

**GOVERNANCE IN MADAGASCAR : SCOPE AND LIMITS OF THE FIGHT  
AGAINST CORRUPTION AND OF DECENTRALIZATION**

**Abstract**

*Madagascans view corruption as an endemic problem affecting the entire administrative and political life of their country. However, a number of indications point to improvements in this area since 2005. First of all, there are now fewer critics of the current situation than there were in 2005. Secondly, the real incidence of corruption (i.e. the number of individuals personally affected by corruption) has significantly declined. However, the proportion of undecided respondents has increased significantly, suggesting a degree of helplessness. An increasing number of Madagascans also claim they have no contact with their administrative services. This result is difficult to interpret: one possible explanation is that lack of contact may be the outcome of an improved efficiency of Madagascar's public services. But it could also be explained as evidence of an increasingly difficult access to public services or as a decline of public trust. In any case, the incidence of corruption remains high: nearly one in ten Madagascans and over 15% of public service users report first-hand experience of corruption in trying to obtain an administrative document or permit. Additional efforts are therefore required in this area.*

*Madagascans have a generally positive view of the work carried out by local authorities in the realm of decentralization. However, a closer look at the answers given by survey respondents tends to limit this largely positive evaluation. The proportion of Madagascans who claim to be satisfied with the efficiency of their local authorities (communes) and the integrity of local authorities in their use of public resources is low and in decline since 2005. The implementation of the public participation principle is inefficient. The participation of Madagascans in public decision-making and the availability of information concerning the management of public affairs at a local level (on policy and budgetary matters) are both rare. Madagascans tend to attribute the inefficiency of local authorities to a limited sense of responsibility (expressed as a low level of concern for local affairs) rather than to inadequate levels of qualification.*

**Introduction**

In recent years, issues of governance (especially corruption) have been placed at the heart of public policies, on the grounds that the success of economic policies is conditioned not merely by their content but also by the manner in which they are implemented. Following the example of the international development community, Madagascar's national authorities therefore view the principles of appropriation, public participation and accountability as central notions in their development strategy and the fight against poverty (see MAP). Following the 2005 survey, the 2008 Afrobarometer public opinion survey (based on the same method) was conceived precisely as a response to the challenge of measuring and monitoring these new aspects of development. The results presented here are designed to provide a reliable and representative diagnosis of the issue at a national level, with a particular focus on two key themes: the impact of the measures taken to combat corruption, and the efficiency and transparency of the management of local affairs, especially at the level of communes, in the context of decentralization. Comparing the

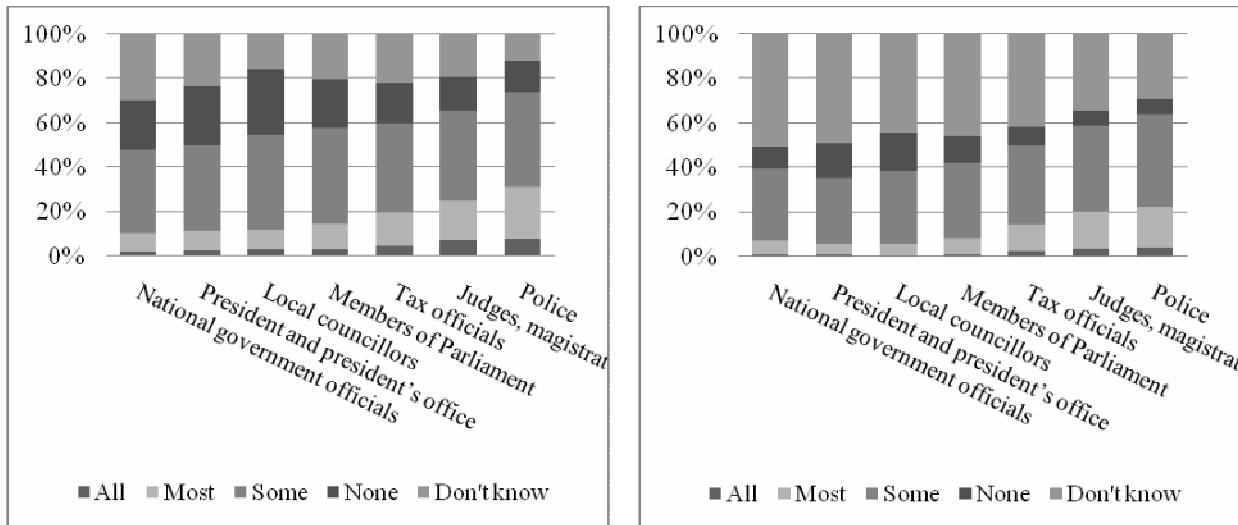
results of the 2008 and 2005 surveys provides a unique opportunity for a practical assessment of recent trends.

