WIDER Working Paper 2025/11

# Is inequality always unfair?

## Experimental evidence on preferences for redistribution in Mozambique and Viet Nam

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March 2025

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**Abstract:** Knowledge of the factors driving people's views on redistribution in the Global South remains limited. While these societies occupy top positions in inequality rankings, redistribution levels tend to be lower. We combine survey and experimental data from Mozambique and Viet Nam to test whether redistributive preferences vary depending on the source of inequality, focusing on two channels, fairness views and communication. First, we confirm the finding that inequality resulting from differences in merit is more accepted than inequality due to luck or factors outside of individual control. We also observe heterogeneity in fairness views. Second, we extend the analysis to consider whether allowing for communication between a receiver, who can suggest a distribution, and a dictator, who makes the final decision, affects redistribution preferences. We find that the relevance of the source of inequality remains. However, whether the expectation of the receiver is met by the dictator varies across samples and depends on the source of inequality. Overall, our results provide important insights into the universality of fairness views and point to the need for more analysis across contexts with different institutional and economic backgrounds.

**Key words:** inequality, fairness, preferences for redistribution, Mozambique, Viet Nam

**JEL classification:** C93, D31, D63, D90

**Acknowledgements:** This study was prepared within the project 'The impacts of inequality on growth, human development, and governance—@EQUAL'. Support by the Novo Nordisk Foundation Grant NNF19SA0060072 is acknowledged. Discussions and feedback from Paul Clist, Bjørn Bo Sørensen, Arjan Verschoor, and participants in the 16th NCBEE, 2024 NOVAfrica Conference, NCDE 2024, CBESS seminar series (2024), and Symposium on 'Perspectives on social inequality and wealth' (2023) are greatly appreciated. We are thankful to Antonio Diaz Cacedo for his research assistance, Klarizze Puzon for engaging in the initial stages of the project, and Matthew J. Easterbrook, Paolo Falco, Christina Gravert, Anustup Kundu, Thomas Markussen, Annalena Oppel, and colleagues at the Development Economics Research Group (UCPH-DERG) and participants in the @EQUAL workshop 2021 for thoughtful discussions and comments on the design of the experiment. We are grateful to Thi Thu Hoai Dang and Fernando Lichucha, co-PIs of the NNF project, for their engagement in discussions and for facilitating the field implementation. The data collection was only possible thanks to the great work of the field coordinators in Mozambique—Giulia Barletta, Francesca Gioia, Agustina Lopez, and Stefano Tarroni—and in Viet Nam—Nghiêm Dinh Xuân—as well as the teams of enumerators in both countries. Moreover, we thank all the participants who accepted to take part in the data collection. A great part of the underlying work and the writing of the paper were done while Ines A. Ferreira was affiliated with the Department of Economics, University of Copenhagen, and while Rachel M. Gisselquist was affiliated with UNU-WIDER. The usual caveats apply.

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This study has been prepared within the project The impacts of inequality on growth, human development, and governance—@EQUAL, supported by the Novo Nordisk Foundation Grant NNF19SA0060072.



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ISSN 1798-7237 ISBN 978-92-9267-568-4

https://doi.org/10.35188/UNU-WIDER/2025/568-4

Typescript prepared by Mary Boss.

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The Institute is funded through income from an endowment fund with additional contributions to its work programme from Finland and Sweden, as well as earmarked contributions for specific projects from a variety of donors.

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# 1 Introduction

While the literature on the determinants of preferences for redistribution has grown substantially (see review in Mengel and Weidenholzer 2022), we still know surprisingly little about what explains redistributive preferences in the Global South. This is especially relevant given that these societies occupy some of the highest positions in inequality rankings, at least according to relative measures, such as the Gini coefficient (UNU-WIDER 2023). Moreover, previous research found evidence suggesting that the 'Robin Hood Paradox', according to which increasing inequality is associated with lower redistributive spending, remains applicable today (e.g., Almås et al. 2020).[1] In other words, redistribution is lower in contexts where it is needed the most, which could contribute to further aggravating the gap between the rich and the poor in these settings.

Thus, understanding the drivers of the views that people hold about the level of redistribution they prefer is beneficial for more informed policy formulation (Stantcheva 2024). Moreover, having a better grasp of the heterogeneity of social preferences is of crucial academic relevance (E. Fehr and Charness 2024). This study contributes to narrowing this knowledge gap by exploring novel evidence from two distinct contexts in the Global South, Mozambique, and Viet Nam. We combine survey and experimental data to test whether redistributive preferences vary depending on the source of inequality, focusing on two channels: (i) fairness views and (ii) communication.

Starting with the first factor, we use a modified dictator game with a production phase (in line with Almås et al. 2020; Cappelen et al. 2007; and others), which generates inequality within each pair of players based on either luck or merit. Evidence from previous studies suggests that attitudes towards inequality and preferences for redistribution are influenced by whether the sources of inequality are perceived as fair (e.g., Almås et al. 2020). Specifically, several studies have found that individuals hold meritocratic views, i.e. they accept inequality resulting from differences in performance (or hard work) but not inequality due to luck or factors outside of individual control (see references in Cappelen et al. 2022; E. Fehr and Charness 2024). However, most of the existing evidence—both survey and experimental—has been conducted in WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) settings, in particular the United States and European countries, and it is unclear whether these findings hold more generally and whether meritocratic values are universal.

Consistent with previous studies in WEIRD settings, our findings from Mozambique and Viet Nam bring out that individuals tolerate inequality to a greater extent when it is a result of

[1] Lindert (2004) used this expression to characterize the global history of social spending up to the 1990s. See references for studies in comparative politics in Hillen and Steiner (2024).

someone's effort rather than simply by a random allocation (beyond individual control). At the same time, our results suggest meaningful diversity in fairness views across countries. For instance, in the Vietnamese sample, we identify a higher share of egalitarians (i.e. those who prefer an equal distribution independent of the source of inequality) than libertarians (i.e., those who tolerate inequality independent of its source), while in the Mozambican sample, the share of libertarians is higher than that of egalitarians.

Additionally, we posit that in real-life scenarios, where communication is ubiquitous, the importance of meritocratic values may be affected by interaction with others. Thus, we compare the changes in behaviour when we allow for communication between a recipient, with power only to make a suggestion, and a dictator, who makes the final decision. It is well documented that peer effects (i.e. the influence of the behaviour of others on one's own behaviour) and communication with others are relevant for moral behaviour and social preferences, such as altruistic behaviour (e.g., Andreoni and Rao 2011; Ellingsen and Johannesson 2004; Isler and Gächter 2022) and for how social norms are perceived (Thöni and Gächter 2015).[2] Additionally, examining how social norms are formed and transmitted through the interaction with peers is critical to achieving a better understanding of the origins of fairness preferences (Hugh-Jones and Ooi 2023) and of the views on policies related to economic inequality (Gelfand et al. 2024). Still, this aspect has often been overlooked in the recent literature linking fairness views and redistributive decisions.

We aim to narrow this gap by examining whether the source of inequality remains relevant when we allow for communication between the recipient and the dictator, who is selected based on luck or merit. Participants play a second round of the standard dictator game. Unlike the first round, where both players are dictators, in this round, the player with the lower initial endowment (resulting from luck or merit) is the recipient and the player with the highest initial endowment is the dictator. The recipient is asked to make a new redistribution choice, now knowing that the dictator will then see it and make the final decision. Our results suggest that the source of inequality remains significant for redistributive preferences but not more (or less) than when decisions are taken independently. Moreover, while we find suggestive evidence of strategic behaviour when the recipient can make a suggestion, whether this expectation is met by the dictator varies across contexts.

As mentioned, most of the existing experimental studies focus on WEIRD (frequently student) populations, who are in environments that may foster meritocratic and libertarian views (E. Fehr and Charness 2024).[3] However, there is some indicative evidence that the focus on

[2] From the theoretical point of view, the influence of peers on norm-driven behaviour is a crucial element in understanding norm compliance (Gächter et al. 2017).

[3] There are, however, a few exceptions. Jakiela (2015) tested egalitarian preferences in agricultural villages in Kenya and showed evidence that earned and unearned income are not treated differently, in contrast with the

meritocratic views may not hold globally (Almås et al. 2024; Schäfer et al. 2015). We focus on samples from Mozambique and Viet Nam because they offer two interesting case studies, with marked differences between each other and WEIRD samples. The Vietnamese mixed socialist market economy allows us to explore whether communist values permeate through to current redistribution preferences. In contrast, Mozambique's high levels of inequality and heavy dependence on external financing (following a very orthodox set of liberal policies) give a clear opportunity to investigate whether market-based values influence the taste for redistribution. Moreover, after two decades of fairly stable inequality levels, from the 2010s, Viet Nam managed to reduce inequality levels, whereas there has been an increase in the levels for Mozambique (UNU-WIDER 2023).

This study builds on and contributes to different strands of the literature. First, it adds to the broader literature on the factors that affect preferences for redistribution (see Mengel and Weidenholzer 2022 for a review). Previous studies found evidence that redistributive preferences are connected to the relative individual position in the income distribution (Cruces et al. 2013; D. Fehr et al. 2022; Hoy and Mager 2021; Hvidberg et al. 2023); future income prospects (Alesina and La Ferrara 2005) and social mobility (Alesina et al. 2018); and the level of experienced, or the exposure to, inequality (Roth and Wohlfart 2018; Sands 2017). It has also been recently suggested that the lack of evidence of a link between increases in inequality and demand for redistribution may be (at least partly) related to the fact that perceptions, more than actual levels, of inequality shape views on redistribution (Gimpelson and Treisman 2018; Karadja et al. 2017; Kuziemko et al. 2015; Stantcheva 2024).

Among these factors, we add to studies on the role of social preferences as predictors of support for redistribution[4] and, more specifically, to the body of literature examining how fairness views can affect attitudes towards inequality and preferences for redistribution (Alesina and Angeletos 2005; Almås et al. 2020; Cappelen et al. 2007, 2013; Durante et al. 2014; E. Fehr and Schmidt 1999; Mollerstrom et al. 2015).[5] Starmans et al. (2017) reviewed the results obtained through different empirical methods and concluded that people prefer fairness over inequality and would pick fair inequality over unfair equality. Judging whether inequality is fair or unfair depends not only on one's own fairness views—that is, how much one values fairness over self-interest or efficiency—but also on the beliefs about the sources of inequality

results from the same experiment in a sample from the United States. More recently, Almås et al. (2024) find that while individuals react differently to the source of inequality in countries across the globe, this seems to be more important in OECD rather than non-OECD countries.

[4] For instance, evidence from Germany documented the prevalence of inequality aversion and showed that selfishness is negatively linked to support for redistribution (Kerschbamer and Müller 2020).

[5] Almås et al. (2024) and Clark and D'Ambrosio (2015) offer helpful reviews on attitudes to inequality.

(Almås et al. 2024).[6] Almås et al. (2020) found significant differences in the fairness views of Americans (more libertarian) and Norwegians (more egalitarian). Together with Cappelen et al. (2007) and Almås et al. (2024), whom we follow in the design of our game, these studies are the closest to our analysis. We depart from them in design specifications (including using stakeholders rather than spectators and allowing for communication) as well as in relation to the countries of focus.

Second, when we allow for communication between the recipient and the dictator in the second part of our analysis, we offer new evidence to the research (mostly in economic psychology)[7] on how communication affects behaviour (Ellingsen and Johannesson 2004), specifically in dictator games (Andreoni and Rao 2011; Bruttel and Stolley 2020; Kleine et al. 2016, 2017; Mohlin and Johannesson 2008; Rankin 2006; Yamamori et al. 2008).[8] We add to these studies by introducing variation in the source of inequality and examining whether this effect interacts with communication, while also maintaining our stakeholder design.

The existing evidence suggests that having a voice affects outcomes differently depending on what is being asked for. Using a sample of undergraduate students in Tokyo, Yamamori et al. (2008) allowed recipients to voice their request for the minimum (numerical) offer that they were willing to receive. They observed that as long as the request was below an equal split of the amount, the dictators' decisions increased as the requests increased. Andreoni and Rao (2011) concurred to this pattern: asking for more has a positive return but only up to the equal division, after which requests were punished. In a similar vein, but using impartial spectators instead of stakeholders, Kleine et al. (2016) found that stakeholders who stated their opinion were allocated significantly less money than those who did not communicate. They explained this result through the fairness judgments of spectators. If the request was lower than what the spectator considered as fair, they followed the request, thus adjusting their own fairness judgments. However, if the request was above their fairness judgment, it was ignored.[9]

There are different ways in which communication may affect fairness views and redistributive behaviour. On one hand, the information from the recipient may be perceived as biased by

[6] See Alesina and Angeletos (2005) for their influential theoretical model and Cappelen et al. (2020) and Martínez (2023) for reviews of the literature.

[7] Early studies on the effects of voice and peer opinions in psychology include, for example, Folger (1977) and Folger et al. (1979).

[8] While we consider that, given our design, our results speak more to the studies on communication, our analysis also links the current paper to experimental studies showing that peer behaviour affects social preferences, including fairness views (Gächter et al. 2013, 2017; Hugh-Jones and Ooi 2023).

[9] In a follow-up study, the same authors found that having a voice led to an increase in the recipient's kindness towards the dictator, independent of the dictator's decision (Kleine et al. 2017). In a different setting, where requests were in the form of a free-form text message, Bruttel and Stolley (2020) added that the content of the written communication mattered for the chance of success.

self-interest (Kleine et al. 2016). This may lead the dictator to ignore it but might also trigger punishment behaviour. On the other hand, the information received may be perceived as an indication of the fairness norm, or increase the salience of that norm, and may affect the cost of not following it (Mohlin and Johannesson 2008). Moreover, it may decrease the social distance to the recipient and create feelings of empathy (Mohlin and Johannesson 2008). In this vein, not fulfilling the expectations of the recipient may have an additional cost depending on the sensitivity of the dictator towards the expectations of others and their degree of guilt aversion (Battigalli and Dufwenberg 2007; Ghidoni and Ploner 2021; Heintz et al. 2015).[10] Bicchieri and Xiao (2009) found that norm conformity was primarily driven by empirical expectations about the behaviour of others, while normative (what others think should be done) expectations were only influential when they were positively related to the individual's empirical expectations. More recently, Ghidoni and Ploner (2021) reported evidence that both guilt feelings and justice considerations (i.e. the desire to allocate outcome in proportion to the effort used to create it) are relevant drivers of allocation decisions. When the distributional norm was not clear, the recipient's expectation could be seen as an indication of justice, which, if not fulfilled, could lead to a sense of guilt. While our design does not allow us to distinguish between these different mechanisms, we offer descriptive analyses on what we observe from the point of view of both the dictator and the recipient.

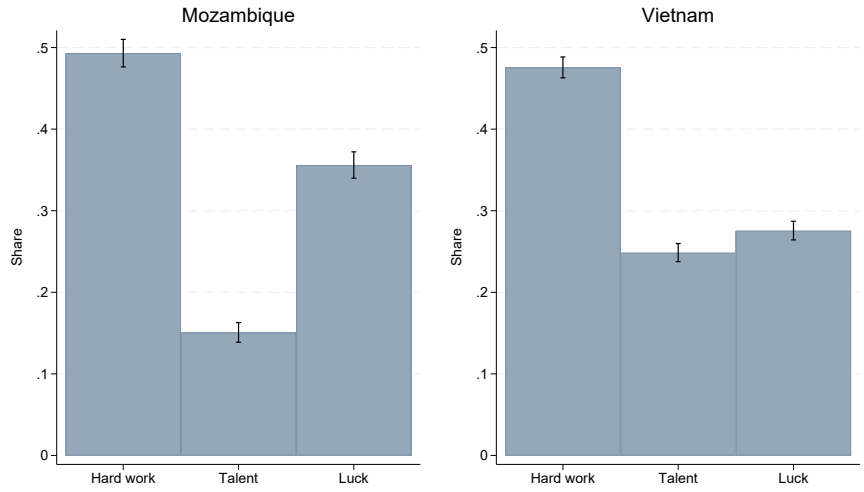
Finally, by comparing samples from Mozambique and Viet Nam, we contribute to expanding the, so far, narrow knowledge on how culture (Luttmer and Singhal 2011) and the institutional environment affect preferences for redistribution (Corneo and Grüner 2002; Mengel and Weidenholzer 2022). For instance, Alesina and Fuchs-Schündeln (2007) showed how the influence of Communism in East Germany led to differences in how the much more pro-state East Germans are compared to West Germans. Moreover, even if one associates Asian values to collectivism, and therefore higher support for redistribution, Chang (2018) described evidence of the opposite relation in East and Southeast Asia, where the belief in self-determination led to opposition to equality instead. We believe the comparative analysis in this paper constitutes an opportunity to examine the universality of meritocracy and to explore further heterogeneity between settings.

