



© UNICEF/JUN0616749/Dejongh

DATA MUST SPEAK

Trends in the CEPE pass rates

Unpacking factors influencing school performance in Côte d'Ivoire

Key findings



Public schools, especially those in rural areas, saw a **significant drop in their end of primary school exam (CEPE) pass rates between 2019 and 2021.**



In 2021, **inequalities in the CEPE pass rates between public schools in rural areas and those in urban areas widened** in each of Côte d'Ivoire's 14 districts, compared with 2019.



Inequalities in CEPE pass rates increased across the board, **from 25 percentage points in 2019 to 40 percentage points in 2021.**

Context

In recent years, the Ivorian Government has implemented several ambitious educational reforms, including the compulsory education policy and the school feeding policy. Despite these efforts, **challenges in access, equity, quality and governance remain.** However, some schools perform better than others, even in disadvantaged areas. By identifying these schools, called positive deviant schools, and the good practices that make them successful, important lessons can be drawn on to improve learning in Côte d'Ivoire and inform the development of the Education and Training Sector Plan 2016–2025.

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 Côte d'Ivoire. The first and second stages of the research involved conducting an **econometric analysis using Education Management Information System (EMIS) data to identify factors influencing school performance and to quantify their effects**. The analysis presented in this brief summarizes the key findings of these early stages of the research.¹

Research findings

The Government of Côte d'Ivoire decided to close schools from 16 March to 25 May 2020 to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Due to the two-month school closure and the social distancing restrictions needed to comply with health and safety guidelines at school examination centres, the Ministry of Education and Literacy decided to cancel the 2020 exams. That year, the CEPE results were based on scores obtained in continuous assessments and mock examinations. The following year, in 2021, the CEPE took place, but with modifications, including changes in calculating the general average and improved anti-cheating measures.

Because the school closures and changes in exam organization occurred at the same time, the trends described below are not necessarily related to either event specifically; nevertheless, they highlight the current challenges facing Côte d'Ivoire in terms of children's learning.

In 2021, the average pass rate decreased by 32 percentage points compared with the previous examination year (from 84.5 per cent in 2019 to 52.5 per cent in 2021). **Public schools, especially those in rural areas, lagged the furthest behind the national average (from 80 per cent of students passing the CEPE in 2019 to 40 per cent in 2021)**. The gap between these schools and higher-performing schools (private and urban schools) widened from 14 percentage points in 2019 to 40 percentage points in 2021.

Widening inequalities in CEPE pass rates can also be observed between public schools in rural areas and those in urban areas across Côte d'Ivoire's 14 districts. The decline in pass rates was generally greater in rural schools than in urban schools, except in Abidjan, where rural public schools experienced a smaller decrease in the percentage of students passing the CEPE than urban public schools.

