

DIALOGUE

La lettre d'information de DIAL

N° 50

July 2018

Focus:

Present and forthcoming migration research at DIAL

Can migration be a factor for development in source countries and what mechanisms are at play in the migration-development nexus? This question is a major research focus for the DIAL team working on the international economy and development. Migration – whether internal (e.g. rural exodus) or international, temporary or permanent – is often a constituent of the development process. Analysing migration is a complex process, as there are many mechanisms involved: migration can have an impact on home communities in the short and long run, mainly by way of migrants' departures, remittances and returns.

The economic approach's starting point is the assumption that the decision to migrate results from an evaluation concluding that the benefits expected from the migration project will be higher than its costs (see for instance Borjas (1987)). The question is then to ascertain whether this decision is individual or made by a household or community as a whole, and to identify the nature of the expected benefits and their distribution. A rich quantitative literature aims at measuring the impact of migration on origin communities through migrants' transfers of funds. It notably questions the effect of remittances on recipients' poverty (see for example Gubert et al. (2010)) and on the accumulation of human capital (for instance Edwards and Ureta, 2003). In the same perspective, the study by S. Mesplé-Somps and A. Al-Mouksit examines whether migrant remittances serve to alleviate transient in-year shocks based on data collected in Mali to assess the insurance effects of both internal and international migration. In view of the much-debated impact of migration on children's school enrolment in the home country, another study will be conducted on Mali where the migration phenomenon is manifold and family compositions are complex. The study will seek to identify differentiated migration effects based on the migrant's link with his or her children (S. Mesplé-Somps, F. Arestoff and A. Sougane). Evidence of the benefits of migration for home communities prompts the question as to the distribution of these gains among the home country's population. Does migration tend to reduce or exacerbate inequalities? The recent literature has made theoretical and empirical progress on this question, evidencing that the impact of migration on inequalities depends on both the determinants of migration – who are the individuals able to leave – and migrants' remittance and return choices. For instance, Adams (1998) put forward an inequality enhancing effect of the Pakistanis emigration, while Taylor and Wyatt (1996) observe the opposite in the case of the Mexican migration to the US.



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This impact can also evolve during the historical migration process: migrants from a recent emigration country are generally members of the relatively well-off fringes of the population, resulting in a tendency for migration to have more of an inegalitarian impact. However, further migration tends to bring down the individual cost of departure given the role played by former migrants and migrant networks in the host country in providing such information as host country job opportunities. This can smooth departures for less well-off individuals and hence reduce the inegalitarian impact of migration (McKenzie and Rapoport, 2007).

The effect of migration on inequalities therefore depends largely on the structure and workings of interpersonal networks, which determine access to information. These networks also often condition remittances to and responsibilities towards the home communities. A number of studies underway at DIAL are looking into these aspects. In the Algerian case, E.M. Mouhoud is analysing the extent to which the impact of remittances on poverty depends on the institutions (village committees) and therefore on the historical course of migration. He is also studying the role of the length of the migration period in this mechanism. In the Lebanese case, he is conducting research in liaison with the Paris School of Economics and Université Paris Nord researchers to understand the impact of migration on inequalities based on migratory characteristics (particularly migrants' destinations) and local characteristics (the ethnic and religious composition of the home town and the circumstances surrounding the migrant's departure). In association with a research programme on the links between interpersonal networks and the reproduction of inequalities in India, C. Nordman is analysing internal migration in collaboration with socio-economists and sociologists at the French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development (IRD), the French Institute of Pondicherry and the Madras Institute of Development Studies. This labour migration often serves as a means of empowerment, especially in rural areas. Yet, here again, it is largely conditioned by personal ties within or outside the community.