A glimpse at our survey evidence on sources of inequality and fairness views supports the comparison between these two country settings. When asked what participants think is the main reason why people in their region are rich (Figure 1), close to half in each country sample chose 'hard work' ('merit'). A lower share selected 'luck' as the main reason for inequal-

[10] See also references on guilt aversion in E. Fehr and Charness (2024).

ity, followed by ‘talent’, which is selected by only close to 15 per cent of the respondents in Mozambique.[11]

Figure 1: Main source of inequality in their region

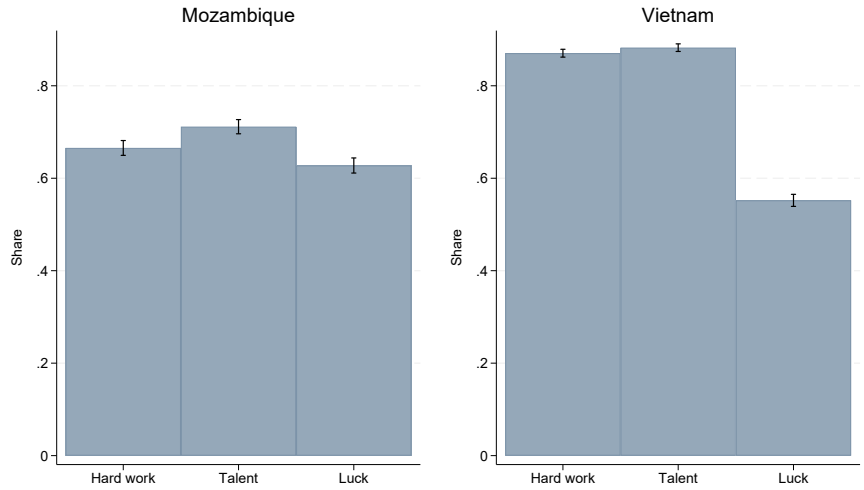



Note: answer to the question ’Of the following options, what is the main reason why people in your region are rich? You can only select one option’. The options were: 1) ’They have worked harder in life’; 2) ’They have greater talent and skills’; 3) ’They have had more luck in life, for example, have parents or other family members or friends that provided them with greater opportunities’. Does not consider ’Don’t know’ or missing answers.
Source: authors’ illustration.

We followed up with a question on whether they considered each of these three sources of inequality as fair (Figure 2). Here we see some more marked differences. In Mozambique, all three sources received agreement by over 60 per cent of the respondents, with ‘talent’ gathering the highest level of agreement. In Viet Nam, close to 90 per cent agree that inequality due to ‘hard work’ or due to ‘talent’ are fair, but only some 55 per cent agree that ‘luck’ is a fair determinant of differences in income. We explore this descriptive evidence further by testing experimentally whether the meritocratic view holds in these two settings.

[11] Asking a similar question, Almås et al. (2024) found that ‘abilities’ and ‘hard work’ were ranked with the lowest importance of the potential factors explaining why the rich are richer than the poor, in both the OECD and non-OECD countries, whereas luck was ranked as more important in OECD compared to non-OECD countries.

Figure 2: Agreement that the source of inequality is fair




Note: agreement with the statement 'It is fair that [source of inequality] determines a person's income', where source of inequality is replaced by luck, hard work, or talent and skills. Takes the value of 1 if the answer is 'Agree' and 0 if the answer is 'Neither agree nor disagree' or 'Disagree'. Does not consider 'Don't know' or missing answers.

Source: authors' illustration.

The paper is organized as follows. In Section 2 we explain our experimental design. We then turn to the theoretical framework underlying our analysis in Section 3 and describe our methods and the data in Section 4. Section 5 discusses the results, while Section 6 concludes.

## 2 Experimental design

### 2.1 Empirical settings

Our study departs from a large part of the literature on Mozambique that focuses on the capital Maputo and zooms in on the province of Nampula in the northern part of the country. With a population of more than five million people, Nampula is the most populous province in the country, with a Gini coefficient of 0.48 in 2019–20 (Barletta et al. 2024). Considering the history of reunification in Viet Nam (Tarp 2018), we collected data in Hà Nam province, located in the north of the country, and Trà Vinh province, in the south of Viet Nam. The latter province is bigger than Hà Nam and has a lower average monthly income per capita. In terms of relative inequality, the levels in both provinces are similar to the national figures.[12]

[12] While in this paper we do not focus on the differences between the two provinces in Viet Nam separately, we refer back to them in a robustness check in the analysis.

We collected data for a total of 905 participants in Mozambique and 1,681 participants in Viet Nam in 2022–23.[13] In Mozambique, we ran sessions in 19 'postos administrativos' (administrative units within the districts)—nine urban and 10 rural—in eight districts in Nampula Province. In Viet Nam, within Hà Nam province (North), we ran sessions in Bình Luc district (in 10 rural communes) and Phu Ly city (in 10 urban communes). Within Trà Vinh province (South), we ran sessions in Cang Long district (in 10 rural communes) and Trà Vinh city (in 10 urban communes).[14]

Within each administrative unit ('posto' in Mozambique and commune in Viet Nam), we ran two sessions, either on consecutive days (in Mozambique) or in the morning and afternoon of the same day (in Viet Nam, with two exceptions). Each session consisted of different parts, including the experiment described in what follows and a short questionnaire, which we used to collect individual socio-demographic data and reported views and opinions.[15]

## 2.2 The game

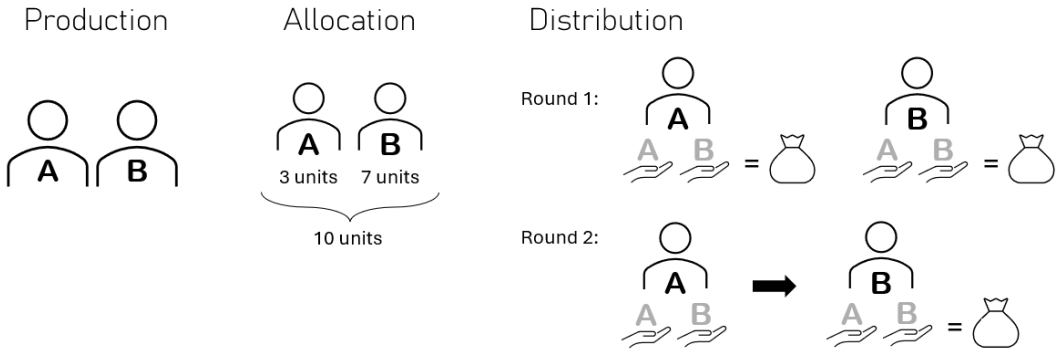
Our incentivized experiment involved three phases: production, allocation, and distribution (represented schematically in Figure 3), following the same structure as Almås et al. (2020) and Cappelen et al. (2007). During the production phase, participants performed a simple effort task, where they copied shapes. In the allocation phase, we grouped participants into pairs—Player A and Player B—who played in different rooms. Player A was endowed with three units (low endowment), and Player B was endowed with seven units (high endowment). We implemented a 'merit' treatment across sessions. In the 'luck' sessions (our control group), the split between Players A and B was determined randomly, based on the participants' ID numbers (which were randomly allocated to participants at the beginning of the session). Players A had odd numbered IDs and Players B had even numbered IDs. In the 'merit' sessions (our treated group), the split between Players A and B was based on the ranked performance in the effort task. The top half was matched to Player B and the bottom half to Player A. Together, each pair had a total endowment of 10 units (each unit corresponded to MZN5 in Mozambique and VND5,000 in Viet Nam).

[13] We received ethical approval for this study by the Joint Ethical Review Board (ERB) of UNU (United Nations University) in March 2022 followed by an approved amendment in May 2023. The study was also registered on the AEA RCT Registry, with RCT ID AEARCTR-0010211.

[14] While we cover different administrative units within each province, the samples are not representative of the full population in the provinces.

[15] A standardized version of the questionnaire is included in Appendix J.

Figure 3: Three phases of the game




Source: authors' elaboration.

The distribution phase consisted of two similar rounds, in which participants made distributive choices about the joint allocation of 10 units between themselves and their pair. In this stage, we used stakeholders, in line with the design by Cappelen et al. (2007), rather than spectators (i.e. making decisions that only affect other players), as in the adaptation by Almås et al. (2020).[16] While we recognize this forces participants to make choices between their self-interest and their fairness views (we return to this in Section 3), we believe that this approach is closer to the reality of redistributive decisions, where preferences affect one's own income as well as the income of others. As recently argued by E. Fehr and Charness (2024: 26), there is evidence that fairness concerns matter only to other-regarding individuals, which suggests that using the spectator approach may overestimate the behavioural relevance of fairness ideals. Moreover, given the differences in initial endowments between the players in each pair, using the stakeholder approach enables us to compare the redistribution preferences between players in an advantageous versus a disadvantageous position. For instance, Amasino et al. (2023) report differences in redistribution choices and reported fairness views between advantaged and disadvantaged dictators (see also Blake et al. 2015).

In the first stage, both participants made their choices independently, and these were not communicated to the other player until the end of the session, when the final amounts were paid to all participants.[17] The first part of our analysis draws on the decisions made in this first stage and is based on between-subject comparison. We ran 40 sessions in Mozambique, 20 with the 'luck' scenario and 20 with the 'merit' scenario. We followed the same structure in each of the two Vietnamese provinces for a total of 40 sessions in the 'merit' scenario and 40 sessions in the 'luck' scenario.

[16] See discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of considering stakeholders or spectators in Cappelen et al. (2020).

[17] We paid each pair according to the decisions of both players. While we did not highlight to participants that two payments were involved in the game, we did emphasize that their answer would decide how much they would receive and how much the other player would receive.

The assignment of participants between sessions in each location was random. In advance of the sessions, our local teams collected lists of potential participants from the local authorities, aiming for a balance among gender, age, and income.[18] Based on these lists, we selected random subsamples (stratified on gender) of participants allocated to 'luck' and 'merit' sessions. Selected individuals were invited to participate in the study at a specified date/time, and the lists of invited participants were checked at the beginning of each session. While these lists do not contain a random sample of the population in the locations, the subsequent selection and allocation of participants between sessions was done randomly. The obtained country samples are described in more detail in the next section.

To the standard design of the game, we added a second stage, where we maintained the same initial pair endowment of 10 units but introduced a change in the power held by the participants. The decisions were sequential, with Player A going first and suggesting their distribution, which was then shown to Player B, who had the highest endowment and the power to decide whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposal. The final distribution corresponded to the decision of Player B, and we paid each participant according to this decision. In addition to collecting their choices, we asked each participant to guess the decision of the other player, i.e. before suggesting an allocation, Player A guessed the allocation decided by Player B, and before seeing the suggestion by Player A, Player B guessed what Player A had suggested. This additional round of the game adds a within-subject element to the analysis and allows us to consider the changes in behaviour between a setting where they make independent decisions to one where there is unilateral communication.

### 2.3 Protocol of the sessions

Each session was structured as follows. After the arrival of all participants, the team members checked attendance and confirmed that the participants in the room matched the list of participants for that session. After a brief introduction explaining the purpose of the session and reading the consent form, we registered participants by collecting the signed consent forms and giving them a small piece of paper with their ID number for the session. This served as their identifier for the remainder of the session, assuring that the data collected could be matched by

[18] We note that the fact that lists were provided by local authorities could mean that our sample of participants may have a stronger political inclination than the average. Over 70 per cent of the participants in each country sample report that they are satisfied or very satisfied with government services. The responses from different questions related to political views also suggest that a large share of the participants agree that it is the government's responsibility to reduce inequality, even if less than half of the participants in Mozambique think the government, instead of individuals, has the responsibility of providing for people. In both countries, the majority of participants agrees that progressive taxation would be fair to help pay for government programs benefiting the poor, and that paying higher taxes and getting more service provision from the government would be preferable than paying lower taxes and having fewer services. Thus, we cannot rule out that our samples may be somewhat biased towards left-wing political ideologies. Still, when it comes to our treatment, the balance tests on these variables show no reason for concern, and we run an additional heterogeneity analysis taking political views into account.

this ID number, but was anonymous. Participants then performed an effort task[19] and played a simple dictator game.

After a short health break, we split participants into two rooms (Players A in one room and Players B in a second room), according to the 'luck' or 'merit' treatment depending on the session. Players A started by playing the game described in Subsection 2.2, while Players B filled in a survey. Afterwards, Players A filled in the survey, while Players B played the game. At the end, we calculated and distributed their respective payments. The baseline gratuity was VND160,000 (approximately US$6) and MZN250 (approximately US$4 USD) in Viet Nam and Mozambique, respectively. To this we added the payments for the game according to the decisions of the participant and their pair. The maximum payments were VND310,000 (approximately US$12) and MZN400 (approximately US$6).

The sessions lasted about half a day in Mozambique and approximately two hours and thirty minutes in Viet Nam. In Mozambique, the sessions were held in both Portuguese and Makua (the local language in Nampula province), whereas in Viet Nam only Vietnamese was used.

## 3 Theoretical framework

Our study follows a simple theoretical framework, adapted from Cappelen et al. (2007) and Almås et al. (2020). After the production phase, each individual is informed about the initial endowments of the pair for a total endowment of $X$, which in our setting, is fixed (10 units). Each individual then chooses to allocate an amount $y$ to themself and $X - y$ to their pair. Following Cappelen et al. (2007), we assume that individuals care about income but also about fairness. Their fairness ideal, $m_i(j)$, specifies how much they think their fair allocation is in treatment $j = L, M$, where $L$ stands for 'luck' and $M$ stands for 'merit'. We model the participant's utility function as follows:

$$V_i(y) = \gamma_i y - \beta_i \frac{(y - m_i(j))^2}{2X} \tag{1}$$

which represents a trade-off between self-interest ($\gamma_i$) and fairness ($\beta_i$). Participants with $\gamma_i = 0$ will propose the amount they think is fair, whereas a participant with $\beta_i = 0$ will keep the total endowment $X$. The optimal interior solution is given by:

$$y^*(j) = m_i(j) + \frac{\gamma_i X}{\beta_i} \tag{2}$$

[19] We did not inform participants explicitly that this task was going to be used at a later stage, but we mentioned that their performance 'may or may not have implications for the rest of the session'.

illustrating that the optimal allocation depends on the fairness ideal and the weight allocated to fairness.

From this, it follows that, if the source of inequality matters for the participant's fairness view, then there will be a difference in the amount allocated between the 'merit' treatment and the 'luck' treatment:

$$y(L) - y(M) = m(L) - m(M) \tag{3}$$

We explain how we test this difference in the next section.

In the second part of our analysis, we extend equation 1 to consider the effect of communication. The utility functions change depending on the position of the player. Starting with Player B, we posit that communication might affect utility depending on (i) whether the individual cares about what the other suggests and what that suggestion is; and/or (ii) the difference between the suggestion and the allocation chosen by Player B in the first round, which can lead to some (dis)utility from (not) matching the suggestion. We model this as follows:

$$V_i(y) = \gamma_i y - \beta_i \frac{(y - m_i(j) - \alpha_i A)^2}{2X} \tag{4}$$

where $\alpha_i$ represents how much the individual values the suggestion. $A$ considers the two factors described, namely the amount suggested, $sug_A$, and the difference between this amount and the previous decision taken $y_1^*(j)$ (their own optimal allocation), squared to consider only positive differences and to give higher weight to higher differences. Thus, we represent $A$ as follows:

$$A = sug_A + (y_1^*(j) - sug_A)^2 \tag{5}$$

The optimal interior solution for Player B in round 2 is thus:

$$y_2^*(j) = m_i(j) + \frac{\gamma_i X}{\beta_i} + \alpha_i A \tag{6}$$

or, replacing $m_i(j)$ and $A$ with their respective expressions:

$$y_2^*(j) = y_1^*(j) + \alpha_i sug_A + \alpha_i (y_1^*(j) - sug_A)^2 \tag{7}$$

In the case of Player A, we consider that their suggested allocation ($y_s$) will now also depend on their guess of what Player B will do. We adjust the model as follows:

$$V_i(y_s) = \gamma_i y_s - \beta_i \frac{(y_s - m_i(j) - \theta_i guess_A)^2}{2X} \tag{8}$$

where $\theta_i$ represents how much they weigh their guess of what Player B will do in their decision, and $guess_A$ is their guess of Player B's decision. The optimal interior solution for Player A in

round 2 is thus:

$$y_s^*(j) = m_i(j) + \frac{\gamma_i X}{\beta_i} + \theta_i guess_A \quad \text{or} \quad y_s^*(j) = y_1^*(j) + \theta_i guess_A \tag{9}$$

## 4 Methods and data

First, to test our main hypothesis, we estimate the following equation:

$$e_i = \alpha + Merit_i\beta_1 + X_i'\beta_2 + \varepsilon_i \tag{10}$$

where $e_i$ is a measure of the inequality implemented by participant $i$, $Merit_i$ is a dummy indicating whether the individual was in a 'merit' session, $X_i'$ is a vector of individual controls (including gender, age, education, income, and position in the game), and $\varepsilon_i$ the error term. $\alpha$ allows for more aggregate fixed effects at the location level.

The level of implemented inequality is given by the ratio of the absolute value of the difference between the allocations to both players proposed by participant $i$ and the difference between the initial allocations of the player with high endowment (Player B) and the player with low endowment (Player A):

$$e_i = \frac{|(allocation\,to\,Player\,B)_i - (allocation\,to\,Player\,A)_i|}{initial\,allocation\,to\,Player\,B - initial\,allocation\,to\,Player\,A} \tag{11}$$

A value of 1 means that there was no redistribution, while a value of 0 means that income is equally distributed. A value between 0 and 1 indicates a decrease in inequality, whereas a value above 1 indicates an increase in inequality.