### A decline in the extent of corruption?

#### *Subjective indices: a perplexed population*

Madagascans view corruption as an endemic problem affecting the entire administrative and political life of their country. None of the institutions identified in the survey escape this assessment. The police ranks top in terms of perceived corruption: nearly two thirds of Madagascans (64%) believe that the Madagascan police services engage in corrupt behavior. Next in line are judges and magistrates: nearly 60% of Madagascans state that at least some judges and magistrates engage in corrupt behavior. Leaving out the survey respondents who claim they have no evidence for answering this question, the proportion of Madagascans who state that at least some judges and magistrates engage in corrupt behavior reaches 89%. After the police and the judicial system, the tax services are also targeted: 50% of Madagascans believe that at least some tax and customs officials engage in corrupt behavior.

**Figure 1 : Perceived corruption in Madagascan institutions**  
2005 2008



Source: Afrobarometer, Dial/Coef Resources, Madagascar, 2008.

Of all public institutions in Madagascar, the National Assembly is most often cited as engaging in corrupt behavior: 42% of Madagascans claim it engages in corrupt behavior (including 78% of survey respondents with a view on the subject). Local councillors, the President's office and national government officials are also targeted, since only a small proportion of Madagascans (31% for the first two, 21% for the third) deem these institutions to be honest.

Comparing the 2005 and 2008 results indicates that in statistical terms the ranking of institutions in matters of perceived corruption has remained virtually unchanged. By contrast, the extent of perceived corruption appears to have declined. The percentage of the total number of Madagascans who denounce corruption has declined for every institution (see table 1). However, this result needs to be viewed with caution since the rate of non-response (survey respondents who chose not to express a view) has significantly increased. If only those who expressed a view are taken into account, a greater number of Madagascans denounced corruption compared with 2005.

**Table 1: Perceived corruption in Madagascan institutions**

	Survey respondents who consider that the institution engages in corrupt behavior (% of the entire population)		Survey respondents who consider that the institution engages in corrupt behavior (% of the total number of survey respondents)		Rate of non-response (%)	
	2005	2008	2005	2008	2005	2008
President and president's office	50,1	35,4	65,3	69,1	23,2	48,7
Members of parliament	58,1	42,4	72,7	78,0	20,1	45,6
Local councillors	54,6	38,5	64,6	68,8	15,5	44,0
National government officials	48,2	39,4	68,6	79,3	29,8	50,4
Police	74,1	63,8	83,9	89,8	11,7	28,9
Tax officials	60,0	50,2	76,9	86,4	21,9	41,8
Judges, magistrates	65,7	58,6	81,2	89,1	19,1	34,2

Sources: Afrobarometer, Dial/Coef Resources, Madagascar, 2005 and 2008.

**Objective indices: a decrease of the real incidence of corruption**

Despite their usefulness for measuring the current state of opinion, subjective perception indices need to be corroborated by objective measurements of real failures or misrule in political institutions, a factor which the Afrobarometer allows for. The first observation concerns the extent of corruption, with a relatively high percentage of victims (15% of Madagascans seeking to obtain official documents and 8% of Madagascans who had some contact with the police)<sup>1</sup>.

However, the results of the survey indicate a positive trend in the country's recent efforts to combat corruption. In two of the services appealed to by Madagascans and where they frequently report first-hand experience of corruption, the incidence of corruption has decreased significantly. Between 2005 and 2008, the percentage of Madagascans who experienced some form of corruption decreased from 13% to 8% for obtaining official documents or permits, and from 7% to 3% in dealings with the police. This diagnosis still applies even if only those who had dealings with the relevant service throughout the year are included (the incidence of corruption decreased from 18% to 15% and from 14% to 8% respectively). This decrease is observed both in urban areas and in rural areas, and is significantly more pronounced in the latter. Therefore, for small-scale corruption at least, the measures taken to combat the issue can be said to have had some positive results.

<sup>1</sup> The question used to establish the number of victims of corruption was: 'In the past year, how often (if ever) have you had to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour to a state official?'. One of the possible responses was: 'I have had no contact with the public services in question'.

**Table 2: Incidence of corruption**

	Reported first-hand experience of corruption (% of the entire population)					
	Total		Urban		Rural	
	2005	2008	2005	2008	2005	2008
obtaining an official document or permit	12,7	8,3	14,6	10,3	12,3	7,7
In dealing with the police	6,5	2,9	9,4	4,9	6,0	2,2
	Reported first-hand experience of corruption (% of the total number of users)					
	Total		Urban		Rural	
	2005	2008	2005	2008	2005	2008
obtaining an official document or permit	18,4	15,1	18,6	16,4	18,4	14,5
In dealing with the police	14,4	7,6	15,7	9,5	14,0	6,6

Sources: Afrobarometer, Dial/Coef Resources, Madagascar, 2005 and 2008.

The real extent of this success needs to be viewed with caution since it appears that in 2008 a lower proportion of Madagascans had some contact with the public services in question than in 2005. This result is difficult to interpret. It could be explained by an improved efficiency of public services, but it could also be viewed as evidence of an increasingly difficult access to public services or as a decline of public trust: because they are discouraged by the poor quality of public services and the extent of corruption, Madagascans may be tempted to keep their use of public services to a minimum.

