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## Chapter 13

# Evaluation Cooperation in West Africa

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**Abstract.** *Evaluation is an increasing concern for the francophone countries of West Africa: however, for the most part impact assessment does not yet have the interest it should in these countries. To reverse this trend, under Benin's leadership, a capacity-building program has been initiated to promote impact evaluation as a tool for public policy analysis, support impact evaluation studies in these countries, and gain consideration for the results of impact evaluation within the framework of public management. This innovative project involves South-South cooperation between countries that share roughly similar economic, political, and social contexts, as well as a legal and economic framework that is converging. The growing interest of West African states in evaluation has led several countries to develop their own evaluation systems. In 2012, eight countries with similar interests met for a workshop on monitoring and evaluation. As a result of the workshop, three countries—Benin, South Africa, and Uganda—are continuing to cooperate by developing the Twende Mbele ("Let's All Move Forward") program to strengthen performance and evaluation monitoring. This program aims to strengthen national evaluation systems, and to gradually extend its interventions to other African countries through the development of appropriate tools for monitoring and evaluation, the capitalization of knowledge resulting from evaluations, and the sharing of national experiences in evaluation.*

Francophone West Africa is identified as an area where there is a need for capacity building in evaluation. The practice of evaluation is itself very uneven and, depending on the country, the institutionalization of evaluation is still rudimentary. This observation was made during the francophone dialogue on evaluation capacity development held in Cotonou on July 7, 2015. More specifically, in the countries of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), the production and use of evidence through impact evaluations to inform public decision making is still very weak.<sup>1</sup>

Several initiatives at the national and regional levels have been undertaken to provide answers to this unpleasant picture as it has been observed in francophone West Africa. These initiatives include national evaluation days as well as regional programs such as Twende Mbele (“Let’s All Move Forward”) and the Capacity Building and Impact Assessment Program in West Africa (WACIE).

This chapter will show how such initiatives can help to effectively strengthen the institutionalization of evaluation, and improve evaluation practice in the francophone countries of West Africa. It will also show that the development of evaluation in these countries has also brought about the design and implementation of regional programs for the sharing of best practices, and support for sustainable capacity building.

The chapter is structured in four parts, plus a conclusion. The first part describes Benin’s experience, in particular progress made in the field of evaluation and how cooperation has influenced this evolution. The second and third parts, respectively, present the WACIE and Twende Mbele programs. The fourth part demonstrates how effective implementation of these two programs and their interrelationship offers clear opportunities for the development of evaluation at the regional level.

## **BENIN’S EXPERIENCE IN REGIONAL COOPERATION**

In 2007, Benin initiated the process of developing evaluative work by assigning this task to a ministry. Within the framework of the operational management of this function, the Office of Public Action Evaluation; the Bureau of Public Policy Evaluation; the Directorate General of Evaluation; and finally (and currently), the Bureau for the Evaluation of Public Policies and Analysis of Governmental Action were established.

The strategy adopted by this institution from its establishment in 2007 until the present basically involves benchmarking and integrating Benin into international evaluation networks. By participating in international evaluation conferences, Benin realized that South Africa and Uganda are in the lead in establishing national monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems. In 2012, the government of Benin endowed the country with a national evaluation policy (NEP 2012–2021), and set up an institutional framework for public policy evaluation, which includes the organizations in charge of M&E and development planning.

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<sup>1</sup>For more information, see Mendiratta (2011).

These advances at the national level have resulted in closer cooperation between Benin, South Africa, and Uganda, and as they appreciated the country's efforts in this area and its lead over other francophone West African counterparts.

Determination from its national stakeholders, supported by strong political will, has enabled Benin to join its peers from South Africa and Uganda in the evaluation cooperation program called Twende Mbele.

As members of the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), South Africa and Uganda encouraged Benin to join this initiative for help in developing the practice of impact evaluation. In 2014, Benin signed a memorandum with 3ie that enables it to receive annual grants for the commissioning of impact assessments, and for capacity-building activities in impact evaluation.