Later we explore the pair-wise data and the individual decisions of Players B and A in the second round by estimating the following baseline models, respectively:

$$a_{Bi2} = \alpha + \beta_1 a_{Bi1} + \beta_2 sug_A + \beta_3 (a_{Bi1} - sug_A)^2 + \varepsilon_i \tag{12}$$

$$a_{Ai2} = \alpha + \beta_1 a_{Ai1} + \beta_2 guess_A + \varepsilon_i \tag{13}$$

where $a_{Ai1}$ ($a_{Bi1}$) is the allocation of Player A (Player B) in round 1, $sug_A$ is the suggestion from Player A, and $a_{Ai2}$ ($a_{Bi2}$) indicates the amount allocated by Player A (Player B) in round 2. We focus on the allocated amount to Player A for simplicity, recalling that the respective allocation to Player B is simply the difference between 10 units and this number. We use both the aggregate data and the separate samples for each treatment when discussing the results, and in later specifications add individual socio-demographic characteristics ($X_i'$) and location fixed effects.

We present summary statistics for the main variables of interest in Table 1. Compared to the total sample, there are some missing observations for implemented inequality in both countries as well as for the socio-demographic characteristics. Half of the participants in each country sample are female, and the average age of the Mozambican participants is 38, while the average Vietnamese participant is 50 years old. The median level of education completed is middle school in both countries. The median Mozambican participant earns up to MZN750 per month (close to US$12), whereas the median Vietnamese participant earns up to VND3,000,000 (about US$123).[20] While the country samples are balanced on the main characteristics (see Table A1 in the Appendix), we also include them as controls in one of our specifications in the next section.[21]

Table 1: Summary statistics

| | Mean | St. dev. | Min. | Median | Max. | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MOZ | | | | | | |
| Implemented inequality (Round 1) | 0.61 | 0.51 | 0.00 | 0.50 | 2.50 | 902 |
| Implemented inequality (Round 2) | 0.53 | 0.53 | 0.00 | 0.50 | 2.50 | 902 |
| Female | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 1.00 | 894 |
| Age of respondent in 2023 | 38.39 | 13.68 | 19.00 | 35.00 | 82.00 | 893 |
| Education level (cat.) | 2.23 | 0.92 | 0.00 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 892 |
| Monthly income level (cat.) | 2.34 | 1.65 | 1.00 | 2.00 | 6.00 | 881 |
| VNM | | | | | | |
| Implemented inequality (Round 1) | 0.70 | 0.70 | 0.00 | 0.50 | 2.50 | 1,680 |
| Implemented inequality (Round 2) | 0.53 | 0.61 | 0.00 | 0.50 | 2.50 | 1,680 |
| Female | 0.54 | 0.50 | 0.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1,678 |
| Age of respondent in 2023 | 49.64 | 11.64 | 18.00 | 51.00 | 83.00 | 1,673 |
| Education level (cat.) | 2.58 | 1.04 | 0.00 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 1,676 |
| Monthly income level (cat.) | 2.92 | 1.58 | 1.00 | 2.00 | 6.00 | 1,671 |
| Total | | | | | | |
| Implemented inequality (Round 1) | 0.66 | 0.64 | 0.00 | 0.50 | 2.50 | 2,582 |
| Implemented inequality (Round 2) | 0.53 | 0.58 | 0.00 | 0.50 | 2.50 | 2,582 |
| Female | 0.52 | 0.50 | 0.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 2,572 |
| Age of respondent in 2023 | 45.72 | 13.49 | 18.00 | 47.00 | 83.00 | 2,566 |
| Education level (cat.) | 2.46 | 1.01 | 0.00 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 2,568 |
| Monthly income level (cat.) | 2.72 | 1.63 | 1.00 | 2.00 | 6.00 | 2,552 |

Note: implemented inequality calculated according to equation 11. Education level is categorical and ranges from 0 (no education) to 5 (postgraduate). Monthly income level is categorical with categories ranging from 1 (no income) to 6 (highest income level). ´
Source: authors' compilation.

[20] The average monthly income in Nampula province in 2020 was MZN1,859. The average monthly income in 2022 was VND4,745,000 in Hà Nam province and VND3,711,000 in Trà Vinh province. Thus, the participants in the study have generally lower income than the population averages.

[21] However, we note that there was some imbalance in terms of education in the Viet Nam sample when considering other balance tests (including regression analysis).

# 5 Main results

## 5.1 Source of inequality

Our first set of main results rely on data obtained from the first round of the distribution phase, namely the proposed distribution by each participant independently, i.e. with no interaction with the other player. We begin by describing the distributions of allocated amounts to each player and the main results obtained by comparing the average level of implemented inequality between the 'luck' and 'merit' treatments. We then discuss briefly some observed differences in fairness views among participants in both country settings.

*Baseline results*

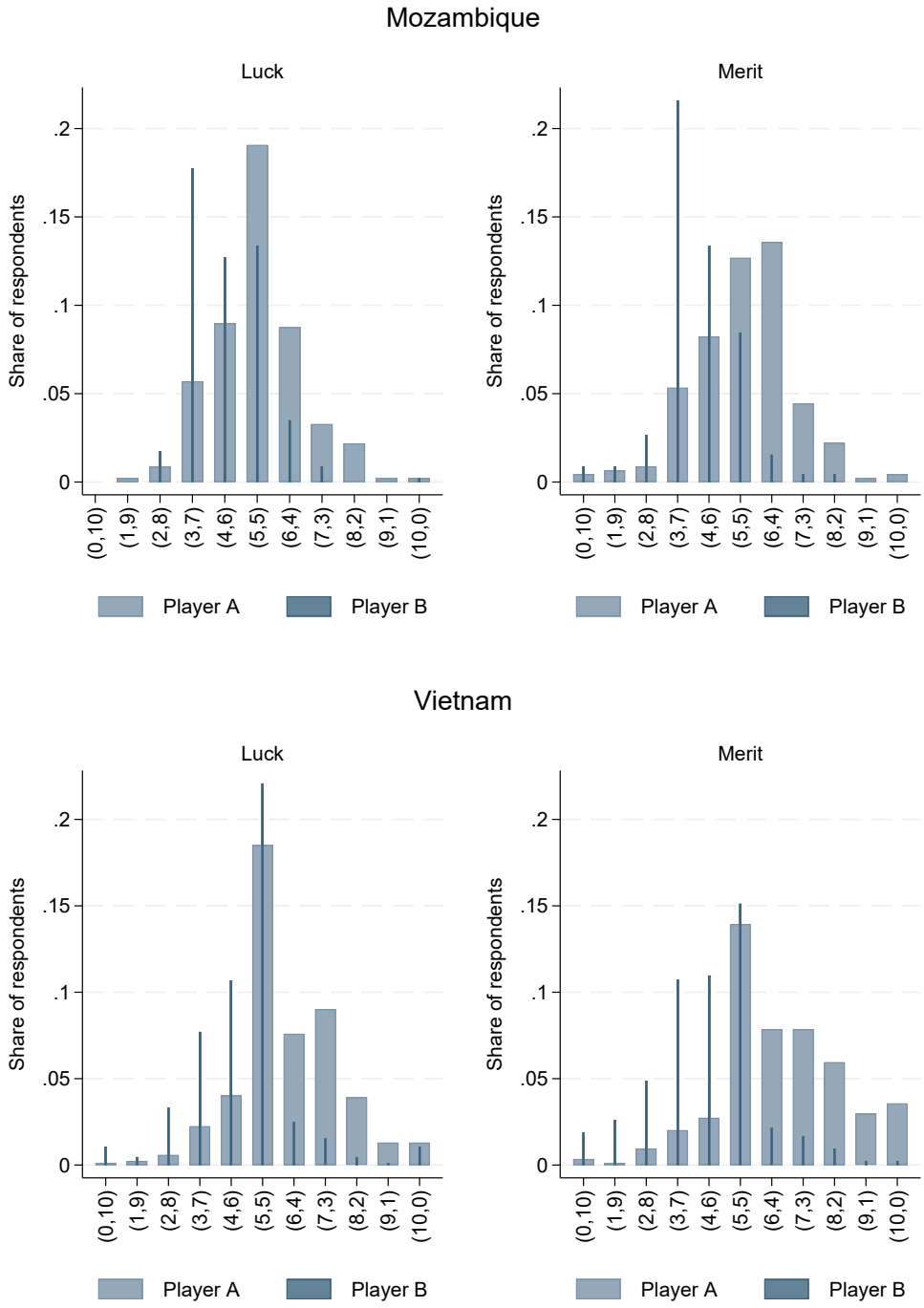
We start by showing the distributions of the amounts allocated to each player, considering the treatments separately (Figure 4).[22] Abstracting from the colour differences within the bars, a crude observation of the graph suggests that our hypothesis is confirmed, with a higher share of equal distributions in the 'luck' compared to the 'merit' sessions in both countries.[23] The colour distinctions in each bar show the shares according to the position of the player, with darker shades corresponding to Player A and lighter shades corresponding to Player B. We observe that in both treatments and in both countries, choosing to keep the initial allocation was a decision made mainly by Players B, whereas distributing equally was more evenly distributed between Players A and B.[24]

[22] Figure B1 in the Appendix shows different distributions in the two countries, aggregating the data across the two treatments. In Mozambique, 26.94 per cent of participants chose equality, compared to 34.88 per cent in Viet Nam. On the other hand, 25.28 per cent of participants in Mozambique chose to keep the same distribution, while only 11.37 per cent made this decision in Viet Nam.

[23] We ran common tests to formally compare the distributions. The Mann-Whitney two-sample statistic suggested no significant differences for the round 1 data in both countries (p-value = 0.1068 in Mozambique and p-value = 0.4398 in Viet Nam). The K-sample equality-of-medians test indicated significant differences between the samples, with p-values of 0.038 and 0.044 in Mozambique and Viet Nam, respectively.

[24] We present the shares of different redistribution scenarios in Figure C3 in the Appendix. It suggests some support for our hypothesis: there is a higher share of participants choosing 'equality' in the 'luck' sessions and a higher share of participants choosing 'more inequality' in the 'merit' sessions, the latter being higher in Viet Nam. We observe no significant differences in the categories of 'no redistribution' and 'less inequality'.

Figure 4: Amount allocated to each player, by treatment



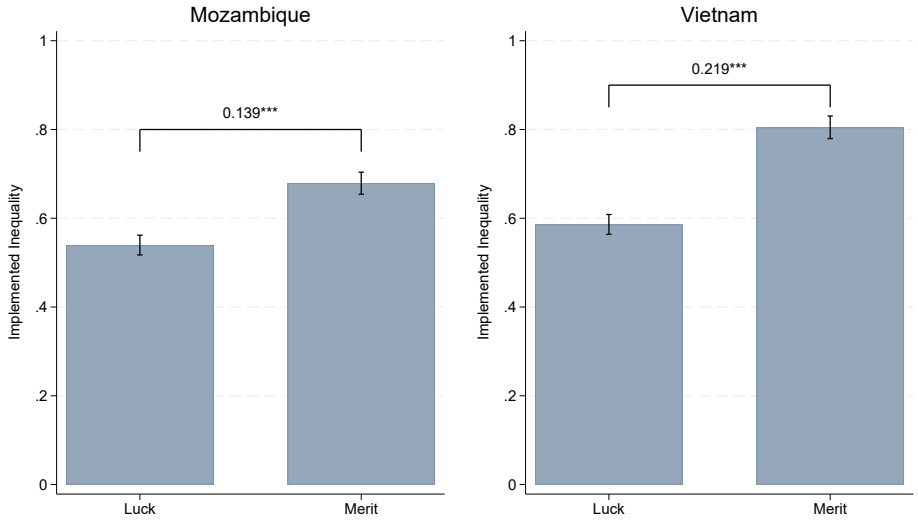

Note: in each ordered pair (A,B), A corresponds to the amount allocated to Player A, and B corresponds to the amount allocated to Player B, independent of the position of the participant who is allocating. Graphs show the cumulative shares according to the position of the player who is allocating. Darker bars show the shares corresponding to Players A and lighter bars show the shares corresponding to Players B.

Source: authors' illustration.

Turning to our main outcome of interest, when comparing the average levels of implemented inequality in the 'luck' and 'merit' groups, we confirm that the source of inequality matters

(Figure 5).[25] We find lower levels of implemented inequality (i.e. higher redistribution) in 'luck' sessions compared to 'merit' sessions in both country samples.[26] This suggests that participants tolerate inequality to a greater extent when it is a result of effort rather than simply by random allocation (beyond individual control). In Mozambique, the average level of implemented inequality is 0.54 in the 'luck' sessions, i.e. just over half of the initial level of inequality, and 0.68 in the 'merit' sessions. In Viet Nam, the difference is even more noticeable. The average implemented inequality is 0.59 in the 'luck' sessions compared to a higher level of 0.81 in the 'merit' sessions.

Figure 5: Average implemented inequality




Note: average values of implemented inequality, calculated according to equation 11.
Source: authors' illustration.

[25] See Appendix Figure B2 for the full distributions of the levels of implemented inequality in the 'luck' and 'merit' sessions.

[26] This result holds when considering round 2 instead (see Appendix Figure F5).

This difference is formally presented in Table 2. Columns (a) represent the results for the t-test of the differences, showing that in Mozambique, the level of implemented inequality was 14 percentage points higher in the 'merit' sessions, whereas in Viet Nam, it was 22 percentage points higher. This effect is robust to controlling for different socio-demographics, including gender, age, education, and income level (columns (b)) and the position of the player (columns (c)), as well as including location fixed effects (columns (d)). The results suggest that participants with a higher level of education implement less inequality in the Mozambican sample, as do participants who earn higher levels of income in the Vietnamese sample. Moreover, the position of the participant—as the player with higher or lower initial endowment—is correlated with the implemented inequality in both countries, though with opposite signs. Players B implemented higher inequality in Mozambique, whereas they implemented lower inequality in Viet Nam.

Table 2: Baseline results on implemented inequality

| | Mozambique | | | | Viet Nam | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) |
| Merit | 0.139*** | 0.146*** | 0.147*** | 0.138*** | 0.219*** | 0.212*** | 0.212*** | 0.206*** |
| | (0.047) | (0.046) | (0.046) | (0.032) | (0.067) | (0.067) | (0.067) | (0.041) |
| Female | | -0.016 | -0.004 | 0.005 | | -0.028 | -0.026 | -0.044 |
| | | (0.037) | (0.038) | (0.038) | | (0.035) | (0.035) | (0.034) |
| Age | | -0.002 | -0.001 | -0.001 | | -0.000 | -0.001 | -0.002 |
| | | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) |
| High education | | -0.111** | -0.114** | -0.096** | | 0.052 | 0.066* | 0.007 |
| | | (0.044) | (0.043) | (0.041) | | (0.039) | (0.039) | (0.036) |
| High income | | -0.028 | -0.036 | -0.038 | | -0.100** | -0.101** | -0.112*** |
| | | (0.036) | (0.035) | (0.036) | | (0.040) | (0.040) | (0.036) |
| Player B | | | 0.147*** | 0.147*** | | | -0.098* | -0.093* |
| | | | (0.044) | (0.044) | | | (0.049) | (0.051) |
| Constant | 0.540*** | 0.666*** | 0.564*** | 0.508*** | 0.586*** | 0.640*** | 0.708*** | 0.579*** |
| | (0.035) | (0.086) | (0.085) | (0.087) | (0.039) | (0.121) | (0.125) | (0.186) |
| Observations | 902 | 875 | 875 | 875 | 1,680 | 1,658 | 1,658 | 1,658 |
| $R^2$ | 0.019 | 0.033 | 0.053 | 0.098 | 0.024 | 0.027 | 0.032 | 0.148 |
| Controls? | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Fixed effects? | No | No | No | Yes | No | No | No | Yes |

Note: the dependent variable is implemented inequality. Columns (a) present the simple correlations between the treatment and the dependent variable. Columns (b) include as controls gender (1 if female), age (in 2023), high education (1 if higher than sample median), and income (1 if monthly income higher than sample median). Columns (c) add the position of the participant (1 if Player B) to the previous list of controls. Columns (d) consider location fixed effects. Standard errors (clustered at the session level) are in parentheses. Significance: *** 0.01, ** 0.05, * 0.1
Source: authors' compilation.

*Heterogeneity analysis*

We then consider whether the effect of the treatment matters more for certain groups of the population by including interaction terms between the treatment and the different control variables. The results are presented in Table 3. They suggest that there is an interaction effect between the treatment and high levels of education and income in Mozambique. While both participants

with high levels and low levels of education implement more inequality in the 'merit' than in the 'luck' sessions (0.218 and 0.084, respectively), participants with higher levels of education implement higher inequality than participants with lower levels of education—the difference being around 13 percentage points. Similarly, participants with higher income implement more inequality (close to 14 percentage points) than the others. The effect of 'merit' as a source of inequality does not seem to interact with any of the other socio-demographic characteristics or the position of the player.