Moving beyond the financial impacts of migration associated with migrants' monetary gains and remittances, and following the results obtained from qualitative approaches in sociology and political science, recent economic research has looked into migration-related socio-political changes, which themselves interact with economic development in the migrants' home countries. Some results notably highlight the aggregated impact of emigration at large, and of student migration in particular, on democracy and political institutions (see for instance Spilimbergo, 2009 ; Docquier et al., 2016 ; Mercier, 2016). Others emphasize the micro-economic impact of migration on social norms (Lindstrom and Saucedo, 2002 and Bertoli and Marchetta, 2012 about fertility) and political norms or voting behaviours (Batista and Vicente, 2011 ; Pfütze, 2012 ; Chauvet and Mercier, 2014 ; Barsbai et al., 2017). DIAL is developing a number of projects in this area focusing on two main complementary dimensions: i) social impacts and migration policies, and (ii) intangible remittances. In addition to transferring funds, international and return migrants are potential vehicles for transfers of information, ideas and norms that could affect local socio-political dynamics. These remittances, and how they depend on the host countries, will be studied by L. Chauvet, F. Gubert, S. Mesplé-Somps and A.-S. Robilliard, focusing in particular on gender norms, female genital mutilation/cutting and domestic violence in Mali. The mechanisms through which migration can affect local political balances will also be studied from different angles using original data collected. For example, a survey conducted by a DIAL team in partnership with the Mali National Statistics Office provides information on the migratory pathways of Malian local officials. The data derived from this survey will be used to study how the migratory experience affects the emergence and composition of local elites. They will also be used to investigate potential particularities among former migrant elected officials in terms of the

public policies they put in place with their effect on local development (projects developed by L. Chauvet, F. Gubert, M. Mercier, S. Mesplé-Somps and J.-N. Senne of Université Paris-Sud). The role of the Malagasy diaspora in Madagascar's long-run politico-economic trajectory, especially by way of its interactions with local elites, will also be analysed drawing on surveys underway of the Malagasy diaspora and its associative fabric in France (projects conducted by M. Razafindrakoto, N. Razakamanana and F. Roubaud). Lastly, a project on the role played by migrants in local socio-political dynamics will investigate the mechanisms through which international migrants and refugees can affect the course of civil violence in their home country, from both a theoretical and empirical angle (project led by M. Mercier).

The question of the impacts of migration appears to be inextricably linked with the determinants of migration: who leaves? The numerous papers dedicated to this question (for instance Chiswick, 1999; Orrenius and Zavodny, 2005; McKenzie and Rapoport, 2010; Fernández-Huertas Moraga, 2011 and 2013; Chort and Senne, 2018) underline how complex it is, since migration is driven by both an aspiration to leave and the means to do so (financial, social and information). It also depends on the historical migration process, which alters the conditions for new departures and can form part of a collective decision-making programme. Added to this are external factors, especially political and environmental elements, which need to be taken into account to understand the emergence of new migratory phenomena. A number of studies underway at DIAL are looking into these questions. S. Mesplé-Somps and B. Nilsson have teamed up with geographers, sociologists and anthropologists at the French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development (IRD), the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and the universities of Paris Diderot and Picardy to conduct a randomised control trial to identify the emergence of new types of migration aspirations among young people in a Malian region, Kayes, which is both a historical seat of migration and source of emergence of new forms of mobility. Another project headed by E. M. Mouhoud in association with economists, sociologists and demographers from the universities of Princeton and New York will seek to explain the determinants of skilled emigration from countries with authoritarian regimes and its specific impact on source countries by developing a comparative approach to the brain drain phenomena in Arab and Latin American countries. The role of access to information in the decision to migrate, particularly illegally, will also be studied in the case of Gambia by a randomised control trial conducted by F. Gubert, T. M'Bah and researchers from the World Bank and the Novafrica research centre. The experimental protocol will serve to identify how access to reliable information on the potential risks and benefits of illegal emigration impacts on young Gambians' migration choices. The question of the link between climate change and migration is drawing increasing attention and calls for original data collection and analysis methodologies. A group of DIAL researchers have started work on this subject, teaming up with climate and environmental imagery experts (Espace-Dev team, Montpellier) to compare detailed satellite imagery data on West Africa with socioeconomic data in order to estimate the connection between local climate change and the propensity to emigrate (project led by F. Gubert).

Last but not least is what is on course to become the increasingly important question of migrant labour market integration in host countries. A number of studies have shown that the "economic assimilation" process is long and expensive with a high level of inequality depending on immigrants' individual characteristics and migration regimes (Chiswick, 1978; Borjas, 1985; Damm, 2009). It is in the destination countries' economic interest to reduce these costs, which are not borne solely by the individual immigrant but also by the host society. In an environment of growing medium-term immigration flows, policymaking needs to be informed by research in particular to improve reception

and assistance procedures. To this end, a draft survey is being developed on recent refugees in France. It is coordinated by E. M. Mouhoud and J. Jarreau in partnership with the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA). Refugees are the category for whom economic assimilation is longest and hardest (Bevelander 2016). The survey's purpose is to study this issue in more depth than is currently possible with existing statistics in France.

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