When participating in 3ie's Evidence Weeks, Benin observed the absence of almost all the francophone countries of the WAEMU area. The initiative for a regional development program of impact assessment in the WAEMU area was designed, and eventually evolved into WACIE.

3ie's traditional field of intervention is impact evaluation, but the institution has broadened its scope to include the area of monitoring. Impact evaluation remains the organization's main focus, but a window is now open for providing support for the strengthening of national M&E systems, and the promotion of researchers from Global South countries, in an attempt to help reduce the gap between North and South in the field of evaluation.

Especially in West Africa, national evaluation systems are weak, the culture of evaluation is still in an early stage, and the practice of impact evaluation is almost nonexistent. This weak culture is caused by a series of difficulties that the promotion and development of evaluation faces, in particular low demand for evaluation in the region; weakness of national statistical systems; and the minimal degree of ownership of evaluation issues by states that have left the demand for and funding of evaluations to donors.

WACIE offers opportunities in the West Africa region for collaboration with the Twende Mbele program, which is a continental initiative. Benin's leadership in promoting evaluation has been demonstrated through its official support for WACIE, and its support for French-speaking countries in West Africa to look to Twende Mbele to help them make progress on governance and accountability issues. Benin promotes the Twende Mbele program in West Africa. And WACIE, which is a regional initiative, has become an opportunity for Twende Mbele to reach many more audiences.

### **THE CAPACITY BUILDING AND IMPACT EVALUATION PROGRAM IN WEST AFRICA (WACIE)**

It is now recognized that rigorous impact evaluations can help quantify the socioeconomic impacts of projects and programs in several areas, and can provide a solid basis for consistent policy-making decisions. Although there is a growing global interest in impact evaluations, a report on trends in Sub-Saharan Africa revealed that there is little to no buy-in from countries and nationals of the continent (Mendiratta. 2011). Despite a considerable

increase in terms of the number of evaluations since 2004 (77 percent from 2004 onward), there are still significant disparities. For instance, impact evaluations in Africa are conducted much more frequently in anglophone countries (mainly Kenya, followed by Uganda) compared to francophone countries (18 percent).<sup>2</sup> In addition, only 11 percent of the studies<sup>3</sup> are conducted with African experts involved in the drafting of the research paper, although African partners (e.g., local NGOs, ministries, etc.) are involved in various stages of the implementation of the programs.

Over the past two years, discussions with key regional stakeholders, including the African Development Bank, the West African Development Bank, and the governments of Benin, Guinea Bissau, Niger, and Senegal have identified a real need for capacity building in order to produce high-quality research results, and to promote their use in the development and implementation of policies. While most governments in the West African region have monitoring systems in place, three key conditions limit rigorous impact evaluations: a lack of the human resources and institutional capacity that could help to conduct and use impact evaluations; a limited monitoring system for helping in the implementation of evaluations; and a low level of competence to conduct the required studies. WACIE was created to tackle these issues.

WACIE is a regionally based national initiative to improve welfare and development outcomes through decision making that is informed by research findings in the West African region. The initial phase of the program will begin in year 2017 and will last three years, followed by a consolidation phase, which may be carried out by a regional organization within WAEMU. The program is promoted by the government of Benin, with partial technical and financial support from 3ie.

## Key Elements of the Program

As specified in the program documents, WACIE's overall objective is to improve welfare outcomes through informed decision making, based on evidence from research findings in the region. To this end, the program is characterized by several key elements:

- Initiating and managing consultations at the national level to identify key areas where evidence is needed for policy making and programmatic decision making
- Establishing and managing a funding mechanism to sponsor public policy impact evaluations
- Developing a set of standards, guidelines, and databases to guide and communicate evaluation results
- Designing, implementing, and disseminating assessments

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<sup>2</sup> Angola, Cape Verde, Eritrea, Mauritius, Mozambique, and Rwanda are classified as neither English- nor French-speaking countries in the report. They account for about 12 percent of impact assessments.

<sup>3</sup> The statistics are based on 257 evaluations from the years 1982–2010.

- Providing training and capacity building to support the planning and implementation of impact evaluations, and the use of evidence in the decision-making process in the region

The proposed initiative covers a number of areas.