Table 3: Heterogeneity analysis

| | Mozambique | | | | | | Viet Nam | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Female | Age | High edu | High inc | Player B | Rural | Female | Age | High edu | High inc | Player B | Rural |
| Merit | 0.173*** | 0.143*** | 0.084** | 0.091** | 0.094* | 0.164** | 0.151*** | 0.220*** | 0.200*** | 0.209*** | 0.218*** | 0.252*** |
| | (0.042) | (0.049) | (0.037) | (0.041) | (0.051) | (0.071) | (0.047) | (0.059) | (0.049) | (0.054) | (0.069) | (0.086) |
| Merit x Female | -0.071 | | | | | | 0.103 | | | | | |
| | (0.073) | | | | | | (0.067) | | | | | |
| Female | 0.042 | 0.008 | 0.005 | 0.006 | 0.009 | -0.002 | -0.094** | -0.042 | -0.042 | -0.042 | -0.042 | -0.030 |
| | (0.060) | (0.038) | (0.038) | (0.038) | (0.038) | (0.038) | (0.044) | (0.035) | (0.035) | (0.035) | (0.035) | (0.037) |
| Merit x Older | | -0.010 | | | | | | -0.028 | | | | |
| | | (0.079) | | | | | | (0.079) | | | | |
| Older | -0.003 | -0.001 | -0.007 | -0.001 | -0.001 | -0.008 | -0.031 | -0.013 | -0.027 | -0.027 | -0.028 | -0.022 |
| | (0.043) | (0.051) | (0.043) | (0.042) | (0.042) | (0.042) | (0.041) | (0.055) | (0.040) | (0.040) | (0.041) | (0.043) |
| Merit x High education | | | 0.134* | | | | | | 0.013 | | | |
| | | | (0.073) | | | | | | (0.067) | | | |
| High education | -0.088** | -0.089** | -0.156** | -0.089** | -0.095** | -0.098** | 0.015 | 0.015 | 0.008 | 0.015 | 0.016 | 0.052 |
| | (0.043) | (0.042) | (0.065) | (0.043) | (0.042) | (0.041) | (0.035) | (0.035) | (0.046) | (0.035) | (0.034) | (0.040) |
| Merit x High income | | | | 0.136** | | | | | | -0.007 | | |
| | | | | (0.067) | | | | | | (0.067) | | |
| High income | -0.040 | -0.041 | -0.043 | -0.108** | -0.044 | -0.042 | -0.108*** | -0.106*** | -0.106*** | -0.103** | -0.106*** | -0.112*** |
| | (0.035) | (0.035) | (0.036) | (0.052) | (0.036) | (0.034) | (0.036) | (0.036) | (0.036) | (0.048) | (0.036) | (0.039) |
| Merit x Player B | | | | | 0.089 | | | | | | -0.022 | |
| | | | | | (0.090) | | | | | | (0.099) | |
| Player B | 0.148*** | 0.149*** | 0.140*** | 0.144*** | 0.107** | 0.149*** | -0.090* | -0.091* | -0.090* | -0.089* | -0.079 | -0.095* |
| | (0.046) | (0.045) | (0.045) | (0.046) | (0.051) | (0.045) | (0.050) | (0.051) | (0.050) | (0.050) | (0.064) | (0.049) |
| Merit x Rural | | | | | | -0.034 | | | | | | -0.085 |
| | | | | | | (0.090) | | | | | | (0.131) |
| Rural | | | | | | 0.044 | | | | | | -0.048 |
| | | | | | | (0.063) | | | | | | (0.078) |
| Observations | 875 | 875 | 875 | 875 | 875 | 875 | 1,658 | 1,658 | 1,658 | 1,658 | 1,658 | 1,658 |
| $R^2$ | 0.098 | 0.097 | 0.101 | 0.101 | 0.099 | 0.054 | 0.148 | 0.147 | 0.147 | 0.147 | 0.147 | 0.037 |

Note: the dependent variable is implemented inequality. Each column presents the results for a specific factor, obtained by adding an interaction term between that factor and the 'merit' term to the baseline specification. The factors considered are: female (1 if female), age (1 if older than sample median), high education (1 if education higher than sample median), income (1 if average monthly income higher than sample median), position of the player (1 if Player B), and rural/urban context (1 if rural). All other controls and location fixed effects included in all specifications. Standard errors (clustered at the session level) are in parentheses.
Significance: *** 0.01, ** 0.05, * 0.1
Source: authors' compilation.

We next test whether there are differences between rural and urban settings. The results under the columns 'Rural' in Table 3 show that, while the effect for 'merit' persists, the rural/urban context does not seem to matter either for allocations or for the influence of the source of inequality. Moreover, we repeat the baseline results, splitting the Vietnamese sample into the North region and the South region (see Appendix Figure D2). Our main results remain. We find a higher magnitude of coefficient in the North province and a lower magnitude in the South province, suggesting that the effect of meritocracy is stronger in the northern than in the southern part of the country.

Finally, we consider the role of political views, given that conceptually, redistribution policies are one of the main determinants of political orientation (Alesina et al. 2001).[27] We create two

[27] We note that this part of the analysis was not pre-registered.

separate variables to represent left-leaning political orientation based on survey questions. The first, which we designate by 'Government', takes the value of 1 if the respondent agrees with the statement 'It is the responsibility of the government to reduce the differences in income between rich people and poor people' and selects the government when asked who should take responsibility for providing for people. The second, labelled as 'Taxation', takes the value of 1 if the respondent agrees with the statement 'It is fair that the rich people pay a higher tax rate than ordinary people in order to help pay for government programs to benefit the poor' and thinks that paying higher taxes and having more services provided by the government is better than paying lower taxes and having fewer services provided. Still, the results in Table D3 in the Appendix show that there are no significant effects of either of these variables on the level of implemented inequality. Moreover, we do not find any interaction effects with the 'merit' treatment.

*Robustness checks*

We perform a series of robustness checks of the main results.[28] First, we consider the potential learning effects in each location, given that we performed two sessions—over two days in Mozambique and in different periods of the day in Viet Nam. The results show that introducing a dummy for the first session in each location does not change the main result.[29] Second, we test whether dropping the first day of data collection in each country affects the results given that the first day was typically more challenging. Again, our main results remain.[30] Third, we replace the location fixed effects with two different sets of enumerator fixed effects: (i) we include dummies for the different teams of enumerators; (ii) we include dummies for the script readers in the respective room. Our main results survive these checks.[31]

We take a step further and test what happens when we use two alternative dependent variables.[32] The first is a dummy if the participant chose the equal distribution, and the second is obtained by replacing the formula in equation 11 with an alternative where we remove the absolute values:

$$e_{alt} = \frac{\text{allocation to Player B - allocation to Player A}}{\text{initial allocation to Player B - initial allocation to Player A}} \tag{14}$$

[28] All the corresponding tables are included in Appendix E.

[29] See column 'Learning effects' in Table E4 in Appendix E. The coefficient for this dummy is significant in Viet Nam but only significant when including location fixed effects in Mozambique.

[30] See column 'First day' in Table E4 in Appendix E.

[31] See column 'Enumerator FE' in Table E4 in Appendix E.

[32] See Table E5 in Appendix E.

The effect of 'merit' persists when we consider a dummy for equal distribution. The coefficient is now negative, as expected, given our hypothesis of less redistribution in the 'merit' scenario. We find no statistically significant effect for our alternative measure of implemented inequality. Still, one should bear in mind that, while including absolute values means that we do not account for the inequality to be reversed between participants, the measure $e_{alt}$ is more challenging to interpret.

We perform three final checks. First, while the analysis presented in this section relies only on data from round 1 of distributions, a similar set of results is obtained when using data from round 2 instead. We find that the coefficient for 'merit' is still significant and similar in size.[33] Second, we consider whether the fact that the implemented distribution may be costly to the participants affects the results. To do that, we create a measure of 'altruistic' behaviour that is equal to 1 if the number of units allocated by the participant to themself is lower than the number initially allocated, which indicates that the participant is willing to bear a 'cost' in their proposed distribution. We find that individuals who bear this cost implement lower inequality and that 'altruistic' Players B implement lower inequality than 'non-altruistic' Players B.[34] Considering our 'merit' treatment, we observe that in both countries, there is a higher share of participants choosing equality and bearing a cost in 'luck' than in 'merit' sessions, in line with our main findings.[35] Finally, we repeat the baseline and the heterogeneity analyses now clustering the standard errors at the location level rather than at the session level. Once again, there are no major changes in the results.[36]

*Differences in fairness views*

We find interesting differences between the two countries in terms of fairness views. Consider as 'egalitarians' the share of participants who divide equally in the 'merit' sessions and as 'libertarians' the share of participants who do not redistribute in the 'luck' sessions. Under certain assumptions,[37] the share of 'meritocrats' can be obtained from the difference between the share that does not redistribute in the 'merit' sessions and the share that does not redistribute in the 'luck' sessions. The corresponding shares for each country are presented in Figure 6. The share of meritocrats is very low in both countries, and most participants do not fall strictly under these categories. Still, it is interesting to note that while in the sample for Viet Nam there is a

[33] See Table F9 in Appendix F.

[34] See Table E6 in Appendix E.

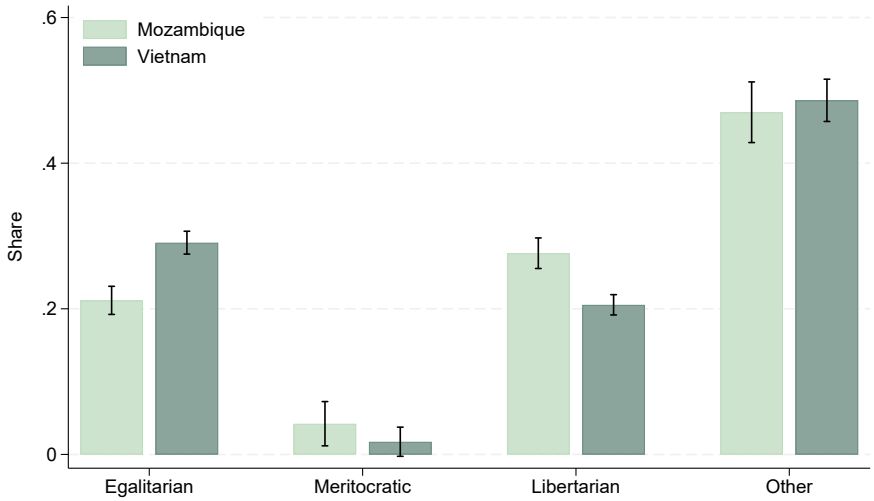
[35] See Figure E4 in Appendix E. In Mozambique, in all other scenarios, the share of participants making that decision and being 'selfish' is higher in 'merit' than in 'luck' sessions. In Viet Nam, this difference is only significant for the scenario of choosing more inequality.

[36] See Tables E7 and E8 in Appendix E.

[37] See more details in Almås et al. (2020).

higher share of egalitarians than libertarians, the opposite is true for the Mozambique sample, in which the share of libertarians is higher than egalitarians.[38]

Figure 6: Shares of egalitarians, libertarians, and meritocrats




Note: shares calculated according to the definitions described in the text.
Source: authors' illustration.

## 5.2 Allowing for communication

We turn now to the second round of the game.[39] The different decisions are represented schematically in Table 4. We start by exploring whether meritocratic values are still relevant when we allow for communication between the recipient and the dictator compared to when decisions were taken independently, i.e. without any communication.

Table 4: Diagram of decisions

| | Round 1 | Round 2 | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Player A | Dictator ($A_1$) | Suggestion ($A_2$) | Guess ($G_A$) |
| Player B | Dictator ($B_1$) | Guess ($G_B$) | Dictator ($B_2$) |

Source: authors' compilation.

Later, we compare the distribution decisions in the two rounds, focusing separately on dictators and recipients. We answer the following questions in the next four subsections:

- Does the source of inequality still matter when we allow for communication?

[38] We consider as an alternative the definition of meritocrats proposed in Almås et al. (2020). They compute the difference between the share of participants allocating more to the more productive worker in the 'merit' treatment and the share of participants allocating more to the lucky worker in the 'luck' treatment. We find a slightly higher share of meritocrats but still no difference between the two countries (see Figure G6 in Appendix G).

[39] We note that while we follow loosely the research questions listed in the pre-registration, we expand the analysis beyond the simple comparisons included in the pre-analysis plan. We highlight that the analysis was intended to be exploratory and that no hypotheses were specified at the time of pre-registering.

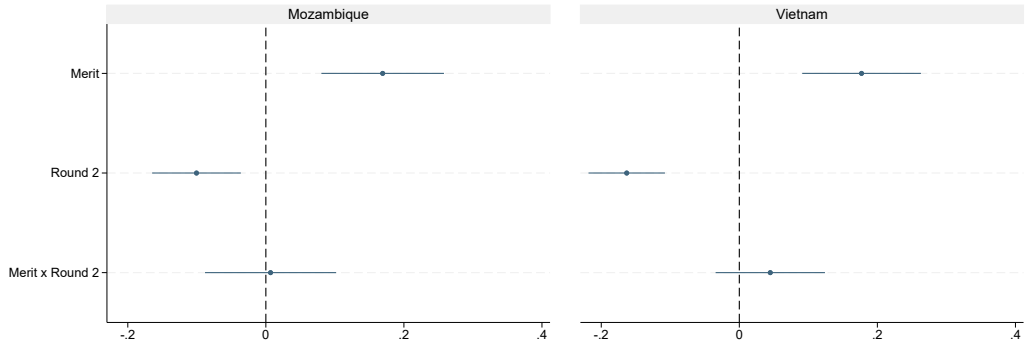
- Does Player A get what they suggest? Does this depend on the source of inequality?
- Does Player B (the dictator) take the suggestion into account? How accurately can they guess the suggestion?
- Is Player A's (the recipient) suggestion related to their guess of what the dictator will do? How accurately can they guess the final decision?

Before we proceed, we note that the changes between the two rounds are not only a reflection of the new setting of the game (i.e. being the recipient but having a voice and being the dictator and seeing the suggestion from the recipient) but also because this is the second round of the game, so there may be learning effects from repetition. We recognize that we cannot distinguish between these two effects and that the discussion should be read with this caveat in mind.

*Importance of the source of inequality*

The answer to the question of whether the source of inequality remains important when communication between dictator and recipient is allowed is yes, but not more (or less) than before. Figure 7 portrays the coefficients for the 'merit' treatment, playing a second round, and the interaction between these two variables, resulting from estimating their effect on implemented inequality by Player B and controlling for individual socio-demographic characteristics and location fixed effects. We focus on Player B only, given that they remain a dictator in the second round and thus the decisions between rounds are comparable, whereas the circumstances for Player A change from dictator to recipient. The figure shows that Player B implemented less inequality in the second round in both country samples. Still, while the effect of 'merit' seems slightly smaller in the second round, this difference is not statistically significant.

Figure 7: The source of inequality still matters but not more than before



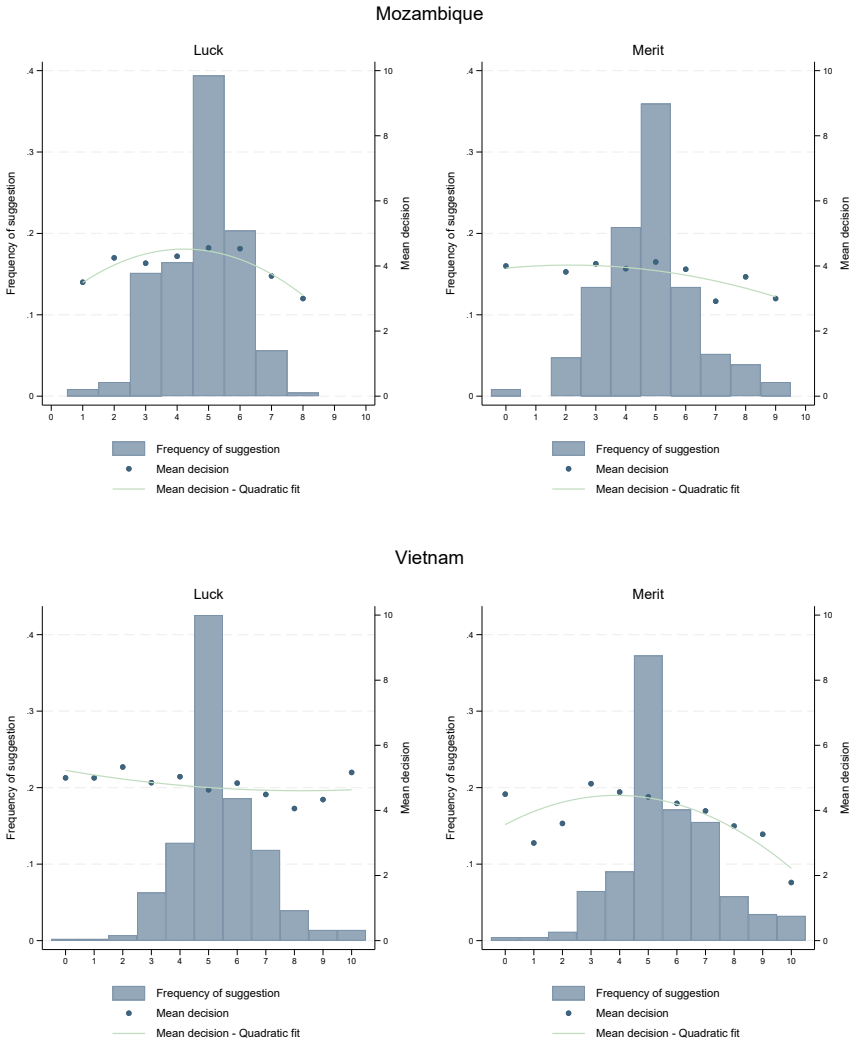

Note: coefficients obtained from regressing implemented inequality by Player B on 'merit' treatment, playing a second round, and the interaction between the two and controlling for individual socio-demographic characteristics and location fixed effects. The socio-demographic characteristics are: gender (1 if female), age, high education (1 if higher than sample median), and income (1 if monthly income higher than sample median). Standard errors are (clustered at the session level) in parentheses.

