the young people interviewed, the more “accommodating” they are to normative moral principles and everyday corruption. The survey also reveals that young people are more at risk of corruption than adults, especially in situations where their professional future is on the line. A full 38% of young people are prepared to pay a bribe to get into a good school or to get a job.

3. Taking forward data collection and methodological innovations

DIAL continues to develop statistical tools to improve the methods used to monitor and evaluate democracy and governance in the developing countries, in connection with poverty and the population’s living conditions. A number of methodological publications have reported on this work (Razafindrakoto & Roubaud, 2006; Herrera *et al.*, 2007 & 2008). Our pioneering approach, launched in the 1990s, has grown in stature with international recognition from sources such as the Stiglitz Commission (2009) in its work and the *Measuring Progress* initiative (OECD, 2011). The starting point for this was that the recent past’s mushrooming international databases based mainly on what the (generally Northern) experts had to say were no substitute for representative surveys that gave voice to the Southern people. Worse still, a comparison of Northern and Southern views of

corruption in Africa (Razafindrakoto & Roubaud, 2010)³ showed that these databases gave a distorted, disparaging image of the people of the South, with dramatic consequences in terms of aid allocation and FDI focuses.

DIAL’s work in this area is based on four types of operation: grafting democracy and governance modules onto the official statistical household surveys, especially the *1-2-3 Surveys*; conducting socio-political surveys with the *Afrobarometer* network; developing innovative ad-hoc surveys associated with specific research programmes; and using and matching existing socioeconomic and political databases.

On the first front, we have taken forward our data collection and methodological consolidation work, expanding our geographical coverage. To date, these modules have been conducted in some 15 African, Latin American and Asian (Vietnam) countries, in systematic partnership with the national statistics institutes. Some countries have decided to institutionalise these modules. This is the case for Benin, Madagascar, Mali and especially Peru, which is the most accomplished model in this approach. The Vietnamese experience is particularly informative. DIAL researchers worked in association with the World Bank in Vietnam on designing a special governance module, which was grafted onto the *Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey* (VHLSS) in 2008. The survey covered a large sample of households. It was conducted by the General Statistics Office under the auspices of the Ministry for Investment Planning. The survey won out over reluctance in a fairly hostile environment by putting a good case, drawing on international experience and building a balanced, transparent partnership. Yet it has to be said that it’s not over till the fat lady sings... In this case, the survey findings have still not been published and the data have not been made available.

On the second front, DIAL joined the international *Afrobarometer* network in 2005 and is in charge of the surveys in Madagascar. The network, which now comprises some 20 African countries, conducts a series of surveys of nationally representative households in order to measure and analyse changes in people’s views

³ This paper won the African Politics Conference Group (APCG) award for the best political science article on Africa in 2010.

on governance, democracy, civil society and economic reform. These surveys were first launched in the late 1990s and will be conducted for the fourth time in 2012. In addition to coordinating the surveys in Madagascar (2005, 2008 and 2012), DIAL contributes to the network's scientific outreach with such actions as training for French-speaking African researchers at summer schools (2007 and 2009).

The third operation covers more detailed surveys on targeted focuses. For example, DIAL helped set up an original survey methodology for young people (and a control group of adults) to develop indicators on corruption and the "integrity" notion based on individuals' values, perceptions and practices (Giang *et al.*, 2011). The survey (*Youth Integrity Survey*) was piloted in Vietnam in 2010 in liaison with local NGOs and is set to be replicated in other countries at Transparency International's instigation. This extension is scheduled to roll out in four Asian countries (South Korea, Fiji, Indonesia and Sri Lanka) this year. DIAL's work with Transparency International and other institutions (such as the UNDP's Oslo Governance Center) goes beyond simply conducting and analysing ad-hoc surveys to participation in think tanks on methodologies and policies.

The last front consists of compiling and comparing existing data in usually disconnected fields (e.g. population censuses and election results). One case in point is the electoral geography work launched in Madagascar in the second half of the 1990s (Roubaud, 2000), which was extended to Mali and Ghana at an even more detailed municipal level (see the above-mentioned studies by Chauvet & Mercier and by André & Mesplé-Somps).