**Table 3: Percentage of Madagascans who made no use of public services**

	No contact (% of the entire population)					
	Total		Urban		Rural	
	2005	2008	2005	2008	2005	2008
obtaining an official document or permit	31,0	43,7	21,5	36,7	32,8	46,1
In dealing with the police	53,8	61,2	40,0	48,4	56,5	65,5

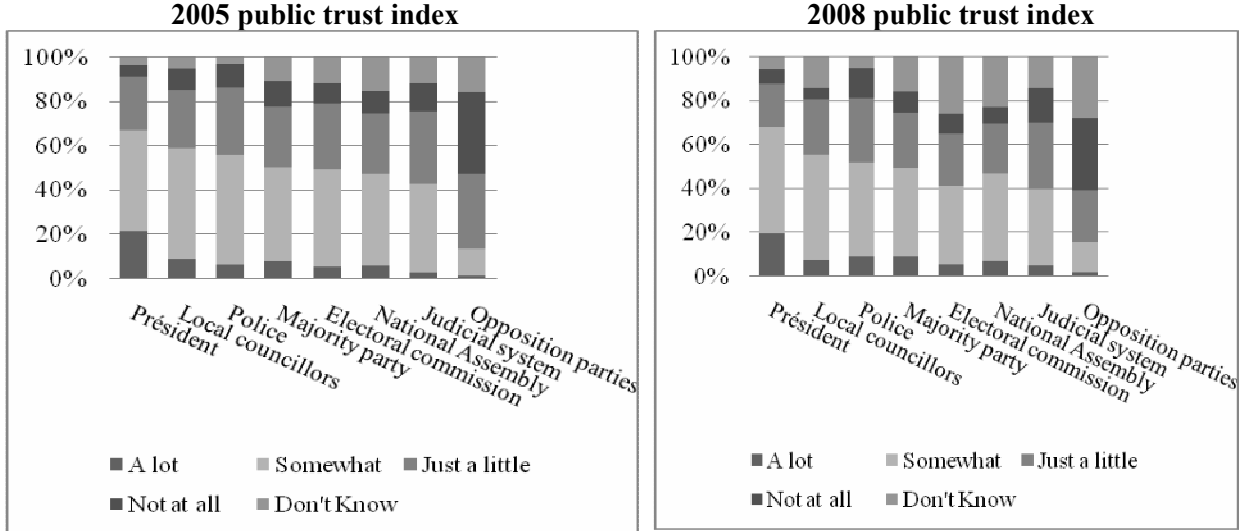
Sources: Afrobarometer, Dial/Coef Resources, Madagascar, 2005 and 2008.

In any case, the incidence of corruption remains high. In 2008, approximately one person in ten who used public services experienced some form of corrupt behavior.

### ***The impact on public trust in Madagascan institutions***

Recent trends affecting the level of public trust in a range of institutions may provide some indications for clarifying recent trends in the extent of corruption. Public distrust of institutions is correlated with the extent of corruption that affects them. The only exception in this respect is the police, with a high level of public trust – a paradoxical result in view of its ranking among the most corrupt institutions. Despite endemic corruption, Madagascans appear to be relatively satisfied with their police services in terms of their role in maintaining order. By contrast, there is a high correlation between public distrust and the extent of corruption in the judicial system and among members of parliament. Members of parliament are deemed to be the most prone to corrupt behavior, which accounts for the low level of public trust which they inspire.

Figure 2



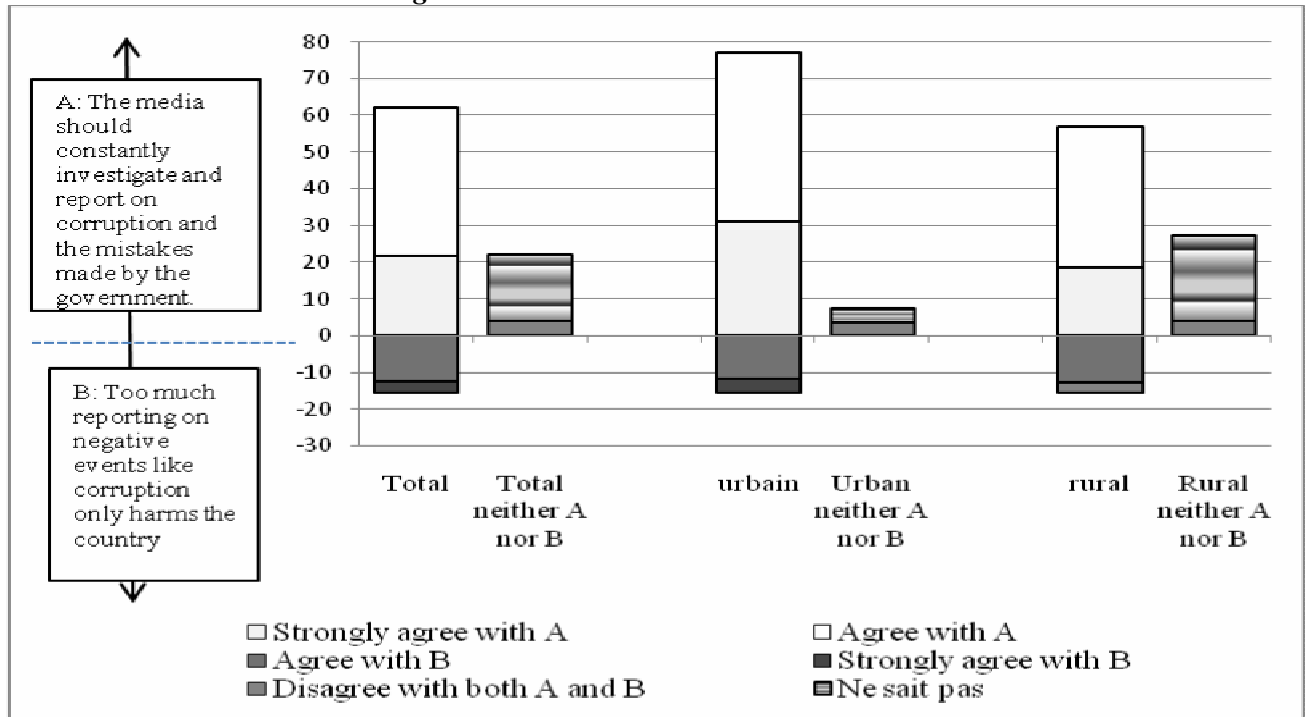
Source: Afrobarometer, Dial/Coef Resources, Madagascar, 2008.

