

DIALOGUE

D I A L n e w s l e t t e r

Number 30

April 2010

Editorial

This rescheduled issue of *Dialogue* could be said to be the first newsletter from a “new” DIAL. On 1 January 2010, DIAL – “Development, Institutions and Long-Run Analyses” – became DIAL – “Development, Institutions and GlobALisation”. This small change to our name is the result of a huge transformation.

The Economic Interest Group (EIG) with the French Development Agency (Afd) has been dissolved and the IRD Research Unit, DIAL, has been partnered with the University of Paris-Dauphine to form a Joint Research Unit (UMR). This move has also expanded DIAL’s scope. While continuing to work on its given issues and methods, DIAL will reach out to take in new subjects focusing in particular on the mechanisms and effects of globalisation.

This new partnership is underpinned by strong similarities and complementarities between the old DIAL and Dauphine’s International Economics and Development team and, beyond, Dauphine’s Economics Laboratory (LEDA). Both teams have worked and produced publications on issues such as the formation of inequalities and poverty, governance and institutions, development assistance, and migration. The complementarities between the two teams will give the “new” DIAL the wherewithal to take a more international view of development questions by looking more at the interactions between countries and the effects of globalisation on development.

The “new” DIAL will comprise some forty researchers and lecturer-researchers and the same number of PhD students. This will give it critical mass and synergy in the pooling of resources – especially documentary resources – research dissemination and promotion, the participation of researchers in education and training, and our responsiveness to calls for bids.

Although the dissolution of the EIG calls for a review of our traditional partnerships, the creation of the Joint Research Unit will help us build on these partnerships in programmes and projects. The AFD, the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MAEE), itself restructured, and the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), will remain our “core” partners, but no longer our sole partners.

The “new” DIAL obviously needs to consolidate the strengths of the two teams, especially in applied research using cutting-edge quantitative methods and in data collection and processing using grass-roots surveys. The statistical hub will continue to grow.

Promotion of the “new” DIAL’s findings will be scaled up with an active publication policy, naturally, but also profile-building for the *STATECO* journal, published jointly by INSEE and Afristat, with the aim of having it listed by the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and the French Research and Higher Education Assessment Agency (AERES). Our website will also be revamped and modernised as part of this move to extend our reach and profile. Our *Dialogue* newsletter will remain six-monthly. It will provide news on the Joint Research Unit’s activities and will participate in the debates, and even have a hand in launching them. The UMR and its researchers will also gain a higher profile by extending the reach of our proactive communication policy beyond the academic world.

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DIALOGUE
is Dial newsletter.
It is published
in French and English.
Circulation: 1.500 copies.

Free subscription on our web site
www.dial.prd.fr

Publisher :
Michel Laurent
Layout :
Coryne Ajavon
Danielle Delmas
Design :
www.iAntal.com

UMR 225
Développement,
Institutions et
Mondialisation “DIAL”

Institut de Recherche pour
la Développement
Université Paris-Dauphine

DIAL and Madagascar: a long history

DIAL has been active in research in Madagascar for over fifteen years now, with nearly a score of researchers from the new body having worked there or working there now. This huge, ongoing and constantly renewed commitment in a long-term partnership with the national institutions has generated new information on the Malagasy economy and society. And this new knowledge has already set a river of ink flowing. Over 75 scientific articles (a large number in international peer reviewed journals), 17 chapters in composite publications and three books have been published, not to mention official reports and grey literature.

The presentation of some of this output to mark the formation of the DIAL Joint Research Unit (UMR) shows the wide range of subjects addressed and the wealth of findings. It also demonstrates some of DIAL's own particular research attributes, which go to make up its identity and the quality of its scientific work.

Our focus on poverty here covers three main groups of study: studies shedding new light on how to identify the poor, studies on macroeconomic determinants and the poverty dynamic, and studies analysing the linkages between poverty and individual behaviour.

Poverty alleviation policies cannot be conducted without first identifying the poor. Poverty is classically defined in monetary terms. Under this definition, poverty in Madagascar is closely linked with area of residence, given the much higher level of rural poverty than urban poverty. Yet it is also linked with institutional activity sector, wherein the informal sector accounts for a large proportion of the poor despite its strong internal income heterogeneity. However, other individual variables, especially level of education, gender and household size, also condition poverty levels. For example, wage inequalities between men and women have been analysed in detail. Surprisingly, they appear to reflect more differences in level of education, working hours and experience than any real sex discrimination mechanisms. They also tie in with different sector choices by men and women, with the most highly educated women opting for self-employment more frequently than the men.

However, the latest thinking on poverty suggests that it cannot be encapsulated solely in monetary terms. Analyses conducted in the Malagasy capital find little overlap among the different facets of poverty, whether objective (monetary, material living conditions, human capital and social exclusion) or subjective (individuals' assessments of their own level of poverty and welfare). This makes it impossible to identify a hard core of poverty. This non-coverage of poor categories casts doubt on the nature and causes of poverty put forward using studies based solely on the monetary approach. This in turn begs the question as to the relevance of the resulting policies.