Source: authors' illustration.

*Differences between suggestions and final allocations*

Next, we ask whether Player A (the recipient) received the same amount as they suggested. Instead of looking at implemented inequality, we focus now on the amount allocated to Player A, by either Player A or Player B.[40] The answer is, it depends on what Player A asks. In Figure 8, we plot the histograms of the suggestions made by the recipient (left y-axis), divided into the 'merit' or 'luck' treatments. For each suggested amount, the dark blue dot shows the average amount allocated by Player B, the dictator (right y-axis). The light green line plots the predicted mean decisions from a linear regression on the suggestions and their quadratic term.

Figure 8: Does Player A get what they suggest?




Note: histograms of the suggested amounts to allocate to Player A, with frequencies presented on the left y-axis. For each suggested amount, the dark dot corresponds to the average amount allocated by Player B, represented in the right y-axis. The lighter line plots the prediction mean decisions from a linear regression on the suggestions and their quadratic term.

Source: authors' illustration.

[40] This is equivalent to considering the amount allocated to Player B, which corresponds to the difference between the total amount (10) and the allocation to Player A.

In both country samples, while more than 35 per cent of the recipients suggest an equal distribution, on average, the final allocated amount is below five. However, there are differences between countries and treatments. In particular, the 'luck' subsample in Mozambique and the 'merit' subsample in Viet Nam roughly suggest an inverted U-shaped relationship between suggestions and decisions. More specifically, if Player A suggests an amount up to four units, on average, they receive more than that. In contrast, if they ask for more than five units, the average allocation is below the request.

These conclusions are confirmed in Table 5. The different columns correspond to different suggested amounts, and, for each of them, the rows present the probability of receiving an amount that is lower, equal, or higher than this suggestion, as well as the mean decision in each of these scenarios. The last row of each country panel includes the values corresponding to the dark blue dots in Figure 8. Among Mozambican individuals (Panel I), there is a high chance of getting four units if they suggest this amount, which was also a common choice, especially in the 'merit' sessions. This corresponds to asking for just one more unit than their initial allocation. The probability of getting less than what they suggest is the highest when the suggestion is higher than five, which was the second-most popular choice among participants.

Table 5: Decision probability scenarios depending on the suggestion, by treatment

| | Suggestion | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Luck | | | | | Merit | | | | |
| | $<3$ | $=3$ | $=4$ | $=5$ | $>5$ | $<3$ | $=3$ | $=4$ | $=5$ | $>5$ |
| *Panel I: Mozambique* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Probability decision $<$ suggestion (%) | . | 11.43 | 21.62 | 37.78 | 88.52 | . | 6.67 | 27.08 | 48.15 | 85.45 |
| Mean decision (units) | . | 2 | 2.88 | 3.38 | 4.09 | . | 1.5 | 2.85 | 3 | 3.15 |
| Probability decision $=$ suggestion (%) | 16.67 | 34.29 | 45.95 | 52.22 | 9.84 | 33.33 | 36.67 | 54.17 | 44.44 | 14.55 |
| Mean decision (units) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6.13 |
| Probability decision $>$ suggestion (%) | 83.33 | 54.29 | 32.43 | 10.00 | 1.64 | 66.67 | 56.67 | 18.75 | 7.41 | . |
| Mean decision (units) | 4.4 | 5.21 | 5.67 | 6.67 | 7 | 4.75 | 5.06 | 5.22 | 6.17 | . |
| % of suggestions | 2.60 | 15.15 | 16.45 | 39.39 | 26.41 | 5.63 | 13.42 | 20.78 | 35.93 | 24.24 |
| Aggregate mean decision (units) | 4 | 4.09 | 4.29 | 4.56 | 4.33 | 3.83 | 4.07 | 3.92 | 4.12 | 3.58 |
| *Panel II: Viet Nam* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Probability decision $<$ suggestion (%) | . | 3.70 | 1.82 | 29.51 | 88.13 | 11.11 | 10.71 | 23.08*** | 41.61** | 91.79 |
| Mean decision (units) | . | 1 | 3 | 3.19 | 4.29 | 1 | 1.67 | 2.56 | 3.15 | 3.54 |
| Probability decision $=$ suggestion (%) | . | 11.11 | 21.82 | 59.02 | 8.75 | 11.11 | 3.57 | 23.08 | 44.72*** | 6.15 |
| Mean decision (units) | . | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6.5 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6.5 |
| Probability decision $>$ suggestion (%) | 100.00 | 85.19 | 76.36 | 11.48 | 3.13 | 77.78 | 85.71 | 53.85** | 13.66 | 2.05 |
| Mean decision (units) | 5.2 | 5.26 | 5.38 | 6.48 | 9.2 | 4.43 | 5.29 | 5.67 | 6.36 | 7.5 |
| % of suggestions | 1.16 | 6.28 | 12.79 | 42.56 | 37.21 | 2.08 | 6.48 | 9.03 | 37.27 | 45.14 |
| Aggregate mean decision (units) | 5.2 | 4.85 | 5.04 | 4.63 | 4.64 | 3.67 | 4.82 | 4.56 | 4.42 | 3.8 |

Note: each column presents, for a certain suggested amount, the probability of receiving an amount that is lower, equal, or higher than what they suggest, as well as the mean decision in each of these scenarios. The last two rows in each panel indicate the percentage of respondents who suggested the amount corresponding to each column and the corresponding mean decision (i.e. mean amount allocated to Player A by Player B). Stars represent the significance of a t-test of the difference between merit and luck for each scenario: *** 0.01, ** 0.05, * 0.1.

Source: authors' compilation.

The scenarios look different in the Viet Nam sample (Panel II). There is a very high chance of receiving at least three when suggesting up to this amount, though a small share of recipients suggest this. If they suggest four units, they are likely to receive more, and this probability is

higher if the source of inequality is 'luck', where the average decision is an equal distribution. However, most participants suggest five or more, and more so than in Mozambique. If they suggest five, they still have a good chance of receiving this amount, though this probability is lower if inequality results from 'merit'.

Overall, it seems that the best strategy is to suggest an amount up to four, which (under certain conditions) is 'rewarded' (i.e. matched with higher allocations), whereas suggestions above this value, on average, are 'punished' with a lower amount. We explore the decisions of the dictators in more detail next.

*The dictators*

In the second round, Player B is again in the role of dictator, but they can now see the suggestion from the recipient. We do not observe a great share of participants choosing selfishly to take the entire amount.[41] If their redistributive preferences are unaffected by seeing the suggestion (or if Player A suggests the same as they had allocated), the distribution from Player B will be the same as in the first round. In fact, half of the dictators kept their inequality choices from the first round in both countries.[42]

The suggestion received from their pair acts as an exogenous information shock. As previous studies have suggested, seeing the suggestion may be perceived by Player B in different ways and affect behaviour differently. The suggestion may be seen as the expectation of the recipient and further interpreted as the fairness norm, or at least increase the salience of this norm (e.g., Mohlin and Johannesson 2008; Ghidoni and Ploner 2021). In this case, not following the suggestion may have an additional cost for the dictator, which may lead them to match the suggestion. However, they may also choose to deviate from it, if it is not in line with their own view, and thus reward or even punish the recipient by giving them, respectively, higher or lower amounts than suggested.

While we do not test for these different channels separately, we nevertheless draw illustrative observations from estimating the link between the decision of Player B in the second round and (i) their decision in the first round and (ii) the suggestion from Player A. The results are presented in Table 6, where the dependent variable is the amount allocated to Player A by Player B in the second round. The three groups of estimations are obtained based on all data, the subsample for 'luck' sessions, and the subsample for the 'merit' sessions, for each country.

[41] We identified two sessions where an unusually high share of participants either suggested an allocation of 10 or allocated 10 units to themselves. We repeated the analysis presented here excluding these two sessions, and the results remain consistent with the main conclusions.

[42] See more details in the matrix in Table H11 in Appendix H, which summarizes the shares of participants choosing each combination of decisions.

Columns (a) in Table 6 show a negative correlation between the amount suggested and the final allocation but is significant only in the Viet Nam sample, when pooling all data and when restricting to the 'merit' subsample.

Table 6: Relationship between the final decision and the suggestion from the recipient

| | All data | | | Luck | | | Merit | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (a) | (b) | (c) | (a) | (b) | (c) | (a) | (b) | (c) |
| *Panel I: Mozambique* | | | | | | | | | |
| Allocation ($B_1$) | 0.549*** | 0.517*** | 0.518*** | 0.496*** | 0.496*** | 0.424*** | 0.570*** | 0.495*** | 0.498*** |
| | (0.066) | (0.069) | (0.077) | (0.087) | (0.086) | (0.096) | (0.089) | (0.096) | (0.100) |
| Suggestion ($A_2$) | -0.034 | 0.011 | -0.005 | 0.059 | 0.053 | 0.070 | -0.098 | -0.017 | -0.022 |
| | (0.060) | (0.056) | (0.055) | (0.080) | (0.081) | (0.079) | (0.079) | (0.074) | (0.065) |
| Difference ($(B_1 - A_2)^2$) | | -0.021 | -0.007 | | 0.006 | -0.005 | | -0.027** | -0.005 |
| | | (0.013) | (0.010) | | (0.025) | (0.030) | | (0.010) | (0.007) |
| Observations | 455 | 455 | 443 | 229 | 229 | 224 | 226 | 226 | 219 |
| $R^2$ | 0.236 | 0.244 | 0.358 | 0.210 | 0.211 | 0.415 | 0.244 | 0.257 | 0.434 |
| *Panel II: Viet Nam* | | | | | | | | | |
| Allocation ($B_1$) | 0.501*** | 0.472*** | 0.436*** | 0.452*** | 0.459*** | 0.441*** | 0.517*** | 0.460*** | 0.412*** |
| | (0.040) | (0.038) | (0.039) | (0.060) | (0.057) | (0.063) | (0.054) | (0.052) | (0.062) |
| Suggestion ($A_2$) | -0.148*** | -0.102*** | -0.084** | -0.078 | -0.094** | -0.088* | -0.181*** | -0.102* | -0.007 |
| | (0.045) | (0.039) | (0.041) | (0.055) | (0.044) | (0.046) | (0.058) | (0.059) | (0.065) |
| Difference ($(B_1 - A_2)^2$) | | -0.011 | -0.013* | | 0.006 | 0.005 | | -0.017** | -0.011 |
| | | (0.008) | (0.007) | | (0.016) | (0.016) | | (0.006) | (0.006) |
| Observations | 862 | 862 | 850 | 430 | 430 | 423 | 432 | 432 | 427 |
| $R^2$ | 0.365 | 0.371 | 0.451 | 0.301 | 0.302 | 0.394 | 0.394 | 0.408 | 0.580 |

Note: the dependent variable is the amount allocated to Player A by Player B in round 2. $A_2$ is the suggestion from Player A and $B_1$ is the decision of Player B in round 1. Columns (c) include as controls gender (1 if female), age, high education (1 if higher than sample median), and income (1 if monthly income higher than sample median) as well as location fixed effects. Standard errors (clustered at the session level) are in parentheses. Significance: *** 0.01, ** 0.05, * 0.1

Source: authors' compilation.

Recall that in our theoretical framework we considered that the allocation of Player B may also be influenced by the size of the difference between what they have previously allocated (which we take as their 'true' preference) and the suggestion they see from Player A. The results of adding the squared term of this difference are reported in columns (b). The coefficient is negative in both countries and in both the full samples and the merit subsamples, but only significant in the latter, and loses significance when we add the player's individual socio-demographic characteristics and location fixed effects in columns (c). As expected, there is a positive and significant correlation between the decisions of Players B in the two rounds across all specifications.[43]

[43] In line with previous studies (e.g., Andreoni and Rao 2011; Kleine et al. 2016; Yamamori et al. 2008), we relaxed the assumption that the relationship is linear and added the square term of the suggestion, as one way of testing for nonlinearity. The results in Table I12 in Appendix I confirm the differences between Mozambique and Viet Nam suggested in Figure 8. In the former, there is a nonlinear relationship between the suggestion and the allocation if the source of inequality is 'luck', whereas in the latter, this relationship is only significant when the source of inequality is 'merit'. Up to a certain amount, higher suggestions are matched with higher allocations, after which there is an negative relation between suggestions and final allocations. Still, after we add the decision of Player B in round 1, and the player's individual socio-demographic characteristics and location fixed effects, this result only holds in Mozambique.

Before Player B saw the suggestion (and made their final allocation), we asked them to guess what the suggestion had been. We obtained an indicator of accuracy by first calculating the average amount allocated by Player A in round 2. Then, for each Player B we computed the difference between their guess of the suggestion and the average allocation by Players A, rounded to the closest unit to facilitate the interpretation. A value of 0 means that the participant made an accurate guess, and higher absolute values correspond to guesses further away from the correct average allocation. Negative values are underestimations, and positive values are overestimations.

Figure 9 presents the accuracy of guesses in each treatment group. In Mozambique, dictators struggled to anticipate the suggestion from recipients in both treatment subsamples, with both under- and overestimations. In contrast, in Viet Nam, Players B were more accurate in the 'luck' scenario,[44] and in general the skew is towards overestimations.

Figure 9: Accuracy of guesses by Player B, by treatment


Note: the x-axis represents the difference between the guess by Player B of the amount suggested by Player A and the average amount allocated by all Players A, rounded to the closest unit. The two lines correspond to the treatment on the source of inequality.

Source: authors' illustration.

*The recipients*

On one hand, recipients may decide to maintain a similar decision in the second round as they had done in the first round. This was the case for more than half of Players A in both countries (53 per cent in Mozambique and 55 per cent in Viet Nam; see more details on Table H10 in Appendix H). On the other hand, if they expect the decision from Player B to be very

[44] A Mann-Whitney test confirmed that there is a significant difference between the two distributions.

different from their own decision in the first round, this may lead them to allocate differently, and potentially more strategically, in the second round. They can use their voice as a signal of their own preference, or as a form of power to influence the dictator's decision. For instance, they may use it as an appeal for compassion and suggest a higher amount than what they think they will receive. Alternatively, they may fear being 'punished' and therefore choose a more modest allocation than they would otherwise. They may also try to match what they think others consider as the fair allocation.

With this in mind, we estimate the relationship between the suggestions and (i) the allocation of Player A in round 1 and (ii) their guess of what Player B will do, which can be interpreted as their expectation of what they will receive. The results are presented in Table 7, where the dependent variable is the suggested allocation to Player A, and the structure of the different columns is similar to Table 6.

Table 7: Relationship between Player A's suggestion and their guess of the final decision

| | All data | | Luck | | Merit | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (a) | (b) | (a) | (b) | (a) | (b) |
| *Panel I: Mozambique* | | | | | | |
| Guess ($G_A$) | 0.284*** | 0.160*** | 0.131 | 0.098 | 0.405*** | 0.210*** |
| | (0.062) | (0.051) | (0.085) | (0.082) | (0.074) | (0.070) |
| Previous allocation ($A_1$) | | 0.476*** | | 0.443*** | | 0.448*** |
| | | (0.050) | | (0.070) | | (0.072) |
| Observations | 462 | 461 | 231 | 230 | 231 | 231 |
| $R^2$ | 0.078 | 0.395 | 0.018 | 0.380 | 0.145 | 0.497 |
| *Panel II: Viet Nam* | | | | | | |
| Guess ($G_A$) | 0.255*** | 0.147*** | 0.293** | 0.155** | 0.213* | 0.119* |
| | (0.078) | (0.047) | (0.112) | (0.058) | (0.108) | (0.070) |
| Previous allocation ($A_1$) | | 0.594*** | | 0.581*** | | 0.595*** |
| | | (0.048) | | (0.065) | | (0.072) |
| Observations | 862 | 862 | 430 | 430 | 432 | 432 |
| $R^2$ | 0.047 | 0.580 | 0.070 | 0.573 | 0.030 | 0.679 |

Note: the dependent variable is the suggested allocation to Player A by Player A in round 2. $G_A$ is their guess of the final amount allocated, and $A_1$ is the decision of Player A in round 1. Columns (b) include as controls gender (1 if female), age, high education (1 if higher than sample median), and income (1 if monthly income higher than sample median) as well as location fixed effects. Standard errors (clustered at the session level) are in parentheses. Significance: *** 0.01, ** 0.05, * 0.1

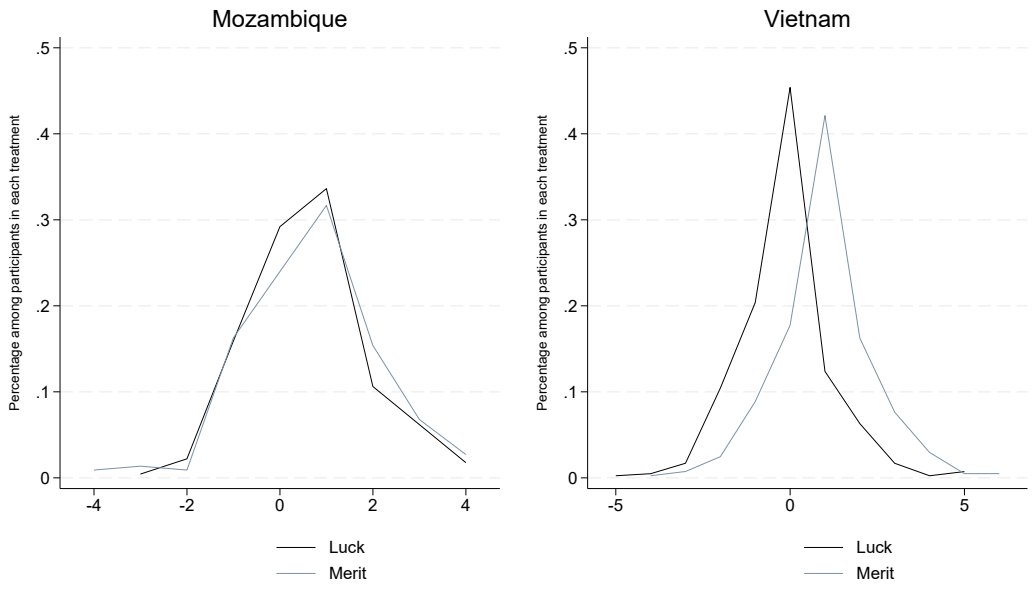
Source: authors' compilation.