On all these fronts, DIAL's activities systematically include training for students, researchers and specialists from the country in which DIAL is working; institution building (essentially public); and a special focus on disseminating the research findings to a wide audience (through conferences and official publications) to help develop the democratic debate on these issues (see, for example, Kuépié *et al.* (2009) for Mali and Herrera (2010) for Peru and the Andean countries).

Conclusion: research outlook

The political economics of development will remain top of DIAL's research agenda in the coming years. This research work forms part of a number of programmes scheduled or already underway. Three of them are worth a special mention.

The POLECOMI project (POLitical ECONomy of Migration), funded by the French National Research Agency (ANR), is looking into how migration influences political life and the emergence of political elites in the two West African countries of Senegal and Mali. Our research aims to identify migrants' transfers of democratic standards to their home villages. POLECOMI is also designed to explore the influence of municipal governance on inequalities within municipalities in Mali. This entails qualitative and quantitative surveys in the two source countries and the two host countries (United States and France). The transfer of democratic standards will be captured by a series of ethnographic interviews combined with an analysis of quantitative surveys of migrants exiting polling stations in France and the United States during the first round of the presidential elections in Senegal (and possibly Mali). We will also study the determinants of access to local and national elected office with a focus on the role of the migratory experiences of individuals and/or their families. This research will be conducted on the basis of the case of Mali. The Malian national statistics institute (INSTAT) has accordingly added migration, political participation and public goods modules to its continuous modular household survey (EMOP) at our request. Lastly, we will look into the influence of governance on the economic sphere with an analysis of the allocation of public goods and inequalities within municipalities.

The second project, launched in 2011, concerns Madagascar and is part of the huge Institutions, Governance and Long-Term Growth programme ordered by the French Development Agency (AFD). It is analysing economic and political pathways and their long-run interrelations in a dozen countries, with each team developing its own methodology in keeping with a multidisciplinary approach. Madagascar's economy has been on a downward trend for decades. This relentless recession is far from explained by just economic policy choices. Every growth

upturn in the country has ended in a major political crisis that has dragged down the positive momentum. Three types of data input have been chosen to identify the factors behind this Malagasy paradox. The first is macroscopic and historical, designed to cross-compare economic growth with socio-political changes over more than 50 years. The second is microeconomic and socio-political. It will analyse the factors the people believe to be behind the successive uprisings based on a series of statistical surveys on their perceptions and aspirations. The last input takes a meso and sociological approach to explore the method of elite reproduction and the role played by the elite in the development process.

Last but not least, the third major project starting this year is called NOPOOR (*Enhancing Knowledge for Renewed Policies against Poverty*). This international research programme funded by the European Commission involves some

20 research institutions. One of the programme's strands focuses on governance to investigate the links between weak institutions and poverty. DIAL's studies on this will concern Madagascar, Vietnam and Peru. They will focus in particular on the running of the public services, participation by the people (especially the poor) and interactions between poverty and the quality of the institutions to analyse any vicious cycle in which the poor may be stuck. The research will draw on data from statistical surveys of the population's points of view and behaviour and will also make use of qualitative interviews. This project aims to develop innovative approaches, with a comparative aspect, based on an evaluation of the knowledge acquired on each focus area.

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Research programmes in progress

The NOPOOR project

Enhancing Knowledge for Renewed Policies against Poverty

A consortium headed by the DIAL Joint Research Unit (UMR) has won the *Tackling Poverty in a Development Context* call for proposals put out by the FP7 Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) programme. This project was launched on 1 April 2012 following eight months of negotiations to define the hundred

or so research activities concerned. The consortium is made up of 20 academic and research institutions (including IRD and the University of Paris Dauphine) in 17 countries across four continents. Over one hundred researchers will take part in the five-year project.

Chauvet Lisa, Lavallée E., Razafindrakoto Mireille, Roubaud François (2012)

Gouvernance démocratique dans les pays en développement : DIAL, six ans plus tard

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