Overall, the comparison of the results concerning public trust indicates that the level of public trust remained statistically unchanged between 2005 and 2008 for all the institutions included in the survey, suggesting that Madagascans remain generally unimpressed about the impact of the measures taken to combat corruption.

**The importance of the role of the media**

In this context of widespread corruption, the media have an important role to play in uncovering cases of alleged corruption and in monitoring current and future trends concerning the extent of corruption. The involvement of the media is supported by a majority of Madagascans: 62% claim that the media should always investigate and report on cases of alleged corruption and the mistakes made by government. Just 16% of Madagascans believe that ‘too much reporting’ on cases of corruption only harms the country.

**Figure 3: The role of the media**



Source: Afrobarometer, Dial/Coef Resources, Madagascar, 2008.

Note: the 'neither A nor B' columns include those survey respondents who 'Disagree with both A and B' and those who 'Don't know'.

While those in favour of public exposures of corruption through newspapers are fewer in rural areas, Madagascans are not firmly opposed to such measures. In fact, a high proportion of Madagascans living in rural areas are unsure of their view on this issue. This result is probably indicative of the need for a greater awareness of the issue of corruption and of governance issues more generally in rural areas.

### **Dissatisfaction with decentralization**

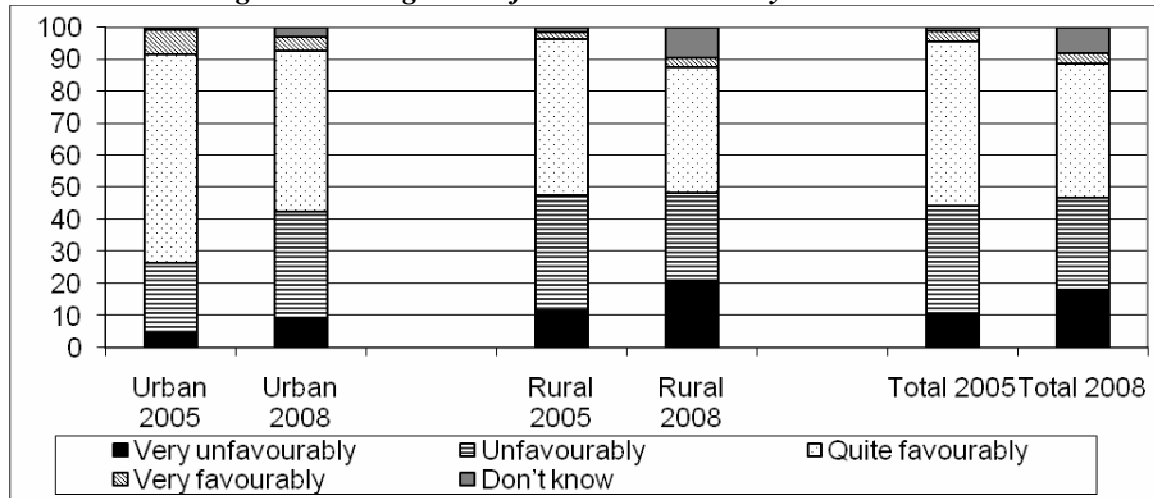
The successful decentralization of public administration is one of the challenges emphasized by the authorities in the Madagascar Action Plan (MAP) designed to implement the practice of 'responsible governance'. The powers of the local authorities, or *communes*, have been reinforced for the management of local affairs. *Communes* have an important role to play in promoting public participation. The idea is to promote democratic rule and the participation of beneficiaries in the governance of local public institutions. The results of the survey provide original diagnoses concerning the scope and limits of decentralization in 2008.