The welfare approach can also put in issue certain preconceptions. For example, one study finds that, despite the problems encountered by informal sector workers, especially underemployment, setting up in this sector is not necessarily something that people feel forced to do. It can be a willing move. It also finds that some workers are well rooted in the sector and express firm optimism in the future of their businesses.

A second group of studies concerns the poverty dynamic and inequalities. Understanding these areas is a second key factor. Long-run trend analyses turn up different findings depending on the period and environment studied. For example, a study of consumption in Antananarivo from 1960 to 1997 finds a steady decline in living standards along with widening inequalities. These trends were neither curbed nor altered by the drastic changes to the political and economic systems. However, the country's macroeconomic performance after this date prompted a sharp drop in poverty in the capital in all its forms (reduction in unemployment and underemployment, decrease in child labour rates, narrowing of gender wage gaps, etc.), even though this overall improvement did little to help the poorest individuals. In the rural areas, the poverty dynamic is particularly hard to assess due to a lack of statistical data. However, a few rural observatories did track household consumption over an equivalent period of time. They turned up a tendency toward improvement, albeit highly imbalanced across the regions.

This spurred a number of studies into growth factors and the determinants of whether inequalities stay or go.

One study looks at the effects of public policies, focusing on export-led growth policies and the efficiency of export processing zones as of the 1990s. It finds that these zones have not only contributed to growth and job creation in general, but have also boosted the local economy due to the extensive use of inputs from other economic sectors and their effects on household consumption. Moreover, it finds that the apparently lower wages in these zones do not reflect greater worker exploitation so much as structural manpower characteristics (gender, age, etc.). Given the better protection offered (some social security cover, application of labour law, etc.), the export processing zones constituted more of a poverty and inequality reduction factor over the period.

The development and longevity of businesses also depends on the economic and financial structures. Research into the impact of business financing by a microcredit institution establishes that financed businesses post better performances on average than the others, even though the dynamic effects are more disparate: positive in growth periods, but more uncertain in slump periods. The importance of financial capacity is also pointed up by a study of factors involved in the persistence of rural poverty. The capacity of the least capital-endowed farmers to resist weather-related income shocks is permanently affected by the low protective capacity of the informal insurance systems.

In addition to looking at the economic structures and public policies, some studies also suggest considering the social structures. For example, a comparative study of five sub-Saharan African countries finds that income inequalities, particularly high in Madagascar, are also associated with greater inequality of educational opportunity, which itself depends to a large extent on the father's social position and level of education. The authors hence posit that this situation could reflect the persistence of a social system that draws hard lines between individuals based on their status group.

A third group of studies looks into the linkages between poverty and individual behaviour.

Many studies find that the level of education in Madagascar is a key determinant of the level of individual welfare and wealth even though returns to education differ depending on the private or public status of the establishments attended. This means that it is particularly

important to analyse families' education strategies and behaviour. First of all, there appears to be a very strong demand for education, including among the poor. This, in an environment of free education, is reflected by high primary school enrolment rates, which would seem to suggest that the level of income is not a determinant in child labour. However, income variations over time have a more significant effect on decisions as to whether children are in school or not. So income shocks can help explain certain premature exits from the education system. Nevertheless, the demand for education may be expressed differently depending on whether it comes from the child's father or mother and depending on the child's gender. The greater the mother's bargaining power in the household, the higher the probability of a girl attending school.

Poverty can also affect demographic patterns. For example, a study based on a biographical survey shows that the country's protracted crisis through to the 1990s significantly pushed back the age of adulthood, as defined by three symbolic milestones: first job, marriage and leaving the parental home. Conversely, households may also implement strategies to escape poverty. Two analyses conducted in rural areas provide some extremely interesting information on this subject. The rural analysis suggests that migration outside of the village is a particularly important factor in increasing incomes. This finding begs the question as to why geographic mobility is so low in Madagascar. The second analysis shows that the practice of child fostering has a positive impact on children's education and hence on their chances of breaking out of poverty.

Poverty can also have an impact on individuals' political behaviour. Although the poor do not, on average, appear to be less attached to democratic principles, one study shows that the combination of growing egalitarian aspirations and a strong feeling of being left by the political wayside is responsible for a firm rejection of democratic systems of government in the capital's poorest neighbourhoods.

The following list of studies is not exhaustive. Yet it does give a good idea of the wide range of subjects and wealth of findings. In addition to the fact that all the research is on Madagascar, these studies have three common threads that bind them into a cohesive whole.

The first is that nearly all the studies are the result of teamwork. Most of them are based on research conducted jointly by two or more unit

members. Even when they are signed by just one author, more often than not they have benefited from comments by other researchers in a formal process (e.g. under the direction of a “senior”), informal process (discussions with colleagues at the workplace) or at presentations to team seminars. This team dynamic is key to the success and quality of the research conducted.