- **Capacity strengthening to produce and use research findings.**
  - The capacity to produce scientific evidence will be enhanced through the participation of local researchers in the funded studies.<sup>4</sup> Training in impact evaluation will also be offered within the member countries, in collaboration with the Regional Centers for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR).
  - The creation of partnerships, codevelopment, and coeducation of training programs with regional academic institutions such as the African School of Economics.<sup>5</sup>
  - The capacity to use research results will also be developed through one or more workshops targeted at decision makers that will be organized within the country.
  - The provision of grants to provide staff for trainings and conferences.
  - Support through an assurance of assistance for quality impact evaluation of local governments and partners in the region.
  - Development of a network to connect personnel, researchers, and decision makers in the region. Furthermore, study teams will be made available to conduct workshops with their respective implementing agencies, thereby enhancing impact evaluation know-how and the use of research findings in institutions for the conception and implementation of projects and programs.
- **Creation of a database of research results.** This will involve support for at least four impact assessment studies. These studies will focus on areas and research issues identified by WACIE member governments in West Africa. They will be based on consultation sessions supported by WACIE secretariat staff, and supervised by 3ie staff. Staff and study teams will liaise with line ministries to discuss opportunities for impact evaluation of selected programs and their implications, and 3ie will conduct the studies independently. The conception phase of the impact evaluation will be subject to formative evaluation of the implementation process.
- **Policy interpretation of research findings** 3ie has a well-developed system for supporting and monitoring the use of study results. Through this system, the project will support the production of the

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<sup>4</sup> This is a condition that must be fulfilled in order to receive funding from 3ie.

<sup>5</sup> The African School of Economics is a private pan-African research university based in Abomey-Calavi, Benin.

operational synthesis of results, and one-page research recommendations on all studies, along with other guidelines derived from research findings that are relevant to help develop major policies.

- **Learning from international experience.** The program will include a grant component to enable participation in international conferences and workshops on impact evaluation, including preconference training. A total of 16 grants will be offered each year.
- **Program management.** The program will be managed by 3ie international staff based in New Delhi, supported by a secretariat located in Cotonou.

### Logic of the Intervention

By the end of its implementation, the program is expected to contribute to improving the living conditions of the people of the WAEMU region through more effective public policies. The expected effects are:

- Improving the effectiveness and relevance of national and sub-regional projects and programs;
- Making use of systematic and sustainable evidence in the formulation and implementation of public policies; and
- Ensuring effective program management.

To observe these effects, the following causal pathways should be achieved:

- Evidence is produced and used to influence and support the formulation and implementation of public policies in each country, as well as subregional programs in the WAEMU area
- The WAEMU countries' national evaluation systems are strengthened and able to produce evidence for informed decision making

The intervention of WACIE is therefore designed to produce evidence that can highlight public policy choices in francophone West Africa, with a view toward contributing to the ultimate improvement of the living conditions of the people of the WAEMU area. We are, however, assuming that evidence may not necessarily lead to policy changes for various reasons: for example, because other policies have priority; or because doubts are raised about the evidence; or because trade-offs have been made to achieve political compromises.

In this respect, some of the risks are related to the lack of will of the decision makers or the political context in certain countries.

To lessen these risks, it is necessary to ensure the commitment made by all WACIE member states when they join 3ie. This commitment stipulates, among other things, that the member countries of 3ie will commit to using the results of the impact evaluations financed by 3ie in their countries, in order to improve the quality of public policies. Similarly, the ministers responsible for public policy evaluation in each WAEMU country will be involved in

defining the program's orientations, and will avert risks to the judicious use of the results and recommendations of evaluations.

To support the planning and implementation of impact evaluations and the use of evidence generated by such evaluations, WACIE plans to strengthen the technical capacities of the various stakeholders. Scholarships for training in impact assessment, or participation in technical workshops on impact evaluation in the subregion, will be awarded for this purpose. This ambition could be undermined by the lack of a training center or high-level technical workshop on impact evaluation in the subregion. For this reason, the program will support and encourage institutions and research centers that have the capacities to offer quality trainings or technical workshops on impact evaluation, to increase their offerings.