#### ***A lower efficiency of communes in the management of local affairs***

Madagascans' attitudes towards the way in which *communes* deal with road maintenance provide a useful index for evaluating the overall performance of local authorities. The findings of the survey are relatively negative, since just 45% of Madagascans claimed they were satisfied with the services provided in 2008. In fact the situation has deteriorated: in 2005, 54% of Madagascans held a positive view of the management of this issue by local councils. The decline is especially pronounced in urban areas, where the proportion of dissatisfied survey respondents has risen from 26% to 43% (while the proportion of survey respondents with a positive view has decreased from 73% to 54%). In 2005, a significant proportion of Madagascans living in rural areas (48%) were already heavily critical of the low level of efficiency of local councils in maintaining roads. Given

that the 2008 survey yielded the same rate of dissatisfaction, the situation cannot be said to have improved, and can even be said to have deteriorated (the satisfaction rate decreased significantly, from 51% to 42%, as a result of the increase in the number of respondents with no view on the issue). Generally speaking, Madagascans living in rural areas appear to be particularly disadvantaged since the poor quality of road infrastructures is liable to have a more serious impact on their living conditions.

**Figure 4: Management of road maintenance by local councils**

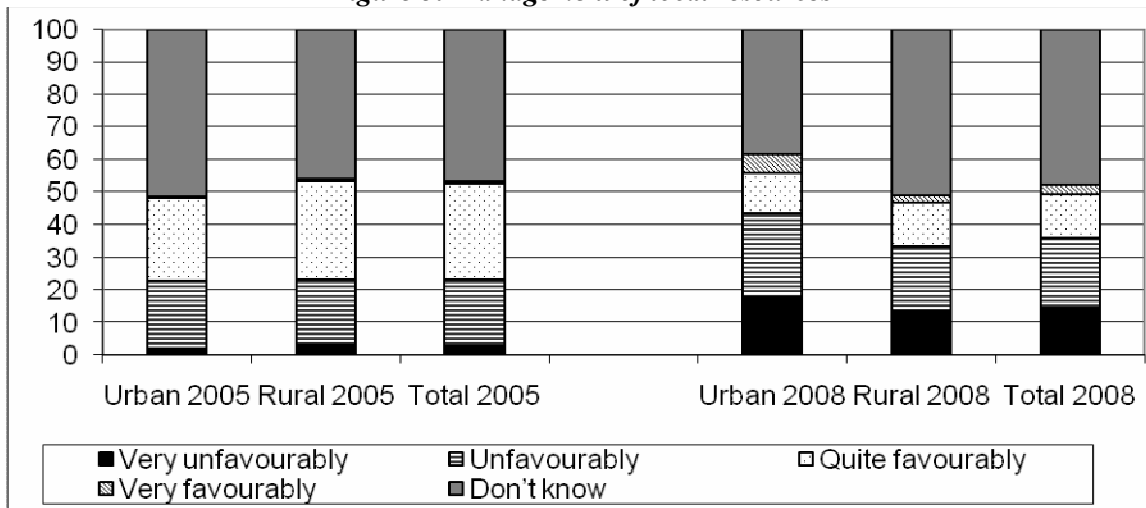


Sources: Afrobarometer, Dial/Coef Resources, Madagascar, 2005 and 2008.

The analysis of Madagascans' attitudes towards the management of local resources suggests an even more severe evaluation. A small minority of Madagascans (17%) say they are satisfied with the way in which local resources are used. While 50% of Madagascans chose not to express a view on the issue, 36% are openly critical of the possibility that a proportion of local resources are used for private purposes (33% of Madagascans living in rural areas and 44% of those living in urban areas).

Madagascans had already been consulted about the use of public resources by local authorities in 2005. The results of the 2005 and 2008 rounds can be compared even if the specific wording of the question was slightly differently. The percentage of critical views is significantly higher in 2008 than in 2005 (36% as opposed to 25%). The trend is particularly noticeable in urban areas (44% as opposed to 23%). These observations tend to confirm the rise of dissatisfaction with local authorities.