The results confirm that there is a positive correlation between their expectations of what Player B will do and their suggestion, when the full country samples are used, with expectations of higher values positively correlated with higher suggestions. The sizes of the coefficients are similar, and despite lower, they are still significant when controlling for the allocation in round 1 (columns (b)). However, this changes when considering the source of inequality and in

opposite ways in each country sample. As expected, there is a high positive correlation between the decisions in the two rounds in both country samples, and even more so in Viet Nam.[45]

Similar to Players B, after Players A had made their suggestion, we asked them to guess what would be the final allocation of the dictators. We use the same indicator as before and plot the distributions in Figure 10. In Mozambique, around 30 per cent of recipients guess accurately, with virtually no differences depending on the source of inequality. In Viet Nam, the shape of the distribution is narrow, indicating that there was less dispersion in the accuracy of the guesses. Still, again the level of accuracy was significantly higher in the luck subsample.[46] Together with the reflections from the guesses of the dictators, this could indicate that the norm behaviour in Viet Nam is stronger when the source of inequality is luck.

Figure 10: Accuracy of guesses by Player A, by treatment




Note: the x-axis represents the difference between the guess by Player A of the amount allocated by Player B and the average amount allocated by all Players B, rounded to the closest unit. The two lines correspond to the treatment on the source of inequality.

Source: authors' illustration.

## 6 Conclusion

We used an incentivized experiment in two countries in the Global South, Mozambique and Viet Nam, to test whether varying the source of inequality affects how individuals make redistribution decisions. In both country samples, we confirm that people tolerate inequality to

[45] Similar to the previous subsection, we repeated this analysis excluding the two outlier sessions, and the same conclusions remain.

[46] Confirmed by a Mann-Whitney test.

a greater extent when it results from someone's effort rather than from a random allocation beyond individual control. We observed some diversity in fairness views as well, with a higher share of egalitarians than libertarians in the Vietnamese sample, in contrast with the Mozambican sample, where the share of libertarians was higher than that of egalitarians. This is in line with studies suggesting that countries with socialist values are more open to redistribution (Corneo and Grüner 2002).

We took a step further, and combined this analysis with existing literature on communication and having a voice. To do that, we added a second round of redistribution decisions where the player with the lower endowment made a suggestion of the allocation between the two players. This suggestion was then shown to the player with the highest endowment, who acted as the dictator and determined the final endowments. We found that the source of inequality remained relevant but not more than it was when there was no communication between the recipient and the dictator.

We highlight four core messages from this analysis. First, across both country samples, while a large share of recipients suggested the equal distribution, on average, the final amount allocated to the recipient was below five units. Moreover, the probability of recipients getting what they ask for was higher if they suggested either an equal distribution or an allocation of four to themselves and six to the dictator, which corresponded to a small reduction in inequality. Second, in line with previous studies, we found some evidence of a relationship between the suggestion from the recipient and the allocation by the dictator. However, this varied by country and by treatment. Third, while recipients suggest a lower allocation to themselves compared to the amount they allocated when in the role of dictators, we still found a positive and significant correlation between their previous decision and their suggested allocation. Their own expectations of what the dictator will do seem to matter but differently depending on the source of inequality and the country context. Finally, the guesses of others' behaviour were more accurate when the source of inequality was luck rather than merit but only in Viet Nam sample.

These results point to interesting avenues for further exploration. First, our goal of implementing the experiment in the field and in different contexts (including rural settings) led us to simplify the design of the game to the extent possible. One possible extension of our design is to create a more sophisticated measure of merit that is proportional to the individual performance in a task. In other words, instead of a dichotomous split of participants into 'better' and 'worse' performers, a measure of earned entitlements could be used, which is continuous and directly linked to actual performance. Moreover, recent studies have pointed to the fact that individual choices are themselves influenced by external circumstances (such as gender norms or race). Thus, merit judgments may not take these unequal opportunities into account (see Andre 2024; E. Fehr and Charness 2024). We concur that more research on this 'shallow meritocracy' is needed.

Second, one possibility to separate the effects of communication from learning effects from repetition would be to add a control treatment where there is a second round of distribution decisions without communication. Moreover, the design could be expanded to investigate the potential mechanisms that explain the different effects of communication in the different treatments and contexts (which would also require bigger sample sizes).

Finally, our study took a step forward in testing the universality of results from WEIRD settings by implementing similar experiments in two different and understudied parts of the world. In line with the important contribution by Almås et al. (2024), future work could expand the analysis to other countries and regions. Moreover, the results suggest important differences between our two study contexts. We posit that these are linked to the differences in development experiences and policy environment in the two countries. As highlighted by Mengel and Weidenholzer (2022), our results point to the need for further research on the link between institutions and preferences for redistribution.

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# Appendix

## A Balance tests

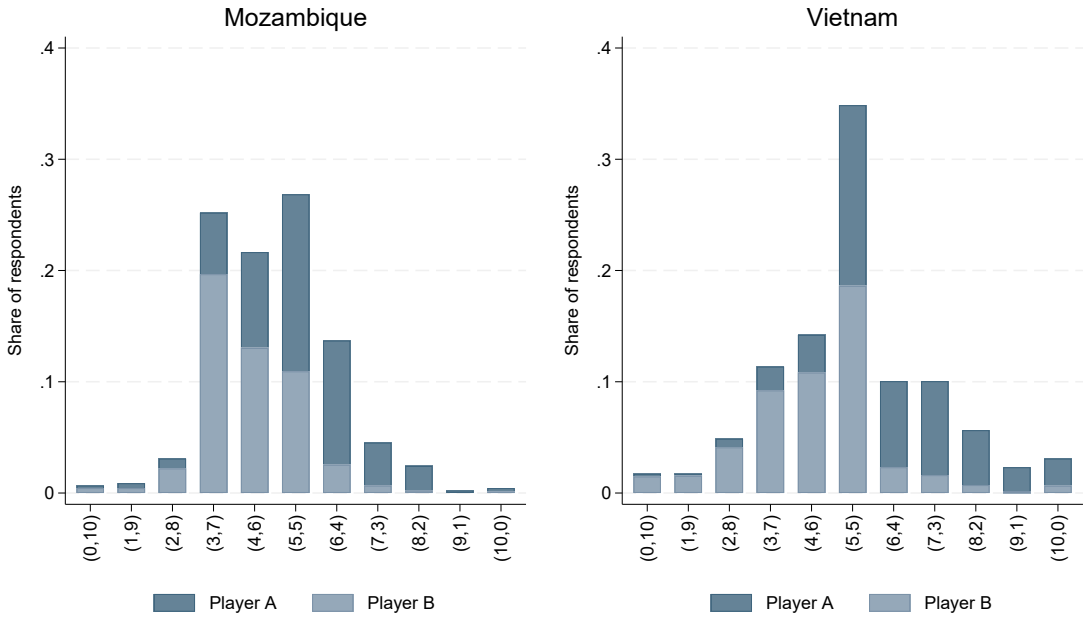
Table A1: Balance tests

| | Luck | Merit | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Mozambique* | | | |
| Female | 0.499 | 0.494 | -0.005 |
| | (0.501) | (0.501) | (0.892) |
| Older than median | 0.513 | 0.474 | -0.039 |
| | (0.500) | (0.500) | (0.239) |
| Education higher than median | 0.377 | 0.422 | 0.045 |
| | (0.485) | (0.494) | (0.172) |
| Income higher than median | 0.353 | 0.336 | -0.017 |
| | (0.479) | (0.473) | (0.595) |
| N | 456 | 449 | 905 |
| *Vietnam* | | | |
| Female | 0.533 | 0.547 | 0.014 |
| | (0.499) | (0.498) | (0.552) |
| Older than median | 0.478 | 0.499 | 0.021 |
| | (0.500) | (0.500) | (0.392) |
| Education higher than median | 0.489 | 0.469 | -0.020 |
| | (0.500) | (0.499) | (0.404) |
| Income higher than median | 0.444 | 0.428 | -0.016 |
| | (0.497) | (0.495) | (0.504) |
| N | 842 | 839 | 1,681 |

Note: standard deviations presented under each treatment column in parenthesis. p-values for the difference in means presented in parentheses in the column 'Differences'.

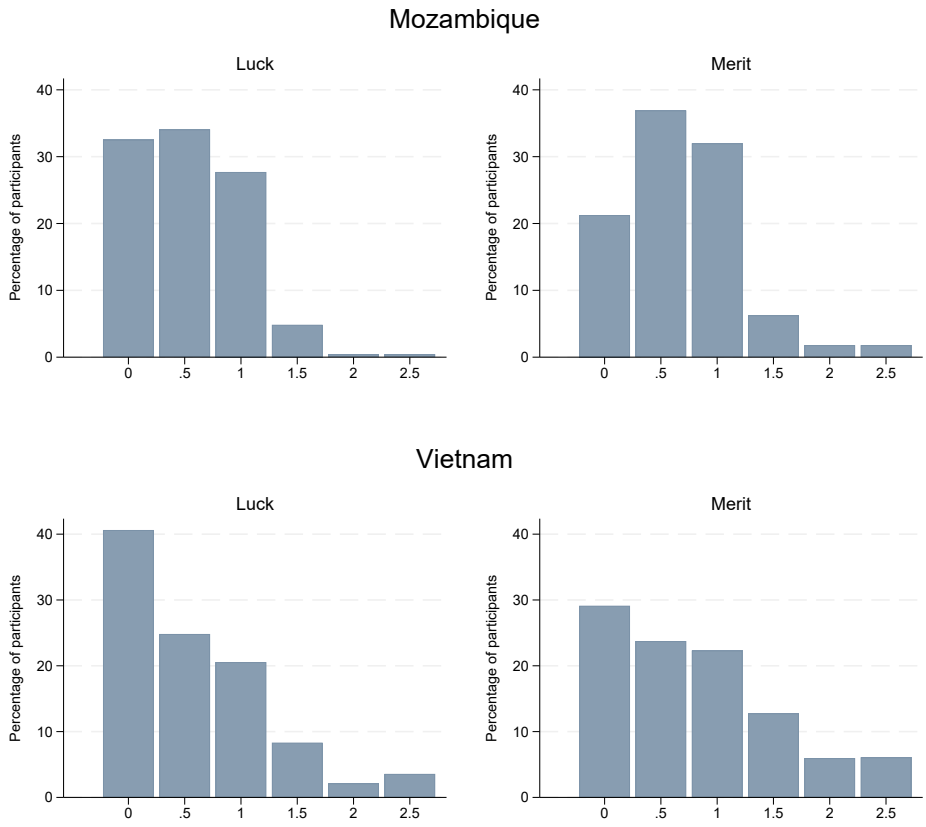
# B Distributions in Round 1

Figure B1: Distribution of amounts allocated to each player, all data




Note: in each ordered pair (A,B), A corresponds to the amount allocated to Player A and B corresponds to the amount allocated to Player B, independent of the position of the participant who is allocating. Graphs show the cumulative shares according to the position of the player. Darker bars show the shares corresponding to players A and lighter bars the shares corresponding to players B.

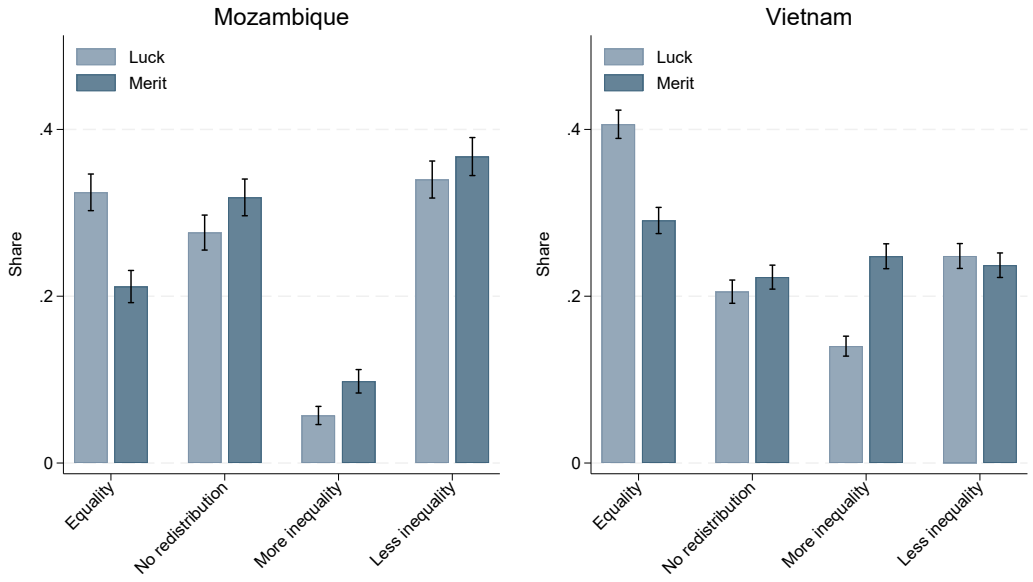
Figure B2: Distribution of implemented inequality in Round 1, by treatment




Note: distributions of the levels of implemented inequality in round 1 (i.e. no interaction between players), calculated according to expression (11), in the luck and merit sessions. A value of 1 means that there was no redistribution, while a value of 0 means that income is equally distributed. A value between 0 and 1 indicates a decrease in inequality, whereas a value above 1 indicates an increase in inequality.

# C Redistribution decisions in Round 1

Figure C3: Shares of different redistribution scenarios




Note: Each bar represents the share of participants who chose that particular scenario (see text for definitions of the scenarios) in the 'luck' sessions (lighter bars) and in the 'merit' sessions (darker bars). We consider under 'equality' the share of participants who choose to distribute equally; under 'no redistribution', participants with a level of implemented inequality which is equal to 1 (this includes those who reverse the inequality positions, i.e., give 7 to Player A and 3 to Player B); under 'more inequality', those with a level of implemented inequality higher than 1; and under 'less inequality', the share of participants whose level of implemented inequality falls between 0 and 1.

# D Additional heterogeneity analysis

Table D2: Baseline results splitting the Vietnamese sample between North and South provinces

| | North province | | | | South province | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) |
| Merit | 0.262** | 0.252** | 0.252** | 0.250*** | 0.174** | 0.170** | 0.171** | 0.162*** |
| | (0.104) | (0.106) | (0.106) | (0.067) | (0.082) | (0.082) | (0.082) | (0.046) |
| Female | | -0.074 | -0.070 | -0.084* | | -0.000 | 0.000 | -0.008 |
| | | (0.050) | (0.050) | (0.049) | | (0.042) | (0.043) | (0.045) |
| Age | | -0.003 | -0.003 | -0.004 | | -0.001 | -0.001 | -0.001 |
| | | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) |
| High education | | 0.052 | 0.072 | 0.004 | | 0.010 | 0.016 | 0.010 |
| | | (0.052) | (0.051) | (0.049) | | (0.053) | (0.053) | (0.052) |
| High income | | -0.115* | -0.116* | -0.159*** | | -0.100** | -0.101** | -0.072 |
| | | (0.061) | (0.062) | (0.054) | | (0.049) | (0.049) | (0.049) |
| Player B | | | -0.149** | -0.134* | | | -0.045 | -0.048 |
| | | | (0.071) | (0.074) | | | (0.066) | (0.069) |
| Observations | 858 | 837 | 837 | 837 | 822 | 821 | 821 | 821 |
| $R^2$ | 0.033 | 0.037 | 0.047 | 0.180 | 0.017 | 0.021 | 0.022 | 0.110 |
| Controls? | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Fixed effects? | No | No | No | Yes | No | No | No | Yes |

significance: *** 0.01, ** 0.05, * 0.1

Note: the dependent variable is implemented inequality. Columns (a) present the simple correlations between the treatment and the dependent variable. Columns (b) include as controls gender (1 if female), age (in 2023), high education (1 if higher than sample median) and income (1 if monthly income higher than sample median). Columns (c) add the position of the participant (1 if Player B) to the previous list of controls. Columns (d) consider location fixed-effects. Standard errors (clustered at the session level) in parenthesis.