### Milestones and Stakeholders

Six of the eight WAEMU countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Niger, and Senegal), and the West African Development Bank, are now members of 3ie. 3ie has also already supported nine impact assessments (in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Senegal). These impact assessments were preceded by capacity-building workshops and consultations. 3ie has also supported four capacity-building workshops in the region (in Benin, Burkina Faso, and Togo).

WACIE will bring together as stakeholders the member states of WAEMU; WAEMU regional institutions (i.e., the WAEMU donor agencies); 3ie; and other nonregional donors (i.e., donor agencies outside of WAEMU), as well as other stakeholders.

- **WAEMU member states.** Each country participating in WACIE will be identifying and choosing a focal point for working with the WACIE secretariat. Focal points are public institutions with a legal mandate to work on impact evaluation issues with the support of their respective government authorities. The role of the focal points is to facilitate the implementation of WACIE at the country level: they will play a key role in the consultation process of identifying relevant projects in relation to the socioeconomic context of each country. In addition, they will ensure the effective involvement of local and national institutions in the initiative.
- **WAEMU regional institutions (WAEMU donor agencies).** These are the West African Development Bank and the WAEMU Commission. They represent WAEMU internal donors who will be supporting WACIE and helping to define strategic policy by participating in WACIE Advisory Committee.
- **3ie.** 3ie will act on the one hand as a catalyst throughout the initiative, by motivating regional involvement and participation in the program; and on the other hand, coordinating and supporting some WACIE activities. WACIE will be led by 3ie's main office in New Delhi. The design of WACIE assumes that there are resources for impact evaluation in the West African region, and that these resources need to be channeled through training and technical assistance.

- **Other nonregional donors (non-WAEMU donor agencies).**

These are other technical and financial partners from the WAEMU member states that will cofinance the program: for example, the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the African Development Bank, and others. They will help mobilize resources and define WACIE's strategic policy by participating in the its Advisory Committee. WACIE support modalities are presented later in this chapter.

- **Other stakeholders.** This group includes the project-executing agencies that will be selected under WACIE. It also includes research teams, and all institutions not included in the previous groups that will benefit from or contribute to the initiative.

## **STRENGTHENING PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION MONITORING PROGRAMS: TWENDE MBELE**

In March 2012, The South African Department of Performance Planning and Monitoring and CLEAR in anglophone Africa organized a regional workshop with seven African countries in Johannesburg in March 2012. At this workshop, Benin, South Africa, and Uganda recognized the similarity of their approaches to developing their national evaluation systems. Since then, they have collaborated by sharing guidelines and methodological tools, and attending training and events together. This has allowed for some cross-learning and the building of a slight, but effective, collaboration between the three nations. And in both anglophone and francophone Africa, CLEAR has worked with these three countries during the initiative.

Since 2013, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) has been supporting the South African Department of Performance in their Strengthening Performance M&E project, which is focusing on the use of M&E in front-line service delivery and on citizen monitoring to inform the government on results delivered to the people of South Africa. The result of the project is that effective delivery of front-line services, a citizen-based surveillance system, and a results-based evaluation system support government accountability to the South African populace. A total of £2 million has been made available over 2013–15. The project has been successful: the systems have developed rapidly and have had impacts on the formulation and implementation of policies. This South African experience has been shared as a training in the framework of cooperation between Benin, South Africa, and Uganda.

These three countries have been active promoters of regional and international networks, including CLEAR and 3ie; both are supported by DFID. South Africa and the United Kingdom are also members of the Partnership for Open Government, which promotes accountability and transparency in government action. Other countries have been interested in what these three countries are doing, with study visits from countries such as Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritius, Niger, Seychelles, and Togo. They are sharing their experiences and tools widely in the region, both in evaluation and monitoring, especially when they rely on the regional work CLEAR undertakes.

The Twende Mbele program aims to support emerging countries across Africa, enabling the three founding partners to intensify learning and to involve other partners that are determined to move forward with M&E. The program will also be built on global experience, using a range of M&E mechanisms that have been proven to improve government performance and accountability.