A second element is the complementary nature of the basic and applied research. Although the studies systematically aspire to academic excellence, they never lose sight of their potential implications and interest for the country, especially in terms of public policies. Hence research on the South becomes research for the South. This research has formed the subject of a certain number of public presentations, conferences and publications in the country (such as the *Economie de Madagascar* journal headed up by DIAL researchers). It has also more often than not been covered by the local press, providing food for thought for the public debate. And it has just as frequently involved Malagasy researchers, drawing on their expert knowledge of their country while contributing to the development of research in the South.

The last common thread has to do with the methodological direction chosen. Although all the studies take a quantitative approach to the economic and social phenomena (statistical analyses and modelling), they are original in terms of their focus on stakeholder behaviour. This is not based on a predefined model, but analysed using ad-hoc surveys (surveys of households or production units) and taking into account the particularities of the environments in which this behaviour is expressed. Such a methodological take calls for a massive investment in statistical data production.

In Madagascar, IRD and the Malagasy national statistical institute INSTAT set up a partnership in 1994 in connection with the MADIO project. It called for two of the unit's researchers to be posted to Madagascar for a period of five years.

This project developed innovative data collection instruments and mechanisms. It also established the technical, symbolic and human conditions required for these instruments and mechanisms to be in regular, long-term use. These methodological innovations – *1-2-3 Surveys*, subject-specific modules grafted onto the ordinary employment surveys, and rural observers – have continued to be used long after the initial project, producing exceptionally long-run statistical series for an African country. These same instruments have also triggered interest far beyond Madagascar's borders. The *1-2-3 Surveys* designed to measure the informal sector have been extended from Madagascar to some 20 developing countries, initially in West Africa in the early 2000s and then on other continents. Today, they form the bedrock of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) action plan for measuring the informal sector in Africa (PASIA). The modules on the *Multiple Dimensions of Poverty, Governance and Democracy*, conducted regularly in Antananarivo since 1995 and reporting on the perceptions and actual experiences of stakeholders in these areas, have also been exported since to Africa, Latin America and Asia, and the UNDP is now showing growing interest in them.

So DIAL has quite a special historical relationship with Madagascar. A research model has developed in this country that belies the supposed impossibility of conducting thorough, high-quality research with a body of relevant and reliable data in a poor country. A number of ambitious projects are shaping up for the future: nationwide roll-out of the *1-2-3 Surveys*, tracking of microcredit institution customers interviewed in 2001 and 2004, analysis of development aid procedures and relations between authorities and international institutions, and the creation of a workshop to analyse data from the Malagasy *Afrobarometer* surveys.

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Better assess the impact of shocks on population

The evaluation of policy impact is increasingly at the heart of development issues. The methodologies and analyses have become more sophisticated, and more frequently used by organizations and development operators.

The impact evaluations cover a wide range of situations. They can evaluate public policies such as trade openness or targeted social programs (e.g. for the poorest part of the population). Development projects and policy impacts are more and more frequently evaluated: what are the benefits, for a specific part of society, of the construction of new roads, new schools, state-provided textbooks, targeted assistance, etc? Impact evaluation allows to test theoretical hypotheses in economics, to deepen the analysis of behaviour, etc. Depending on the methodology the evaluation can be macro or microeconomic.

One area where these methods are increasingly used is in the evaluation of a country's situation following a crisis or a shock. These shocks can be brought about by different reasons (natural disasters, political crisis, economic or public health issues), but they have serious consequences on living conditions. Most importantly, not every household is affected in the same way. Some households are more vulnerable and should be given special treatment.

The earthquake in Haiti on January 12th of this year is a terrible disaster that has touched the whole population of the southern part of the country. However, every household was affected differently. The death of the head of household, loss of

housing, and unemployment affect families in varying ways. Above all, the earthquake's impact varies according to the household's characteristics. It is likely that the poorest households suffer more from the consequences of the earthquake. These households are also affected differently when it comes to the allocation of aid because not all of them have the same access to public assistance offices or do not have the same connections.

DIAL is renowned for its extensive expertise in surveys and analysis of living conditions in developing countries. DIAL has already conducted many impact studies. Some of these studies are more specifically oriented towards the analysis of shocks and focus on the consequences of a decrease in income following a shock on certain aspects of the household living conditions such as childhood education.

DIAL now concentrates more resolutely to this type of analysis and participate in the development of more appropriate methodologies in different contexts. We plan to intervene in emergency situations (or post-emergency) and contribute to improve the information available to policymakers in order to implement fairer and more efficient policies that take into account the real needs of the population. Our team will soon be complemented with the addition of a climatic shocks specialist. This topic will be at the heart of the discussions during the international seminary DIAL will organize at the end of 2011.

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