

DATA MUST SPEAK

# Giving all girls a chance for promotion and success

Research on positive deviant schools to improve learning in Togo

## Key findings



**The promotion rate** for girls is lower than for boys in primary and secondary education, and there has been no significant improvement in the past five years. The gaps between girls and boys tend to widen at the primary education level.



**Girls' performance on primary- and secondary school-leaving examinations** is lower than that of boys.



**Having a female teacher** is associated with a reduction in the gender gap in promotion, dropout and graduation rates in primary and secondary school.



**Having a female head teacher** is also associated with better promotion rates and better results in the Primary School Completion Certificate (CEPD) examinations for girls.



**The impact of the length of the journey to school** on promotion rates varies by gender. Girls are at a particular disadvantage where the journey is longer.



**The presence of latrines** is associated with higher promotion rates for girls, mainly as a result of lower dropout rates.

## Context

Despite government efforts and several recent educational reforms (including curriculum reforms and policies on secondary-school teaching, school meals and teachers), there are still **challenges in access, equity, quality and management in the Togolese education system**. Despite these challenges, some schools perform better than others, even in disadvantaged areas. By identifying these positive deviant schools and the good practices that make them successful, important lessons can be learned to improve learning in Togo and contribute to the efficient implementation of the Education Sector Plan 2020–2030.



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## Research on positive deviant schools

Against this background, the **Data Must Speak (DMS) research on positive deviant schools** explores local solutions for improving the quality of education in Togo. The first stage of the research was to conduct **a statistical analysis using the Education Management Information System (EMIS) and national examination scores** to identify factors associated with school performance and quantify their effects. The analysis presented in this brief focuses on the main findings of this stage.<sup>1</sup>

## Research results

**The promotion rate for girls is lower than for boys in both primary and secondary education.** The promotion rate for boys in primary school is about 0.9 percentage points higher than for girls, and there has been no improvement over time. The gap between girls and boys even increased after the 2019/20 school year, possibly due to school closures related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The gaps between girls and boys tend to widen at the primary education level. The promotion rate for girls is slightly higher than for boys in the first two years of primary school (CP1 and CP2), but the trend is reversed from the fourth year (CE2) onwards. At the end of the fifth year of primary school (CM1), girls' promotion rate to the final year (CM2) is 3.5 percentage points lower than boys'. The gender gap persists in secondary school, where boys have consistently higher promotion rates than girls (see Figure 1).

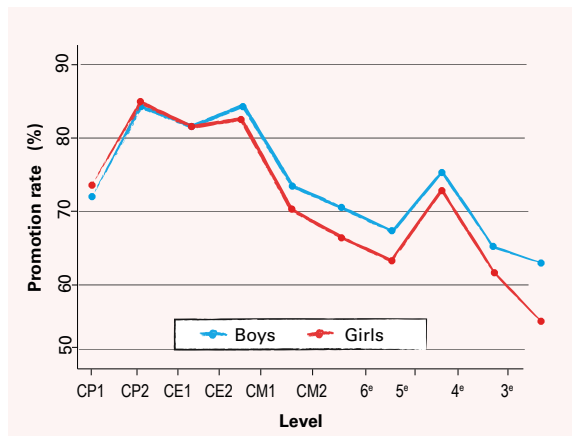
**The gap between girls and boys is also evident in academic performance,** with girls not performing as well in the CEPD exams. Their graduation rate is 3.9 percentage points lower than that of boys and their average grade out of 20 is 0.3 points fewer. At the end of lower secondary school, girls also perform worse than boys in the Lower Secondary Completion Certificate (BEPC) examinations, with an average grade out of 20 that is 0.4 percentage points lower and a 6.4 percentage point lower pass rate.

The results of the statistical models show that **having a female teacher is associated with a reduction in the gender gap in promotion, dropout and graduation rates in primary and secondary school.**

<sup>1</sup> Although rigorous, this analysis has its limitations, since it is based on observational data. The statistical models account for school fixed effects and involve numerous controls to reduce the likelihood that the estimated relationships are based on systematic differences between schools. However, additional studies will be required to verify that the observed effects are causal and not simply correlations.

