Basic questions

Which university did you attend?
University of Lome (TOGO)

Did you have a choice of universities to attend, and if so why did you choose the school you attended?
No, there was only this university.

Describe the university briefly. The categories below seem interesting to me, but please also provide any other details or stories that you feel are interesting. The more the better.

- How many students attend
The University Lome is in the capitol of Togo (Lome). It has 5 faculties (Science, Law, Economic Sciences, Languages and Literature, Medical and Pharmacy Sciences), Schools and Institutes.

- Size of classes (how many students per classroom)
It has 5 classes that can take 500 students, about 15 that can take 200–300 students and many small classes. There are about 20,000 students.

- Where students live

- Whether the university is selective or open to all
The university is open to all, but doing what really want to do depends on your results from secondary school. For example you can wish to do Mathematics but the results you got in secondary school don’t allow you. (Any way you will get something else to do.)

- Whether students are local or from all over the country (or from other countries)
The university is open to students from all the country and from other countries.

- How easy it was to talk with your professors

- What your professors were like
There are Professors who discuss well with students, understand them and help them, but most of Profs are difficult to talk to because they think they are too important.

- What the facilities were like: were there computers, were the classrooms crowded, was the library good, etc.
Until 1995, the university had a nice time. Students were living in cities in campus, and many other houses hired in the town, and students were eating in the University's
restaurant. But since 1996 things became difficult for students. Everyone had to find his accommodation except those coming from the north part of the country (just for their first year). But they still had some cash that can help them live. Students fees were about US$8. Since 2000, no accommodation, no cash, and student fees went up to US$100. In a class for N students more than 2N attend courses.

- **Whether you had internet access**
  We had Internet access but very limited because of the number of students (not many computers).

- **% male vs. female students**
  There are 80% male vs 20% female student.

- **% of students studying technical fields (math, science, engineering)**
  Only 10% of students study technical fields because these fields are very selective. In fact, they have to take few students in order to give them a good education. Many students who go to study in other countries after the university refuse to come back because they see the salary is too low. For this reason there is a big need of lecturers. That is the main reason that makes the number of students greater than the size of classrooms.

### Obstacles to attending university

**How much did it cost each year to attend your university?**

As I said above, student fees are US$100, but the big problem is how to live if your parents are not in Lome, since you have no support from the government.

**What are the most common reasons, in your opinion, that secondary school graduates in your country do NOT continue on to university?**

The most common reason is MONEY.

**Did you personally overcome any obstacles in attending university?**

Yes. I started at the university in 2001 (too late for good life). I lost this year because they closed the university because of student reclamation. I spent my 4 years after that with many problems. My parents are in the North. I had to pay for my studies myself, and that made me be always angry with everybody without reason. I had to attend lectures, and to do some jobs to make my life possible. I worked very had (less than 6 hours to sleep each day during the two last years). Notice that many students leave studies because of these difficulties.
University education quality

Do you feel your university prepared you adequately for graduate school?
Yes, I can say that the studies are very good. It is difficult but when you succeed you have much knowledge. When we are doing many things, and so it is a good preparation.

What do you think you learned well at university?
Mathematics and Physics

What do you wish you’d learned better?
Mathematics

In general, describe some positive features of your university
Good teaching

Describe some negative features
Few lecturers, problem of computing (few machines).

Do a significant fraction of your university’s students drop out without graduating? If so, what are the factors that cause people to drop out?
60% of students drop out without graduation. The reasons are money and difficult conditions of studies. Very difficult exams to reduce the number of students before third year.

Post-university

What did you do after university & before [———]? for how long?
I taught Mathematics in private school for one year (I graduated in 2005)

Was this your ideal career choice, and if not, what would you have preferred to do, and what were the obstacles to getting your desired employment or training?
No, it was not my career choice. I wanted to continue my studies in order to get a PhD and help my university and my country. Since they refused to support me, I decided to find some money myself and teaching was the only activity I had to do.

Did many of your friends at university go on to graduate school or professional degrees, or would that be a very unusual choice?
Some did, but I can’t say more about that because most of my friends stopped studies and found small jobs because it was not easy for them.
Benefit and Future Plans

Please describe what you gained from attending [———]
I learn many new things in computing. I come to know new fields as yours (Climate modeling).

Has attending [———] changed your goals and career opportunities?
No. I hope to have an opportunity to do a Master and a PhD after [———], especially in Statistics.

What could [———] do better?
I think [———] could take a number of students they can support after [———] for Master’s. Because if I go back at home after [———], I am not seen as different from the student I graduated with in Lome.

What will (did) you do immediately after [———]?
I hope to do a Master’s in Mathematical Statistics

What do you expect to be doing in 10 years?
I expect to teach in my university and work as a statistician in some companies in my country.

If you are not planning to go back to your home country, what would have to change to make you want to go back?
I want to go back but I wish to see salaries changed and studies be accorded importance.

Policy

If you were appointed the head of the education department in your country, what changes would you argue for?
Education for all and in good conditions. Support students for postgraduate studies and use them just after in the university.

Could international donors help make those changes happen? How?
Yes. For example giving scholarships, helping many companies.

If you were invited to UNESCO to make a presentation about how the U.N. should help African higher education, what would you ask for? (Please be somewhat realistic here!)
Build classes, give books for libraries, help directors to understand the important things more than their pockets. They can also provide conditional scholarships if possible. I say conditional because student must work for their countries after their studies.
How representative are you?

Did your mother & father attend university? Your siblings?
My father didn’t. He did an Institute of Veterinary. My mother also didn’t.

When you were a child, did you (and your parents) assume that you would attend university? and if not, what made you decide to go?
Yes, we assumed that I would attain the university.

Did most of your secondary school classmates go on to university?
No. It is very difficult to get the secondary school leaving certificate for university (at most 10% get it), and sometimes you spend more than 3 years in the last class just for this certificate.

Were you one of the top students at your university? What fraction of your classmates at university could cope with a program at the level of [———]?
Yes, I did my best because I accept to suffer. I was one of the best students of my university. All student who graduate can cope with the program at the level of [———].

Anecdotes

Please tell me a story (or stories) about your university that is especially revealing. Choose whatever you want, and write as much as you want. For example, some ideas from my own university experience include a professor who was especially meaningful or helpful, a frustrating experience trying to register for classes, a friend who had to leave school, and an experience doing research with a professor.

I don’t have much to say. Most of my Professors liked me because of my work. They accept to help me every time I need help. But they are not happy when I am not in class because of some problems, even they can’t assist me with money.