DFID is currently funding the African Networks Strengthening for Governance, Accountability, and Transparency (SANGAT) program, which supports three other African networks. SANGAT aims to take advantage of the existing projects, demand-driven processes, and peer learning in thematic areas. There are currently three SANGAT projects, focusing on areas from budget transparency and public finance to a high-level network dealing with major issues of prosecution and organized crime. Twende Mbele is being funded as a fourth component of the SANGAT program.

### Key Elements of the Program

As specified in the project documents, the immediate result proposed for Twende Mbele is “the improvement of M&E systems (e.g., practices, policies, tools and procedures) demonstrated in partner countries based on shared experiences.” The theory of change assumes that the M&E systems demonstrated in the project (immediate outcomes) will be expanded and further developed, and will be applied in additional countries over a period of six years (wider result) in order to improve the output and accountability of governments toward their citizens. This would result in improved services, a better use of M&E products by parliaments, and an improved performance culture.

The immediate results—demonstration of improved M&E systems—will be achieved by:

- The creation of an M&E application at the level of senior management, Parliament, and the public;
- The conduct of learning and sharing activities to build on, based on the experience of current partners;
- The development of specific M&E tools in collaboration with partners; and
- The implementation of programs to ensure ownership and cost-effectiveness.

Many countries undertake surveillance activities, but this program seeks to work specifically with those seeking to make a systematic assessment within government as well as monitoring, so that there is a desire for learning and deeper change, and more systemic effects on the output and impact of governments on the living conditions of their people.

### Milestone and Stakeholders

The central objective of Twende Mbele is not to constitute a network where countries share their experiences a priori, but to help collaborate in the development and implementation of M&E systems that improve the performance and impact of government actions on citizens.

Established in 2015, the plan predicts that by 2018, the number of partner countries will increase from three to six. There is already high demand for countries to be included in the project, but participating countries must maintain a commitment level corresponding to their capacities. It is therefore important to define an engagement strategy to include other countries. For those countries that do not have a sufficient level of development of their national M&E systems, Twende Mbele has put in place an inclusion mechanism based on differentiations between countries. This option works primarily with countries that are truly committed to using M&E to improve the lives of their citizens.

An initial classification has placed countries in three broad categories:

- **Category A.** Those “knocking on the door” are committed to using M&E in change processes (the indirect indicator being that they are engaged in the evaluation)
- **Category B.** Those who are already initiating actions in the field of M&E, have individual champions, and are willing to become more involved
- **Category C.** Those with some interest but who are not actively pursuing M&E as a key element in improving government performance

The program wishes to actively target all of these countries, and include them to the extent possible in its activities. Their involvement and ability to advance the work will be evaluated using explicit criteria, and enabling them to become collaborative partners.

Potential partners in **Category A** are already very active in M&E, and are keen to improve what they are already doing for better government performance. In these countries, there is already the political will to expose failures and draw lessons from them. These partners could improve their activities by appropriating and contextualizing some of the more advanced tools that have been operationalized in countries outside of Africa. The most effective strategy to employ with these countries is to collaborate on the development of their national M&E systems in order to make them more effective and inclusive. This category includes Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Niger. They can be considered main partners in the program.

The countries in **Category B** have some involvement in M&E, but have not yet committed to extensive systems, or faced rigorous evaluations that may reveal weaknesses. For those with significant interest in M&E, participation in learning and capacity-building activities can be beneficial. However, these countries need to demonstrate their interest in using these opportunities. This category includes Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, and Zambia.

**Category C** countries may not be interested in being involved in Twende Mbele, but it may be appropriate to involve them in activities such as newsletters, and informing them of events they might be able to attend. The program should aim to spread M&E focal points across all African countries, and to share news about Twende Mbele as well as general M&E activities

and information that might stimulate further interest. This category includes Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

It is essential that this process be based on self-selection, and that countries recognize where they stand in relation to Twende Mbele. They must also commit to the appropriate roles for each level of participation if they wish to participate.

