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## Bingo for Africa

IPA field staff are used to using lotteries to determine treatment and control groups for randomized control trials. Some of our Research Affiliates have also used existing government lotteries ([visas for migration to New Zealand](#) and [school vouchers in Colombia](#), for example) as natural field experiments.

But France has recently announced the possibility of creating [a different kind of lottery](#), one that will supplement its development aid to Africa. Much as popular lotteries like Powerball and Mega Millions in the US send a portion of their proceeds to the state budget for special areas such as education or the environment, this new lotto game would add money to France's development funding for Africa, in particular aid to education.

At first, this sounds a bit ridiculous--conventional wisdom pegs development aid as a responsibility of wealthy countries, and the great needs of the African continent seem trivialized when funding for education projects there becomes reliant on a form of gambling. This is not to mention the possible outcome mentioned by John Boonstra at the [UN Dispatch blog](#), "...it would pretty much undo the benefit if obsessive lotto players are being impoverished to help un-impovertish Africans." (It seems unlikely this lottery will impoverish players in France, but anything is possible...)

The funny thing is that this design isn't really new. I remember the fundraising drive at my high school each year, when all the students raised money by selling tickets for what was, after all, just a small scale lottery. Our cause wasn't considered any less worthy for offering a cash prize, nor the buyers any less charitable for hoping to win it.

Now what would be truly novel would be if the "Bingo for Africa" winner donated his or her winnings right back to education projects in Africa. (Or perhaps, funded an IPA evaluation of one.)

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