Table D3: Baseline results considering different political views

| | Mozambique | | | | Vietnam | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Government | | Taxation | | Government | | Taxation | |
| Merit | 0.138*** | 0.115** | 0.138*** | 0.133*** | 0.212*** | 0.144*** | 0.209*** | 0.224*** |
| | (0.032) | (0.046) | (0.032) | (0.036) | (0.041) | (0.051) | (0.041) | (0.047) |
| Female | 0.007 | 0.008 | 0.007 | 0.007 | -0.043 | -0.044 | -0.038 | -0.039 |
| | (0.038) | (0.038) | (0.038) | (0.039) | (0.035) | (0.035) | (0.035) | (0.035) |
| Older | -0.007 | -0.005 | -0.008 | -0.008 | -0.025 | -0.026 | -0.027 | -0.027 |
| | (0.043) | (0.042) | (0.043) | (0.043) | (0.041) | (0.041) | (0.041) | (0.041) |
| High education | -0.088** | -0.086** | -0.090** | -0.090** | 0.012 | 0.014 | 0.015 | 0.015 |
| | (0.042) | (0.042) | (0.042) | (0.042) | (0.035) | (0.035) | (0.035) | (0.035) |
| High income | -0.038 | -0.037 | -0.044 | -0.044 | -0.109*** | -0.111*** | -0.103*** | -0.105*** |
| | (0.036) | (0.036) | (0.036) | (0.035) | (0.036) | (0.036) | (0.036) | (0.037) |
| Player B | 0.150*** | 0.149*** | 0.147*** | 0.147*** | -0.088* | -0.088* | -0.089* | -0.088* |
| | (0.046) | (0.046) | (0.046) | (0.046) | (0.051) | (0.051) | (0.051) | (0.051) |
| Government | 0.025 | -0.005 | | | -0.038 | -0.091* | | |
| | (0.039) | (0.054) | | | (0.037) | (0.049) | | |
| Merit x Government | | 0.061 | | | | 0.109 | | |
| | | (0.075) | | | | (0.073) | | |
| Taxation | | | 0.045 | 0.037 | | | -0.052 | -0.006 |
| | | | (0.046) | (0.064) | | | (0.045) | (0.057) |
| Merit x Taxation | | | | 0.016 | | | | -0.098 |
| | | | | (0.088) | | | | (0.088) |
| Observations | 875 | 875 | 875 | 875 | 1649 | 1649 | 1649 | 1649 |
| $R^2$ | 0.098 | 0.099 | 0.099 | 0.099 | 0.148 | 0.150 | 0.148 | 0.149 |

significance: *** 0.01, ** 0.05, * 0.1

Note: the dependent variable is implemented inequality. In each 'Government' or 'Taxation' pair of columns, the first presents the results of adding a dummy for support of government intervention or taxation, respectively. The second considers heterogeneity of treatment effects by adding an interaction term between each of these terms and the 'merit' term. 'Government' takes the value of 1 if the respondent agrees with the statement 'It is the responsibility of the government to reduce the differences in income between rich people and poor people' and selects the government when asked who should take responsibility for providing for people. 'Taxation' takes the value of 1 if the respondent agrees with the statement 'It is fair that the rich people pay a higher tax rate than ordinary people in order to help pay for government programs to benefit the poor' and thinks that paying higher taxes and having more services provided by the government is better than paying lower taxes and having fewer services provided. Location fixed-effects included in all specifications. Standard errors (clustered at the session level) in parenthesis.

# E Robustness checks

## E.1 Additional checks

Table E4: Potential factors affecting the session

| | Mozambique | | | | | | | | Vietnam | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Learning effects | | | First day | | | Enumerator FE | | Learning effects | | | First day | | | Enumerator FE | |
| | (a) | (b) | (c) | (a) | (b) | (c) | (a) | (b) | (a) | (b) | (c) | (a) | (b) | (c) | (a) | (b) |
| Merit | 0.123** | 0.128** | 0.116*** | 0.146*** | 0.156*** | 0.151*** | 0.142*** | 0.162*** | 0.227*** | 0.220*** | 0.214*** | 0.218*** | 0.211*** | 0.204*** | 0.199*** | 0.214*** |
| | (0.051) | (0.050) | (0.030) | (0.049) | (0.048) | (0.034) | (0.050) | (0.046) | (0.066) | (0.067) | (0.040) | (0.069) | (0.070) | (0.043) | (0.062) | (0.064) |
| Female | | -0.005 | 0.004 | | -0.001 | 0.009 | 0.003 | 0.007 | | -0.027 | -0.045 | | -0.019 | -0.039 | -0.036 | -0.029 |
| | | (0.037) | (0.038) | | (0.039) | (0.040) | (0.038) | (0.039) | | (0.035) | (0.035) | | (0.036) | (0.036) | (0.035) | (0.035) |
| Age | | -0.001 | -0.001 | | -0.001 | -0.001 | -0.001 | -0.001 | | -0.001 | -0.002 | | -0.000 | -0.002 | -0.003 | -0.002 |
| | | (0.002) | (0.002) | | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | | (0.002) | (0.002) | | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) |
| High education | | -0.116*** | -0.097** | | -0.109** | -0.090** | -0.095** | -0.114** | | 0.065 | 0.006 | | 0.075* | 0.011 | 0.040 | 0.047 |
| | | (0.043) | (0.041) | | (0.045) | (0.043) | (0.039) | (0.043) | | (0.040) | (0.035) | | (0.040) | (0.036) | (0.037) | (0.039) |
| High income | | -0.036 | -0.038 | | -0.027 | -0.027 | -0.039 | -0.047 | | -0.100** | -0.111*** | | -0.092** | -0.104*** | -0.108*** | -0.100** |
| | | (0.035) | (0.036) | | (0.036) | (0.037) | (0.032) | (0.033) | | (0.040) | (0.036) | | (0.042) | (0.038) | (0.039) | (0.038) |
| Player B | | 0.147*** | 0.146*** | | 0.134*** | 0.134*** | 0.148*** | 0.229*** | | -0.097* | -0.092* | | -0.095* | -0.091* | -0.101** | -0.067 |
| | | (0.044) | (0.044) | | (0.045) | (0.046) | (0.045) | (0.059) | | (0.050) | (0.051) | | (0.051) | (0.053) | (0.049) | (0.055) |
| First day | -0.064 | -0.071 | -0.080*** | | | | | | -0.122* | -0.122* | -0.118*** | | | | | |
| | (0.050) | (0.048) | (0.028) | | | | | | (0.065) | (0.066) | (0.040) | | | | | |
| Observations | 902 | 875 | 875 | 856 | 833 | 833 | 875 | 863 | 1680 | 1658 | 1658 | 1607 | 1585 | 1585 | 1658 | 1658 |
| $R^2$ | 0.023 | 0.058 | 0.103 | 0.021 | 0.050 | 0.095 | 0.071 | 0.094 | 0.032 | 0.039 | 0.155 | 0.024 | 0.031 | 0.150 | 0.064 | 0.050 |
| Controls? | No | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Fixed effects? | No | No | Yes | No | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes | No | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |

significance: *** 0.01, ** 0.05, * 0.1

Note: the dependent variable is implemented inequality. Columns (a) present the simple correlations between the treatment and the dependent variable. Columns (b) include as controls gender (1 if female), age, high education (1 if higher than sample median), income (1 if monthly income higher than sample median) and the position of the participant (1 if Player B). Columns (c) consider location fixed-effects. Standard errors (clustered at the session level) in parenthesis.

Table E5: Alternative dependent variables

| | Mozambique | | | | | | Vietnam | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Equality | | | Alternative $e$ | | | Equality | | | Alternative $e$ | | |
| | (a) | (b) | (c) | (a) | (b) | (c) | (a) | (b) | (c) | (a) | (b) | (c) |
| Merit | -0.113*** | -0.127*** | -0.121*** | 0.080 | 0.061 | 0.052 | -0.115*** | -0.112*** | -0.106*** | 0.020 | 0.022 | 0.022 |
| | (0.037) | (0.034) | (0.022) | (0.055) | (0.057) | (0.048) | (0.037) | (0.037) | (0.021) | (0.065) | (0.065) | (0.047) |
| Female | | -0.007 | -0.014 | | 0.032 | 0.032 | | 0.010 | 0.021 | | 0.015 | 0.012 |
| | | (0.039) | (0.039) | | (0.049) | (0.052) | | (0.026) | (0.027) | | (0.046) | (0.045) |
| Age | | 0.000 | 0.000 | | -0.001 | -0.002 | | -0.001 | -0.000 | | -0.001 | -0.001 |
| | | (0.001) | (0.001) | | (0.002) | (0.002) | | (0.001) | (0.001) | | (0.002) | (0.002) |
| High education | | 0.147*** | 0.121*** | | 0.010 | -0.022 | | -0.057** | -0.028 | | 0.123** | 0.137** |
| | | (0.040) | (0.039) | | (0.053) | (0.054) | | (0.028) | (0.028) | | (0.059) | (0.056) |
| High income | | 0.034 | 0.032 | | 0.013 | 0.016 | | 0.053** | 0.070*** | | -0.003 | -0.001 |
| | | (0.033) | (0.034) | | (0.050) | (0.054) | | (0.026) | (0.026) | | (0.055) | (0.051) |
| Player B | | -0.119*** | -0.116*** | | 0.599*** | 0.599*** | | 0.033 | 0.030 | | 0.907*** | 0.904*** |
| | | (0.031) | (0.031) | | (0.073) | (0.074) | | (0.033) | (0.035) | | (0.089) | (0.090) |
| Observations | 902 | 875 | 875 | 902 | 875 | 875 | 1680 | 1658 | 1658 | 1680 | 1658 | 1658 |
| $R^2$ | 0.016 | 0.062 | 0.094 | 0.003 | 0.169 | 0.187 | 0.015 | 0.019 | 0.104 | 0.000 | 0.224 | 0.264 |
| Controls? | No | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes |
| Fixed effects? | No | No | Yes | No | No | Yes | No | No | Yes | No | No | Yes |

significance: *** 0.01, ** 0.05, * 0.1

Note: the dependent variable is implemented inequality. Columns (a) present the simple correlations between the treatment and the dependent variable. Columns (b) include as controls gender (1 if female), age, high education (1 if higher than sample median), income (1 if monthly income higher than sample median) and the position of the participant (1 if Player B). Columns (c) consider location fixed-effects. Standard errors (clustered at the session level) in parenthesis.

## E.2 Considering altruistic behaviour

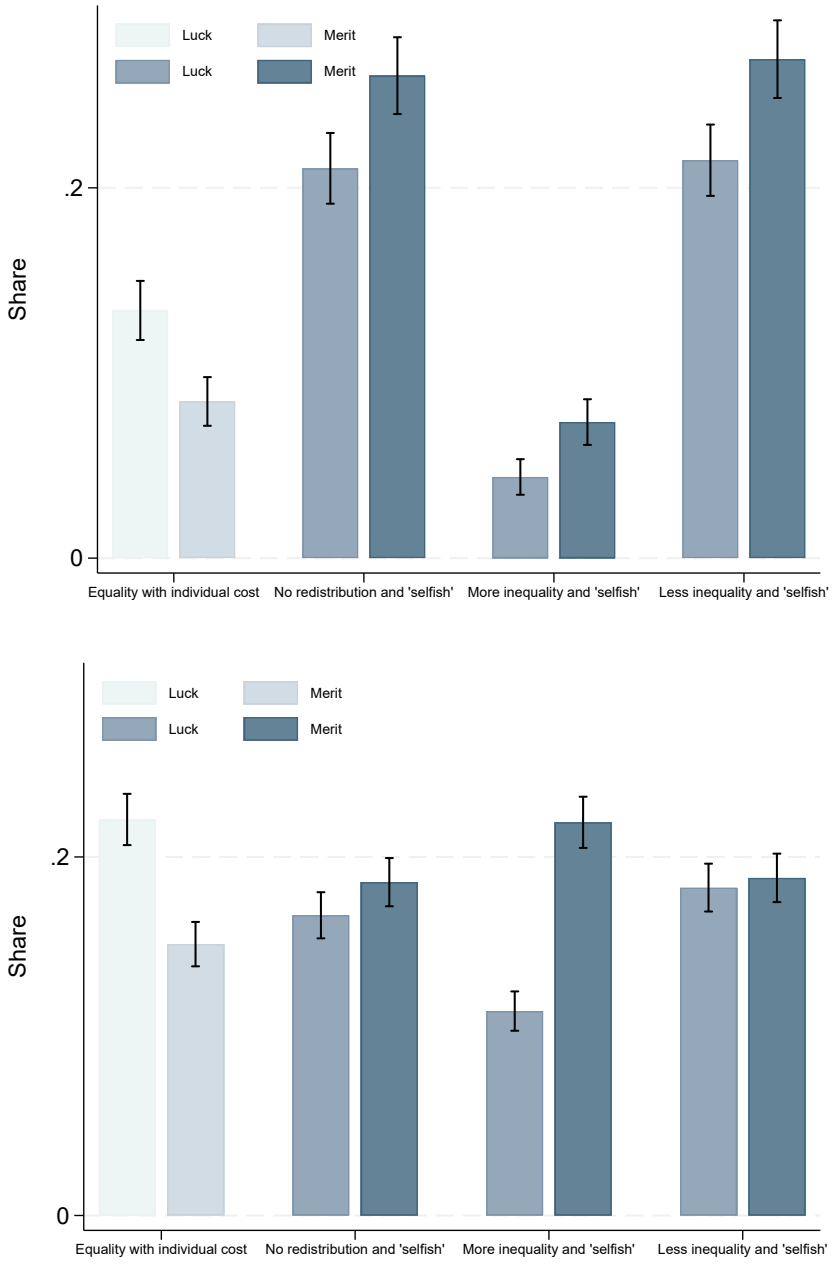
Table E6: Baseline results considering altruistic behaviour

| | Mozambique | | | | Vietnam | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) |
| Merit | 0.129*** | 0.122*** | 0.121*** | 0.091*** | 0.167*** | 0.168*** | 0.231*** | 0.138*** |
| | (0.043) | (0.032) | (0.033) | (0.018) | (0.058) | (0.036) | (0.059) | (0.033) |
| Female | -0.005 | 0.002 | 0.002 | 0.011 | -0.053* | -0.064** | -0.065** | -0.050* |
| | (0.035) | (0.036) | (0.036) | (0.029) | (0.031) | (0.031) | (0.031) | (0.028) |
| Age | -0.001 | -0.001 | -0.001 | 0.000 | -0.000 | -0.002 | -0.002 | -0.002 |
| | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) |
| High education | -0.087** | -0.080** | -0.080** | -0.047 | 0.066* | 0.009 | 0.017 | -0.018 |
| | (0.040) | (0.038) | (0.037) | (0.029) | (0.038) | (0.036) | (0.036) | (0.030) |
| High income | -0.035 | -0.038 | -0.038 | -0.030 | -0.074* | -0.090** | -0.090** | -0.082** |
| | (0.034) | (0.035) | (0.035) | (0.024) | (0.038) | (0.037) | (0.037) | (0.034) |
| Player B | 0.250*** | 0.242*** | 0.242*** | 0.655*** | 0.307*** | 0.271*** | 0.262*** | 0.591*** |
| | (0.058) | (0.056) | (0.056) | (0.046) | (0.073) | (0.069) | (0.070) | (0.058) |
| Altruistic | -0.256*** | -0.237*** | -0.239*** | 0.749*** | -0.665*** | -0.596*** | -0.513*** | 0.616*** |
| | (0.061) | (0.055) | (0.061) | (0.062) | (0.082) | (0.072) | (0.087) | (0.079) |
| Merit x Altruistic | | | 0.004 | | | | -0.164 | |
| | | | (0.083) | | | | (0.102) | |
| Player B x Altruistic | | | | -1.480*** | | | | -1.555*** |
| | | | | (0.078) | | | | (0.093) |
| Observations | 875 | 875 | 875 | 875 | 1658 | 1658 | 1658 | 1658 |
| $R^2$ | 0.100 | 0.136 | 0.136 | 0.474 | 0.158 | 0.243 | 0.246 | 0.355 |

significance: *** 0.01, ** 0.05, * 0.1

Note: the dependent variable is implemented inequality. Columns (a) include as controls gender (1 if female), age (in 2023), high education (1 if higher than sample median), income (1 if monthly income higher than sample median) and altruism (1 if the allocation meant a reduction income compared to the initial allocation). Columns (b) consider location fixed-effects. Columns (c) add an interaction term between altruism and the 'merit' term and columns (d) add an interaction term between altruism and the 'Player B' term instead. Standard errors (clustered at the session level) in parenthesis.

Figure E4: Shares of different redistribution scenarios considering individual cost and selfishness, Mozambique and Vietnam




Note: the first two columns reflect the share of participants who choose equality and incur in an individual cost (i.e. reduce the amount allocated to themselves compared to the initial allocation). The lighter column of the left corresponds to 'luck' sessions and the slightly darker column on the right corresponds to 'merit' sessions. The remaining three groups of columns represent the shares of participants that choose each of the distribution scenarios and act 'selfishly', meaning that they allocate more than five units to themselves. Lighter columns on the left correspond to 'luck' sessions and the darker columns on the right corresponds to 'merit' sessions.