## LEARNING FROM THE BENIN EXPERIENCE

Becoming a member of 3ie has allowed Benin to benefit from financial and technical support for undertaking the impact evaluation of the Free Support for the Scholarship of Girls in Secondary School Level One Program. This program is designed to promote the schooling of young girls across the country and contribute to reducing the education gap with young boys.

The government of Benin is waiting for the evaluation findings in order to improve its sectoral reforms in the field of education. 3ie has also given financial support to many Beninese in the field of capacity building, to attend courses and seminars around the world that are linked to impact evaluation.

### Difficulties Encountered

The major difficulty faced up to now in the area of cooperation to promote M&E—both at the country and subregional levels—is related to WACIE, which, while it is a country-level initiative, has program objectives that remain regional.

In fact, the promotion of WACIE requires WAEMU country members to belong to 3ie. Each WAEMU country member has the responsibility to fulfill this essential condition in order for the program to become a reality. Program implementation needs the strong engagement of all of its stakeholders, especially the WAEMU states, and communitarian institutions such as the WAEMU Commission and the West African Development Bank.

### Perspectives

Benin's approach to its evaluation system has enabled the country to build its international reputation for the innovative cooperation programs it has developed with its partners. The ultimate expected result of the Twende Mbele program is the effectiveness of national M&E systems at the continental level: WACIE, which is a regional community program, offers promising prospects for the development of impact evaluation at the regional level.

The sharing of experience and the development of collaborative governance tools encouraged by these programs will undoubtedly improve the quality of transparency in public management at the continental level.

After its pilot phase, WACIE will be carried out by a community institution, and will be a reference organization for WAEMU through the research results and evidence obtained. Through these results, WACIE will be able to feed the process of defining the community directives for WAEMU.

The movement that Benin will instigate through its inclusion in global evaluation networks will lead the countries involved to improve their quality

of governance: this could result in the improvement of their standings according to the Ibrahim Index of African Governance.<sup>6</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Development policies and programs at the global level demand better performance and more efficiency not only from states but also from partners and donors. Evaluation is a mechanism used to report on the commitments made in order to ensure good governance: it is a strategic steering tool that can help to inform decision makers.

African states must therefore take ownership of evaluation, according to their sociocultural contexts, and they should pool their experiences in order to improve governance. This pooling calls for the establishment of regional and subregional cooperation platforms for the strengthening of national M&E systems, with the aim of improving the living conditions of the people.

Benin's experience in the field of public policy evaluation has shown that it is important to open up to other experiences in order to capitalize on achievements. It is within this framework that Benin has initiated the setting up of a regional program for capacity building and impact assessment in the WAEMU countries, in partnership with 3ie. This program will not only develop impact assessment within WAEMU countries, but will also strengthen national evaluation systems and the capacities of stakeholders to conduct the evaluation.

To achieve this, WACIE will establish a mechanism for the selection of evaluation areas, and analysis of the results and conclusions of evaluation reports. It will also lead consultations aimed at setting standards, guidelines, and supporting funding mechanisms.

Benin is also relying on the Twende Mbele program, which is the result of its cooperation with South Africa and Uganda, to strengthen the collective learning process at the subregional level through M&E performance improvement and evaluation practice. These cooperative regional initiatives in evaluation will open new perspectives for the development of evaluation in Africa.

## REFERENCE

Mendiratta, Vibhuti. 2011. "Report on Impact Evaluation in Sub-Saharan Africa." Working Paper, UMR DIAL, Paris.

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<sup>6</sup>The Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) provides an annual assessment of the quality of governance in every African country. Originally established in association with the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, the IIAG now consists of more than 90 indicators in 14 subcategories, 4 categories, and 1 overall measurement of governance performance. These indicators include official data, expert assessments and citizen surveys, provided by more than 30 independent global data institutions. This represents the most comprehensive collection of data on African governance. <http://mo.ibrahim.foundation/iiag/>.

The background features a large, abstract circular graphic composed of numerous overlapping, semi-transparent blue segments of varying shades, from light sky blue to deep navy blue. These segments are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, resembling a stylized gear or a complex digital interface. The overall effect is modern and technological.

**Part IV**

Safeguards and  
Resettlement