**Figure 5: Management of local resources**

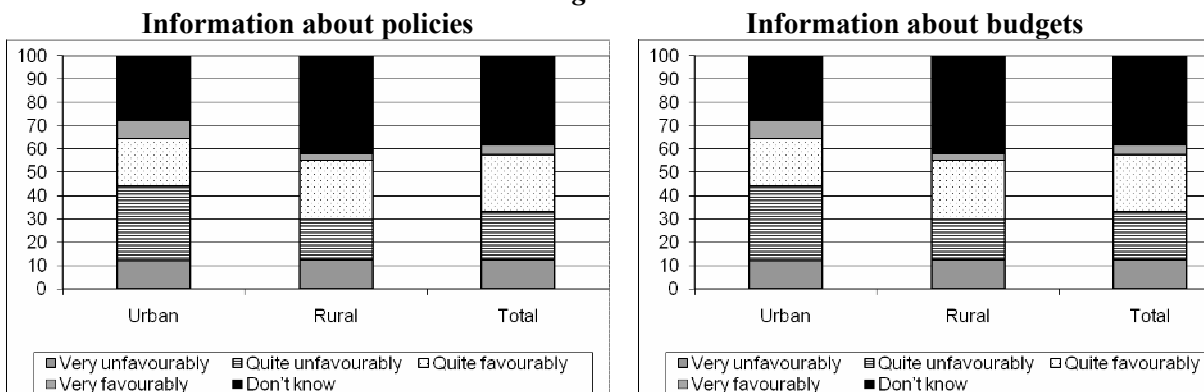


Sources: Afrobarometer, Dial/Coef Resources, Madagascar, 2005 and 2008.

One of the advantages of decentralization is that it allows for a closer relation between the authorities and the general public. Decentralization enables the authorities to be more in tune with the needs of the population, and also enables the population to monitor and control the management of public affairs. Decentralization ought therefore to promote public participation. Applying this principle presupposes an availability of specific information, especially information about local policies and budgets, as well as the active inclusion of the whole range of actors (citizens and civil society) in the decisions that affect life in the community.

The analysis of Madagascans' attitudes indicates that the authorities have fallen well short of these objectives. The findings of the survey are negative both in rural areas and in urban areas (with similar levels of dissatisfaction): (a) just 28% of Madagascans feel that citizens are adequately informed about the policies of local authorities; (b) even fewer Madagascans (16%) feel that there is a degree of transparency in matters of budgetary management; (c) just 20% of Madagascans claim to be satisfied with the measures taken to ensure that the general public is involved in decisions at a local level; (d) it appears that members of civil society are not consulted on a sufficiently regular basis about political decisions, since just 20% of Madagascans claim that such procedures are effectively applied.

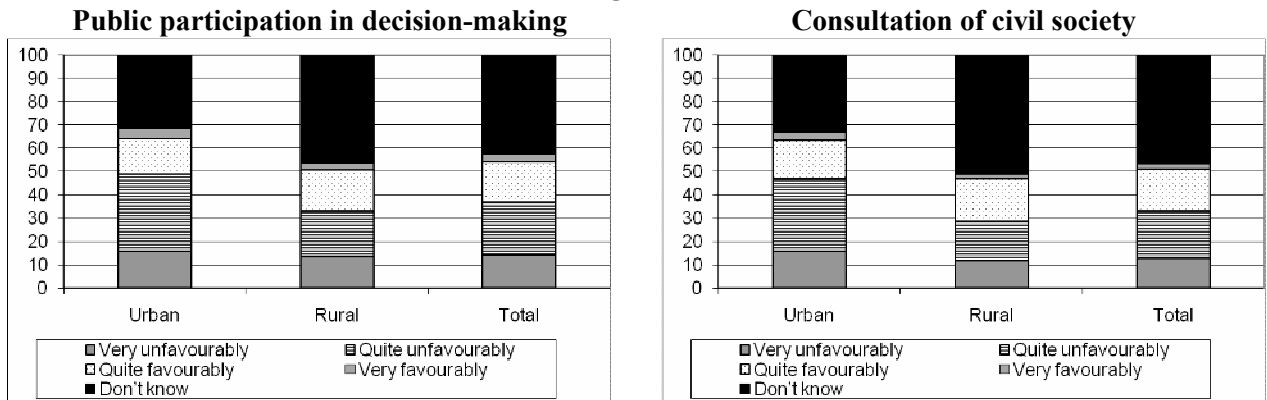
**Figure 6**



Source: Afrobarometer, Dial/Coef Resources, Madagascar, 2008.



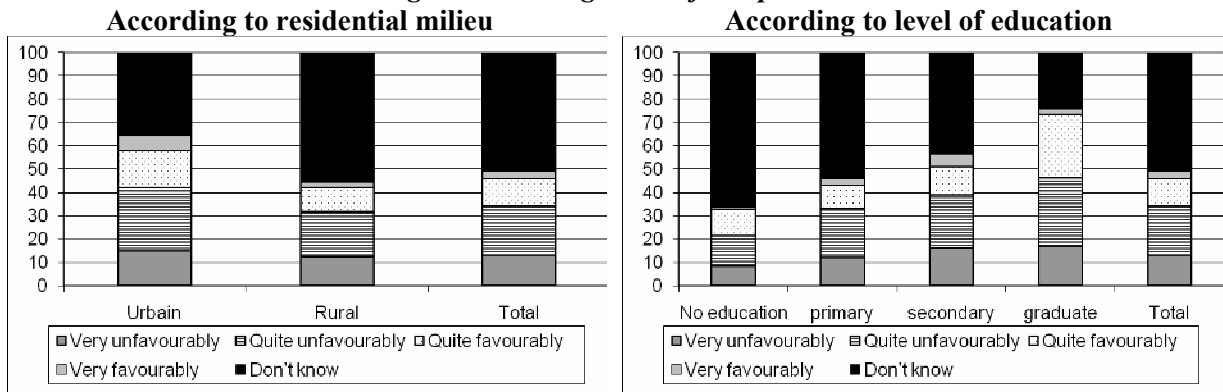
**Figure 7**



Source: Afrobarometer, Dial/Coef Resources, Madagascar, 2008.