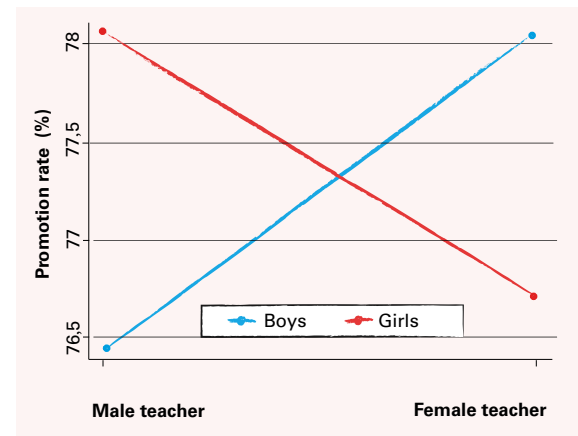
The promotion rate for girls in primary school is higher than for boys when they are taught by a woman (78 per cent versus 76.7 per cent). The opposite effect is seen when the teacher is male, with a lower promotion rate for girls than for boys (76.4 per cent versus 78.1 per cent). One of the reasons for this is a decrease in the dropout rate for girls when they are taught by a woman. There is also a positive impact on the academic performance of girls. Female students score an average of 0.37 points fewer than male students in the CEPD examinations when they are taught by a man in the final year of primary school (CM2), however this gap drops to 0.24 points when the teacher is a woman. In general, the percentage of women in the teaching profession is relatively low: while 21.1 per cent of students have a female teacher in the first year of primary school (CP1), this rate drops to 4.2 per cent in the final year (CM2).

**Figure 1: Promotion rate by gender**



Promotion rates in the final year of primary school (CM2) and fourth year of secondary school correspond to examination pass rates

**Figure 2: Gender of the primary school teacher**



Source: EMIS data for 2020–2021.

In lower secondary school, as in primary school, the presence of female teachers is associated with a reduction in the gender gap in promotion and success rates.

**Having a female head teacher is associated with a higher promotion rate for girls in primary school, including a lower dropout rate.** While the dropout rate for boys is the same regardless of the gender of the head teacher, the dropout rate for girls is lower (by 0.77 percentage points) when that person is female. In addition, the gap between girls and boys in CEPD scores decreases when the head teacher is a woman. However, these results are not replicated in secondary school.

**The promotion rate for girls decreases as distance to school increases.** While boys do not appear to be affected by an increase in the average length of travel to school at the primary level, the girls' promotion rate decreases by 0.3 percentage points as the average distance increases by one kilometre. The impact of travel time is negative for boys in secondary school, but this effect is more than doubled for girls (0.5 percentage points fewer for boys versus 1.3 percentage points for girls). In both cases, distance appears to primarily affect the promotion rate of girls due to the dropout rate.

**The presence of latrines is associated with better promotion rates for girls, including lower dropout rates.** In primary schools with latrines, the dropout rate for girls is 0.1 percentage points lower than in other schools.

**Gender inequalities in Togo** are not solely the result of factors outside the education system. Girls can achieve more when they are in a supportive environment. As noted in this brief, the presence of female teachers and head teachers, as well as improved access to the school, especially for girls who live farther away (for example, by providing public transport), are avenues to explore in order to promote girls' continued access to education and improve their learning outcomes.

## Education policy areas for further exploration



**Analyse the mechanisms** that might explain why girls do better with female staff in leadership and teaching positions. Different behavioural factors could be examined for further analysis (for example, those related to individuals, interactions, or structural elements).



**Review existing policies** to increase the number of female teachers and to promote gender equity, and identify strengths and bottlenecks.

## About the Data Must Speak research on positive deviant schools

The DMS research on positive deviant schools in Togo was developed jointly by the Ministry of Primary, Secondary, Technical and Artisanal Education of Togo (MEPSTA), local project partners, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Togo country office, and the UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight. This global research project is being implemented in 14 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It is co-funded by the *Knowledge and Innovation Exchange* (KIX) programme of the Global Partnership for Education/International Development Research Centre, the Hewlett Foundation, the Jacobs Foundation, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, the Schools2030 programme (led by the Aga Khan Foundation), and UNICEF's Thematic Fund for Education.

## Series of thematic briefs

This brief is the first in a series of documents produced as part of the DMS research in Togo. It focuses primarily on gender issues in the Togolese education system. The other briefs focus on teaching staff and the resources allocated to schools. It aims to inform the dialogue on educational policies in Togo and other countries.

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