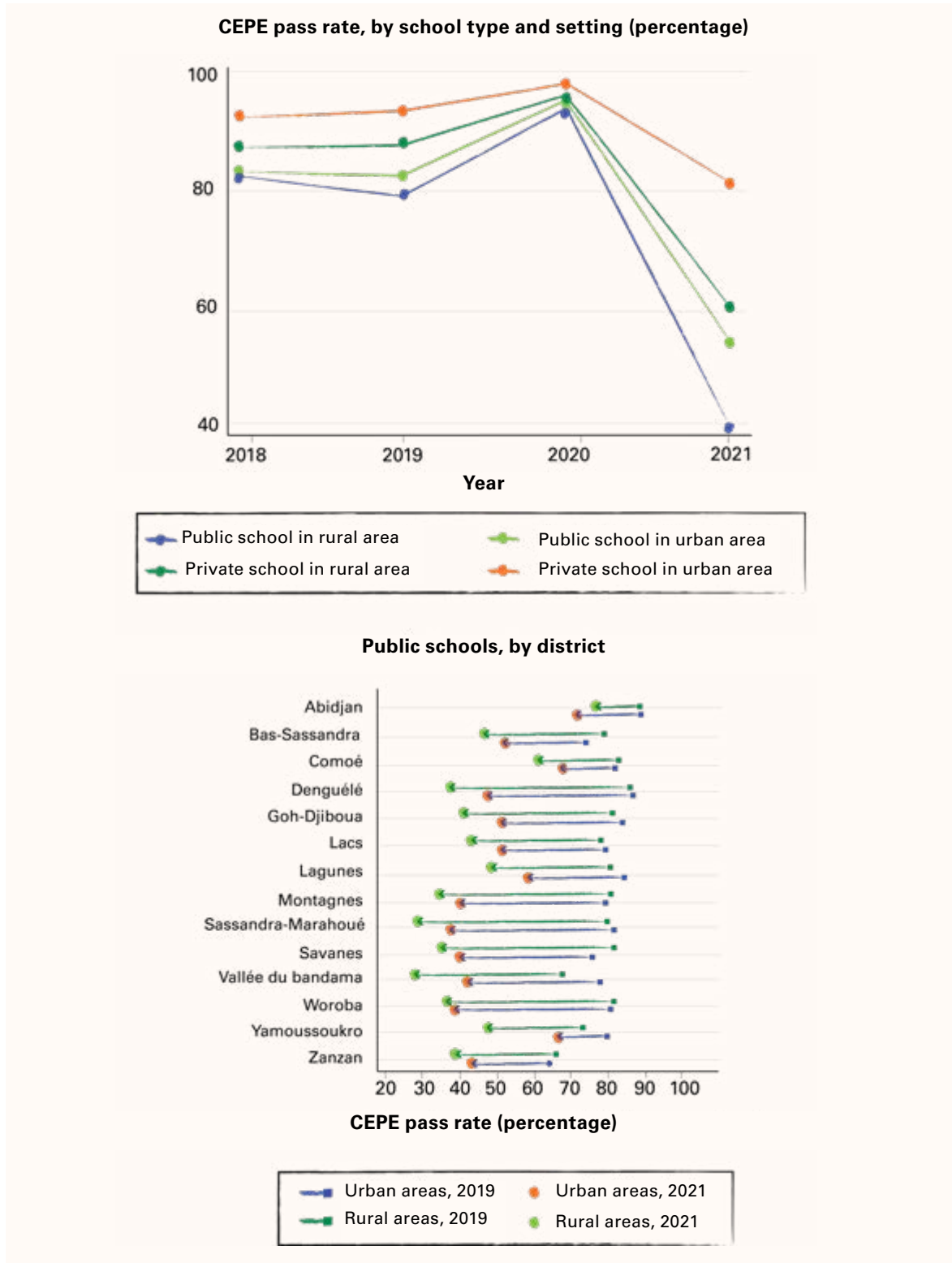
More worryingly, regional inequalities were less pronounced before the school closures. In 2019, the worst performing region (Zanzan) was 25 percentage points behind Abidjan. However, in 2021, the worst performing region (Vallée du Bandama) was almost 40 percentage points behind Abidjan. Overall, inequality among students nationwide, both within and across districts, has increased significantly.



¹ Although rigorous, this analysis has its limitations because it is based on observational data. The econometric models used include school fixed effects and numerous control variables to reduce the likelihood that the relationships identified are due to systematic differences between schools.

In 2022, the CEPE pass rate increased slightly, to 64.8 per cent.² Inequalities between different teaching statuses and locations have not yet been analysed.

Figure 1: Widening inequalities in CEPE pass rates



² Official portal of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, 'Éducation nationale/CEPE: 442 558 admis au CEPE session 2022', 21 June 2022. Available at: www.gouv.ci/actualite-article.php?recordID=13682.

Suggested areas for further exploration



Conduct further joint research to understand the drop in CEPE pass rates in 2021 and the resulting increase in inequality.



Ensure that districts experiencing sharp declines in pass rates are supported so that they are not left behind.



Examine whether the **increase in inequality** observed in 2021 continued in 2022.

About the Data Must Speak research on positive deviant schools

The DMS research on positive deviant schools in Côte d'Ivoire was developed jointly by the Ministry of Education and Literacy, local research partners, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Côte d'Ivoire country office, and the UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight. This global research 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 policy briefs

This brief is the first in a series of documents produced as part of the DMS research in Côte d'Ivoire. It focuses on gender issues in the Ivorian education system and aims to inform policy dialogue in Côte d'Ivoire and other relevant countries. To access the full research documents, including the report analysing the factors influencing school performance in Côte d'Ivoire and the tables illustrating the results described above, please see [here](#).

For more information:

- Aristide Toti, Education Statistics Specialist, Education and Training Sector Task Force, Ministry of Education and Literacy, aristoti2002@yahoo.fr
- Silué Zié, Education Officer, UNICEF Côte d'Ivoire, szie@unicef.org
- Renaud Comba, DMS Research Coordinator, UNICEF Innocenti, rcomba@unicef.org

This brief is published by the Ministry of Education and Literacy of Côte d'Ivoire, UNICEF Côte d'Ivoire and UNICEF Innocenti. Click [here](#) to copy the citation.

For every child, answers