The public participation principle therefore remains to be satisfactorily applied and implemented. This result can be explained by the fact that the authorities need time to become gradually accustomed to what is essentially a relatively new practice. The implementation of the public participation principle is a long-term process. By contrast, the management of complaints made by the general public has always been one of the tasks of local authorities. Yet on this point only a small minority of Madagascans (15% overall and 13% in rural areas) feel that they are able to make their complaints heard and that there are efficient procedures designed to manage their complaints. The most highly educated Madagascans find it easier to solicit the authorities to have their complaints attended to. The most highly qualified Madagascans are the most likely (30%) to hold a positive view of the management of complaints. But the same group also includes the highest level of critical views (46%).

**Figure 8 : Management of complaints**

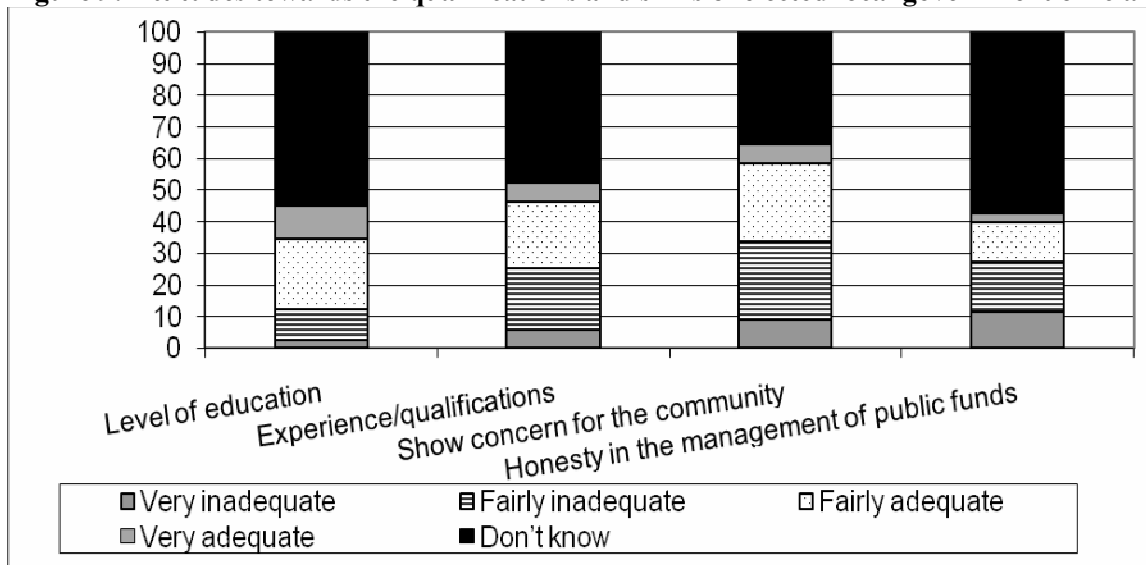


Source: Afrobarometer, Dial/Coef Resources, Madagascar, 2008.

***A limited sense of responsibilities more than a low standard of qualification among local elected representatives***

One of the traditional criticisms levelled at decentralization is the low standard of qualifications among local elected representatives. The problems that arise in the management of local affairs are often attributed to the lack of experience or to the inadequate level of education of local government officials. Given that just 27% of Madagascans claim that their representatives have the required level of experience to manage public affairs (and that 33% of Madagascans feel they have an adequate level of education), it appears that further training is required to improve the competence of local government officials.

**Figure 9: Attitudes towards the qualifications and skills of elected local government officials**



Source: Afrobarometer, Dial/Coef Resources, Madagascar, 2008.

However, the low standard of qualifications of local elected representatives is far less problematic than their lack of concern and integrity. 34% of Madagascans are heavily critical of the lack of any sense of responsibility displayed by their elected local government officials and 27% emphasize their lack of honesty in the management of local resources. Over 50% of Madagascans feel that they are not in a position to express a view on these issues.

