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RE: Cancellation Memo for the Evaluation of the Benin Access to Land Project

MCC contracted NORC in June 2006 to lead the independent evaluations of several Benin Compact Projects, including the Access to Land (ATL) Project, Access to Finance Project and Access to Justice Project. An Evaluation Design Report (EDR) was prepared by NORC covering all three projects and cleared by MCC in December 2006 and can be accessed on the MCC Evaluation Catalogue. This memo concerns the evaluation of the Benin Access to Land Project, which was essentially divided into rural and urban and carried out between 2006-2011.

NORC proposed a randomized controlled trial (RCT) for evaluating the Benin ATL Project. Similar to other project evaluations covered by the 2006 EDR, the evaluation relied on the Benin government’s EMICoV (Enquête Modulaire Intégrée sur les Conditions de Vie de Ménages). The EMICoV is a nationally-representative household survey, administered by the Benin National Statistics Institute (INSAE- Institut National de la Statistique et de l’Analyse Economique). MCA-Benin provided financial support for the 2006 EMICoV and 2010 EMICoV data collection rounds. The survey collected comprehensive data on land and justice, as well as socio-economic data on household income, expenditure, employment, economic activity, and investment. However, the EMICoV baseline survey (2006-2008) presented multiple challenges in acquiring parcel level investment information and incorporating the correct sample of PFR villages. For example, approximately 20 PFR villages could not be located in the EMICoV sample, due to mismatch in village names. Subsequently, there was an extensive verification of the EMICoV 2010 sample (and an increase in the sample size) to ensure that the PFR treatment and control villages are all incorporated. However, the 2010 EMICoV and related data entry by INSAE faced continued quality issues.

MCC was concerned with continued quality and oversight issues around EMICoV and INSAE, as well as NORC’s methodological approach. In 2010, MCC made the decision to have NORC conduct the evaluation of the urban component of the ATL Project while having the World Bank Gender Innovation Lab take over the rural component of the ATL Project evaluation. The World Bank similarly found data quality issues with the EMICoV and raised funds to field a separate data collection effort in 2011 using non-MCC/MCA funding. The World Bank did not use the EMICoV for baseline data but did use the 2010 EMICoV to provide the village-level sampling frame for the study’s first round of data collection in 2011. In 2013, MCC and the World Bank worked to formalize the World Bank’s role overseeing the rural component of the evaluation of the ATL Project with an official EFO/Coop Agreement signed in 2014 covering both evaluations for the rural component of the ATL Project in Benin and a land activity Ghana. The World Bank used MCC funds to collect a second and final round of panel household data in 2015. The World Bank’s evaluation design, materials, and results are posted here – <https://data.mcc.gov/evaluations/index.php/catalog/169>

NORC meanwhile continued to manage the evaluation of the urban component of the ATL Project. Following an inception mission in February 2012, NORC advised MCC that it was no longer possible to continue with the original evaluation design due to the small number of urban occupancy permit holders that were granted a land title by the end of the Compact (less than 0.5% of the targets). In accordance with those findings, NORC reformulated the issues that the evaluation could address and redefined the original quantitative evaluation around a more qualitative approach. NORC submitted their draft evaluation design for the urban components of the Access to Land Project in March 23, 2012 (“Benin Impact Services. Inception Report/preliminary Design Report. Access to Urban Land.”) and a final version of this design report in September 19, 2012 following incorporation of MCC Evaluation Management Committee (EMC) comments (“Access to Urban Land Design Report”). However, this 2012 EDR was not approved by MCC’s Evaluation Management Committee (EMC) due to concerns the evaluation would not provide much learning compared to the cost.

MCC asked NORC to refocus the urban land evaluation where learning was feasible and cost effective. This included broadening the evaluation to look beyond effects of solely the direct titling (from occupancy permits) activity and to also look at overall changes in sporadic demand for land titles expected from the land office capacity building activities and impacts from the new land code drafted by the Compact and finally passed in January 2013. Questions around land titling also took on a more qualitative nature, looking at changes in perceptions of tenure, credit and service access. Specifically, the research questions focused on:

1. What is the impact of the formalization and registration of land titling on the price of land and the organization and function of land markets in urban and peri-urban environments?
2. How do households and economic operators/investors perceive the impact of the program for formalization of land tenure on (i) security of investment, (ii) access to credit, (iii) security of tenure, and (iv) access to services and facilities?
3. What is the evolution of the sporadic demand for land titles following the opening of decentralized DDET (Department of Domains, Registration and Stamps) offices at the regional level?
4. What has been the impact of the 2013 Land Code on security of tenure, land markets, and property production?

NORC submitted a revised EDR around these four questions and presented their EDR to MCC’s EMC in September 11th following a round of MCC comments in August 2013[[1]](#footnote-1). The presentation of the EDR was followed by field missions September-October 2013 to further clarify data and evaluation possibilities. Based on the field mission and EMC comments, NORC submitted the final revised EDR on November 23, 2013 (“Benin Impact Evaluation Services: Revised Evaluation Design for Access to Urban Land Program”). The MCC EMC reviewed this revised EDR and determined the proposed evaluation strategy would not be able to cost effectively measure expected results.

In consideration of the multiple design updates and feedback, MCC lacked confidence in continuing to pursue an evaluation of the ATL Project with NORC. MCC issued a stop work order to NORC on the evaluation of the urban land component[[2]](#footnote-2) and the NORC-led ATL evaluation effectively ended in February 2014.

Considering that an impact evaluation was no longer possible, and it was already well into the post Compact period, MCC decided in lieu of an independent evaluation to contract former MCC land lead William Valletta to conduct a project assessment. Specifically, MCC tasked Valletta to update an earlier MCC internal memo on ATL Project performance (“Urban Title Evaluation”, 2012) and undergo an external peer review. Valletta was well respected for the frank and detailed memo he had written prior on ATL, which detailed ATL Project implementation and performance constraints.

Valletta used his Benin contacts and detailed ATL Project knowledge to update the assessment memo with latest outputs by the Benin government, including processing of land titles and the passing of the long awaited new land code. In addition, Valletta updated the issues faced by the ATL Project activities to include those issues that continued or were resolved in the post Compact period. The memo was peer reviewed by the World Bank Gender Innovation Lab and finalized and cleared by MCC in February 2017. The memo provided a clear picture of the project outputs up to the end of Compact and in the post Compact period, highlighting the government of Benin’s continued processing of land titles and passing of the new land code, while noting the continued lengthy process and delays faced by the complicated land titling and approval procedures and related functioning of the land offices. The complete memo can be accessed in MCC’s Evaluation Catalogue.

1. The revised EDR for Access to Land was presented to the EMC along with revised EDRs for Access to Justice and Access to Finance Projects. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. NORC was similarly ordered to stop work on the Access to Justice Project. NORC did continue work on the evaluation of the Access to Finance Project. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)