## E.3 Standard errors clustered at the location level

Table E7: Baseline results with standard errors clustered at the location level

| | Mozambique | | | | Vietnam | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) |
| Merit | 0.139*** | 0.146*** | 0.147*** | 0.138*** | 0.219*** | 0.212*** | 0.212*** | 0.206*** |
| | (0.038) | (0.039) | (0.039) | (0.040) | (0.058) | (0.059) | (0.059) | (0.059) |
| Female | | -0.016 | -0.004 | 0.005 | | -0.028 | -0.026 | -0.044 |
| | | (0.044) | (0.044) | (0.045) | | (0.035) | (0.035) | (0.034) |
| Age | | -0.002 | -0.001 | -0.001 | | -0.000 | -0.001 | -0.002 |
| | | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) |
| High education | | -0.111** | -0.114** | -0.096* | | 0.052 | 0.066* | 0.007 |
| | | (0.051) | (0.048) | (0.046) | | (0.038) | (0.039) | (0.034) |
| High income | | -0.028 | -0.036 | -0.038 | | -0.100** | -0.101** | -0.112*** |
| | | (0.029) | (0.028) | (0.029) | | (0.038) | (0.038) | (0.034) |
| Player B | | | 0.147*** | 0.147*** | | | -0.098** | -0.093* |
| | | | (0.045) | (0.045) | | | (0.047) | (0.048) |
| Observations | 902 | 875 | 875 | 875 | 1680 | 1658 | 1658 | 1658 |
| $R^2$ | 0.019 | 0.033 | 0.053 | 0.098 | 0.024 | 0.027 | 0.032 | 0.148 |
| Controls? | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Fixed effects? | No | No | No | Yes | No | No | No | Yes |

significance: *** 0.01, ** 0.05, * 0.1

Note: the dependent variable is implemented inequality. Columns (a) present the simple correlations between the treatment and the dependent variable. Columns (b) include as controls gender (1 if female), age, high education (1 if higher than sample median) and income (1 if monthly income higher than sample median). Columns (c) add the position of the participant (1 if Player B) to the previous list of controls. Columns (d) consider enumerator and location fixed-effects. Standard errors (clustered at the location level) in parenthesis.

Table E8: Heterogeneity analysis with standard errors clustered at the location level

| | Mozambique | | | | | | Vietnam | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Female | Age | High edu | High inc | Player B | Rural | Female | Age | High edu | High inc | Player B | Rural |
| Merit | 0.173*** | 0.143** | 0.084** | 0.091* | 0.094 | 0.164*** | 0.151** | 0.220*** | 0.200*** | 0.209*** | 0.218** | 0.252** |
| | (0.040) | (0.053) | (0.036) | (0.051) | (0.056) | (0.054) | (0.057) | (0.074) | (0.063) | (0.072) | (0.086) | (0.097) |
| Merit x Female | -0.071 | | | | | | 0.103 | | | | | |
| | (0.066) | | | | | | (0.072) | | | | | |
| Female | 0.042 | 0.008 | 0.005 | 0.006 | 0.009 | -0.002 | -0.094** | -0.042 | -0.042 | -0.042 | -0.042 | -0.030 |
| | (0.062) | (0.043) | (0.043) | (0.044) | (0.043) | (0.043) | (0.045) | (0.034) | (0.034) | (0.033) | (0.033) | (0.037) |
| Merit x Older | | -0.010 | | | | | | -0.028 | | | | |
| | | (0.081) | | | | | | (0.079) | | | | |
| Older | -0.003 | -0.001 | -0.007 | -0.001 | -0.001 | -0.008 | -0.031 | -0.013 | -0.027 | -0.027 | -0.028 | -0.022 |
| | (0.038) | (0.053) | (0.038) | (0.038) | (0.038) | (0.035) | (0.044) | (0.060) | (0.044) | (0.044) | (0.045) | (0.046) |
| Merit x High education | | | 0.134** | | | | | | 0.013 | | | |
| | | | (0.054) | | | | | | (0.080) | | | |
| High education | -0.088* | -0.089* | -0.156** | -0.089* | -0.095* | -0.098** | 0.015 | 0.015 | 0.008 | 0.015 | 0.016 | 0.052 |
| | (0.048) | (0.048) | (0.065) | (0.049) | (0.046) | (0.046) | (0.033) | (0.034) | (0.049) | (0.034) | (0.031) | (0.041) |
| Merit x High income | | | | 0.136* | | | | | | -0.007 | | |
| | | | | (0.072) | | | | | | (0.079) | | |
| High income | -0.040 | -0.041 | -0.043 | -0.108** | -0.044 | -0.042 | -0.108*** | -0.106*** | -0.106*** | -0.103* | -0.106*** | -0.112*** |
| | (0.028) | (0.027) | (0.029) | (0.051) | (0.030) | (0.027) | (0.034) | (0.033) | (0.034) | (0.052) | (0.033) | (0.036) |
| Merit x Player B | | | | | 0.089 | | | | | | -0.022 | |
| | | | | | (0.091) | | | | | | (0.107) | |
| Player B | 0.148*** | 0.149*** | 0.140*** | 0.144*** | 0.107* | 0.149*** | -0.090* | -0.091* | -0.090* | -0.089* | -0.079 | -0.095** |
| | (0.047) | (0.046) | (0.046) | (0.045) | (0.053) | (0.046) | (0.048) | (0.047) | (0.048) | (0.047) | (0.065) | (0.047) |
| Observations | 875 | 875 | 875 | 875 | 875 | 875 | 1658 | 1658 | 1658 | 1658 | 1658 | 1658 |
| $R^2$ | 0.098 | 0.097 | 0.101 | 0.101 | 0.099 | 0.054 | 0.148 | 0.147 | 0.147 | 0.147 | 0.147 | 0.037 |

significance: *** 0.01, ** 0.05, * 0.1

Note: the dependent variable is implemented inequality. Each column presents the results for a specific factor, obtained by adding an interaction term between that factor and the 'merit' term to the baseline specification. The factors considered are: female (1 if female), age (1 if older than sample median), high education (1 if education higher than sample median), income (1 if average monthly income higher than sample median), position of the player (1 if Player B) and rural/urban (1 if rural). All other controls and enumerator and location fixed-effects included in all specifications. Standard errors (clustered at the location level) in parenthesis.

# F Using data from Round 2 instead

Figure F5: Average implemented inequality, Round 2


Note: Average values of implemented inequality in round 2 (i.e. when Player A proposes and Player B has the power to make the final decision), calculated according to expression (11).

Table F9: Baseline results on implemented inequality, Round 2

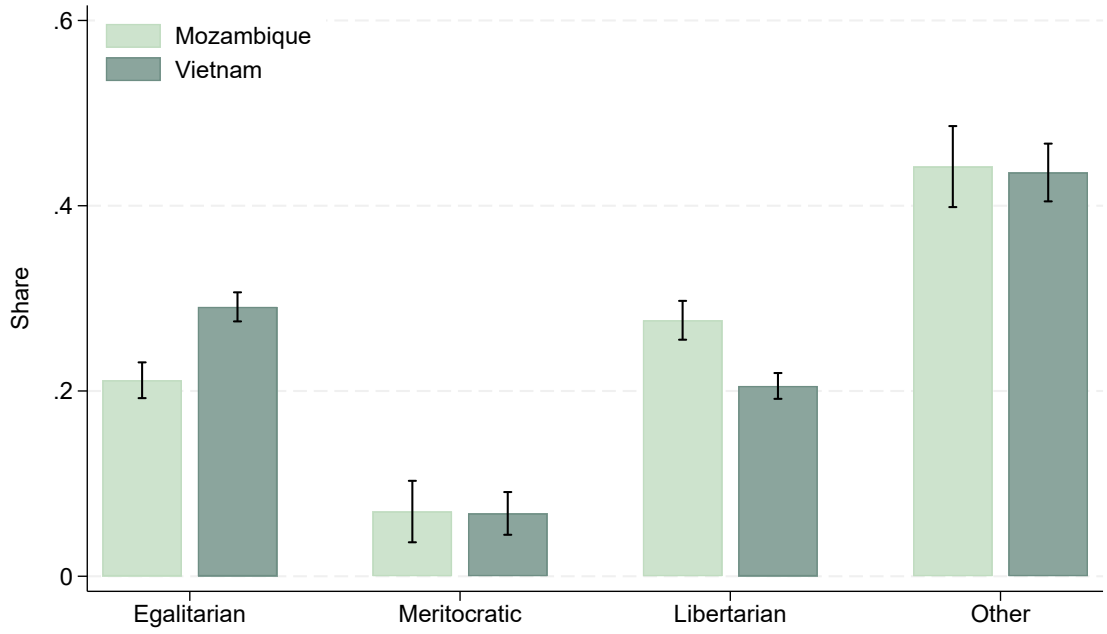
| | Mozambique | | | | Vietnam | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) |
| Merit | 0.127** | 0.135** | 0.136** | 0.124*** | 0.203*** | 0.204*** | 0.204*** | 0.194*** |
| | (0.058) | (0.059) | (0.059) | (0.040) | (0.066) | (0.065) | (0.065) | (0.047) |
| Female | | 0.000 | 0.008 | 0.011 | | -0.082** | -0.080** | -0.108*** |
| | | (0.033) | (0.033) | (0.032) | | (0.032) | (0.032) | (0.030) |
| Age | | -0.000 | 0.000 | -0.002 | | 0.000 | -0.000 | -0.003 |
| | | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) |
| High education | | -0.085* | -0.087* | -0.086** | | 0.112*** | 0.121*** | 0.032 |
| | | (0.045) | (0.044) | (0.036) | | (0.035) | (0.035) | (0.031) |
| High income | | 0.048 | 0.043 | 0.037 | | -0.025 | -0.026 | -0.058* |
| | | (0.036) | (0.036) | (0.038) | | (0.033) | (0.034) | (0.033) |
| Player B | | | 0.104** | 0.098** | | | -0.062 | -0.053 |
| | | | (0.040) | (0.039) | | | (0.042) | (0.042) |
| Observations | 902 | 875 | 875 | 875 | 1680 | 1658 | 1658 | 1658 |
| $R^2$ | 0.014 | 0.022 | 0.031 | 0.099 | 0.028 | 0.040 | 0.042 | 0.155 |
| Controls? | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Fixed effects? | No | No | No | Yes | No | No | No | Yes |

significance: *** 0.01, ** 0.05, * 0.1

Note: the dependent variable is implemented inequality. Only data from round 2 (i.e. when Player A proposes and Player B has the power to make the final decision) considered. Columns (a) present the simple correlations between the treatment and the dependent variable. Columns (b) include as controls gender (1 if female), age, high education (1 if higher than sample median) and income (1 if monthly income higher than sample median). Columns (c) add the position of the participant (1 if Player B) to the previous list of controls. Columns (d) consider location fixed-effects. Standard errors (clustered at the session level) in parenthesis.

# G Fairness views: alternative definition

Figure G6: Shares of egalitarians, libertarians and meritocrats according to the definition in XXXX




Note: shares of egalitarians and libertarians calculated according to the definitions described in the text. Share of meritocrats obtained through the difference between share allocating more to the more productive worker in the 'merit' treatment and the share of participants allocating more to the lucky worker in the 'luck' treatment (definition according to Almås et al. 2020).

## H Matrices of decisions between rounds

Table H10 shows that a high percentage of Player A in both countries kept the same decision (see diagonals in the table), especially those who chose to distribute equally or reduce inequality. In general, it was more common to change towards suggesting lower than higher inequality.

Table H10: Matrix of decisions between rounds by Player A

| | | Round 2 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Extreme ineq. | Increase ineq. | No redistribution | Reduce ineq. | Equality |
| *Panel I: Mozambique* | | | | | | |
| Round 1 | Extreme ineq. | **0.43** | 0.22 | 0.43 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| | Increase ineq. | 0.00 | **3.03** | 3.03 | 0.00 | 2.17 |
| | No redistribution | 0.00 | 1.73 | **8.23** | 4.76 | 4.11 |
| | Reduce ineq. | 0.00 | 1.52 | 7.14 | **20.56** | 10.61 |
| | Equality | 0.00 | 0.22 | 2.60 | 8.44 | **20.78** |
| *Panel II: Vietnam* | | | | | | |
| Round 1 | Extreme ineq. | **2.20** | 1.28 | 0.58 | 0.70 | 0.81 |
| | Increase ineq. | 0.23 | **6.14** | 4.18 | 2.90 | 2.67 |
| | No redistribution | 0.12 | 0.70 | **10.09** | 6.03 | 4.99 |
| | Reduce ineq. | 0.00 | 0.23 | 2.90 | **12.76** | 7.42 |
| | Equality | 0.12 | 0.24 | 2.32 | 6.38 | **24.01** |

Note: the matrix presents the percentage of participants who chose each pair of decisions in the two rounds. Values highlighted in bold correspond to the percentages of players who kept the same decision between the two rounds.

The diagonal of Panel I in Table H11 suggests that in Mozambique, a significant proportion of Player B kept their choice consistent between rounds. The patterns look different for Vietnam (Panel II). With the exception of those who chose equality in both rounds (close to 26 per cent), there is less consistency in the behaviour for participants who chose to not redistribute or to reduce inequality in the first round.

Table H11: Matrix of decisions between rounds by Player B

| | | Round 2 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Extreme ineq. | Increase ineq. | No redistribution | Reduce ineq. | Equality |
| *Panel I: Mozambique* | | | | | | |
| Round 1 | Extreme ineq. | **0.88** | 0.22 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| | Increase ineq. | 0.00 | **2.64** | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| | No redistribution | 1.10 | 3.74 | **15.16** | 11.87 | 8.57 |
| | Reduce ineq. | 0.00 | 0.88 | 5.49 | **15.38** | 9.23 |
| | Equality | 0.00 | 0.22 | 1.98 | 3.98 | **15.60** |
| *Panel II: Vietnam* | | | | | | |
| Round 1 | Extreme ineq. | **1.74** | 1.16 | 0.35 | 0.12 | 0.81 |
| | Increase ineq. | 0.35 | **5.33** | 2.90 | 1.74 | 2.44 |
| | No redistribution | 0.12 | 1.86 | **6.26** | 7.54 | 5.34 |
| | Reduce ineq. | 0.12 | 0.93 | 3.13 | **12.18** | 9.28 |
| | Equality | 0.00 | 0.70 | 2.44 | 7.31 | **25.87** |

Note: the matrix presents the percentage of participants who chose each pair of decisions in the two rounds. Values highlighted in bold correspond to the percentages of players who kept the same decision between the two rounds.

# I Round 2: non-linear effects of the suggestion of Player A on Player B's final decision

Table I12: Relationship between the final decision and the suggestion from the recipient

| | All data | | | Luck | | | Merit | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (a) | (b) | (c) | (a) | (b) | (c) | (a) | (b) | (c) |
| *Panel I: Mozambique* | | | | | | | | | |
| Suggestion ($A_2$) | -0.042 | 0.636** | 0.637*** | 0.049 | 0.983*** | 1.054*** | -0.102 | 0.316 | 0.220 |
| | (0.080) | (0.242) | (0.222) | (0.106) | (0.336) | (0.335) | (0.106) | (0.254) | (0.226) |
| Suggestion, squared ($(A_2)^2$) | | -0.070** | -0.067*** | | -0.102*** | -0.108*** | | -0.042 | -0.025 |
| | | (0.026) | (0.022) | | (0.033) | (0.034) | | (0.027) | (0.023) |
| Allocation ($B_1$) | | | 0.519*** | | | 0.425*** | | | 0.507*** |
| | | | (0.067) | | | (0.089) | | | (0.092) |
| Observations | 455 | 455 | 443 | 229 | 229 | 224 | 226 | 226 | 219 |
| $R^2$ | 0.002 | 0.025 | 0.376 | 0.002 | 0.030 | 0.444 | 0.011 | 0.022 | 0.437 |
| *Panel II: Vietnam* | | | | | | | | | |
| Suggestion ($A_2$) | -0.205*** | 0.286 | 0.242 | -0.087* | -0.224 | 0.052 | -0.262*** | 0.480** | 0.246 |
| | (0.057) | (0.206) | (0.147) | (0.046) | (0.195) | (0.250) | (0.077) | (0.213) | (0.209) |
| Suggestion, squared ($(A_2)^2$) | | -0.042** | -0.032** | | 0.012 | -0.011 | | -0.063*** | -0.026 |
| | | (0.019) | (0.013) | | (0.018) | (0.024) | | (0.018) | (0.017) |
| Allocation ($B_1$) | | | 0.461*** | | | 0.435*** | | | 0.439*** |
| | | | (0.039) | | | (0.064) | | | (0.059) |
| Observations | 862 | 862 | 850 | 430 | 430 | 423 | 432 | 432 | 427 |
| $R^2$ | 0.047 | 0.061 | 0.451 | 0.008 | 0.010 | 0.394 | 0.080 | 0.115 | 0.581 |

significance: *** 0.01, ** 0.05, * 0.1

Note: the dependent variable is the amount allocated to Player A by Player B in round 2. $A_2$ is the suggestion from Player A and $B_1$ is the decision of Player B in round 1. Columns (c) include as controls gender (1 if female), age, high education (1 if higher than sample median) and income (1 if monthly income higher than sample median) as well as location fixed-effects. Standard errors (clustered at the session level) in parenthesis.

## J Instructions used in the experiment and survey questions (English translation)

Available as supplementary material on the working paper's webpage: https://www.wider.unu.edu/publication/inequality-always-unfair.