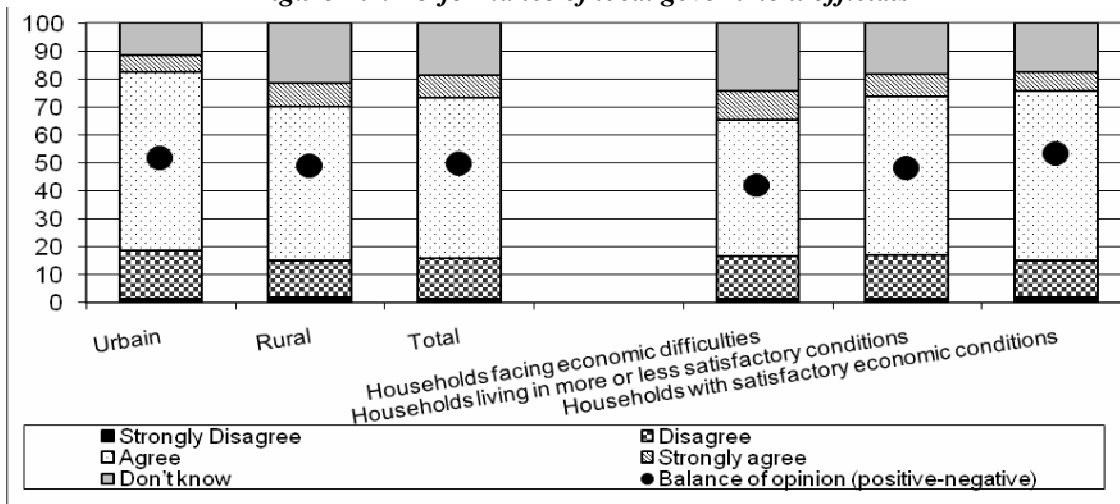
***A positive evaluation of the performance of local and national government officials***

Overall, Madagascans responded positively when asked about the way in which elected representatives at different levels carried out their public duties. While their views concerning the management of local affairs are fairly negative, 65% of Madagascans approve of the way in which local councillors carry out their duties. The performance of local councillors is rated more favourably than the performance of members of parliament, since just 60% of Madagascans hold a positive view of the latter. However, these results are significantly lower than the degree of satisfaction with the president, who was rated favourably by 82% of Madagascans.

The particularly high satisfaction rates in urban and rural areas (aside from the ranking of institutions) are difficult to interpret, especially since there is no reference to compare them with. What can be said is that households living in more precarious conditions<sup>2</sup> hold less positive views of the performance of local government officials and members of parliament. The failures of local representatives and national authorities (National Assembly) are felt more acutely by the poorest Madagascans. A higher proportion of Madagascans living in urban areas than in rural areas are sceptical about the way in which the President carried out his duties (19% as opposed to 11%).

<sup>2</sup> The question used to establish the number of victims was: ‘In the past year, how often (if ever) have you had to pay a bribe, give a gift or do a favour to a state official?’. One of the possible answers was: ‘Have had no dealings with the public services in question’.

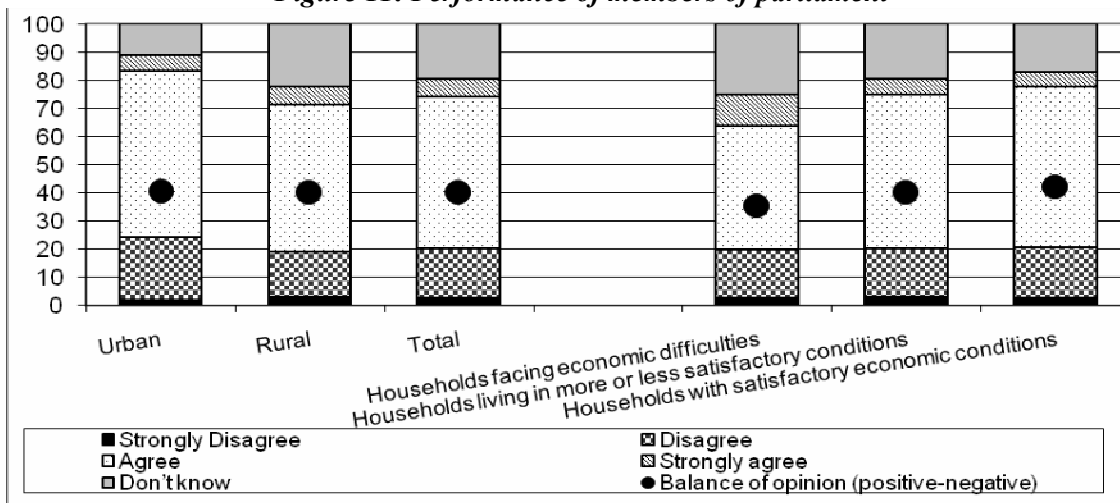
**Figure 10<sup>3</sup>: Performance of local government officials**



Source: Afrobarometer, Dial/Coef Resources, Madagascar, 2008.

Note: the black spots show the balance of opinion (those who approve – those who disapprove) in % points (following the same scale on the left of the figure)

**Figure 11: Performance of members of parliament**



Source: Afrobarometer, Dial/Coef Resources, Madagascar, 2008.

Note: the black spots show the balance of opinion (those who approve – those who disapprove) in % points (following the same scale on the left on the figure)

<sup>3</sup> Individuals living in the most precarious conditions are defined as those who are ‘always’ or ‘very frequently’ faced with food shortages and shortages of clean water and fuel and who possess no material goods such as radio, television or means of transport.

**Figure 12: Performance of the President**



Source: Afrobarometer, Dial/Coef Resources, Madagascar, 2008.

Note: the black spots show the balance of opinion (those who approve – those who disapprove) in % points (following the same scale on the left on the figure)

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