

Evidence for those left farthest behind

unicef 
for every child

Broadening our understanding of whose knowledge counts as a force for social justice

KEYNOTE | SEMANA DA AVALIAÇÃO 2026

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Equity: Why the time of action is now

The **moral imperative** to act against inequities globally has never been stronger. Individuals and communities left behind are suffering increasing deprivations.

Children and adolescents, historically among the most neglected, are affected across their full rights, including health, protection, nutrition, and education.

This continual aggravation of deprivations will not resolve itself. It travels through communities over time until the system can no longer absorb it and breaks down.

1 billion



children live in countries at **extremely high risk from climate impacts** like droughts and floods; the burden falls heaviest on communities already struggling with poverty

412 million



children wake up in **extreme monetary poverty** (less than \$3 per day) and are more than twice as likely as adults to live in extreme monetary poverty


272 million



children **out of school** worldwide, with progress stalling, and in some regions reversing; funding cuts could push 6 million more children out of school

Behind every deprived child, multiple and often ignored violations

These are not only devastating figures: deprivations affect population groups differently based on specific vulnerabilities and intersecting characteristics such as income, territory, race, gender, and functional or psychosocial difficulties.

272 million 

children **out of school** worldwide, with progress stalling, and in some regions reversing; funding cuts could push 6 million more children out of school

36%

of students are out of school in the poorest countries globally compared to **3%** in the richest countries

1 in 3

children living in conflict/fragile countries were out of school in 2024, which is **3x** times the rate of children globally

49%

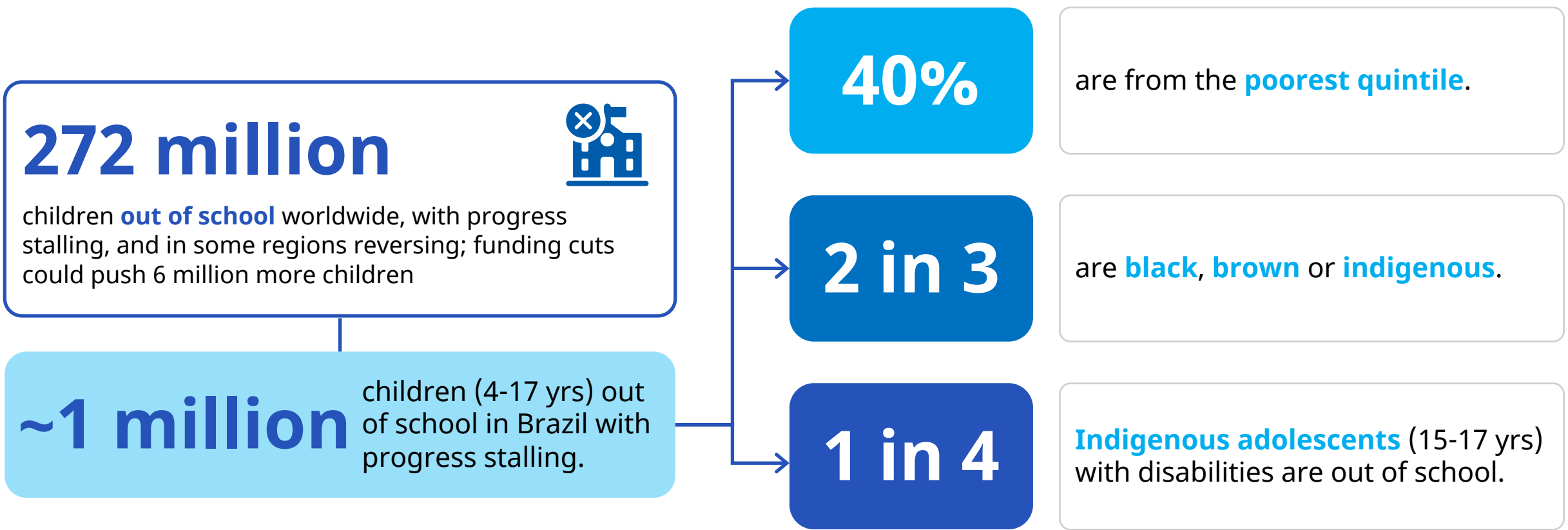
more likely for **children with disabilities** to have never attended school compared to their peers without disabilities

~1 in 3

adolescent girls from the poorest households around the world have never set foot in a classroom

Behind every deprived child, multiple and often ignored violations **Brazil**

Such intersecting characteristics that affect children's opportunities are shaping disparities in Brazil not only by income, but also by the intersection of race, territory, disability, gender, and access to services.



Where evaluation fits

There is hope on where evaluators can help address existing deprivations.

Embedding an equity lens has been pivotal for UNICEF in the effort to move the needle for children being left behind.



Our story continues to evolve ...

BEFORE THE 1970s

EXCLUDED

"A subject to be measured."

Evaluation as neutral, technocratic measurement accountable to funders and decision-makers. Those most affected are counted and observed but never consulted.

1970s - EARLY 1990s

CONSULTED

"A source of data."

Evaluation answers more to the public and stakeholders. But voices largely enter as data, while experts still set the questions and own the findings. Token inclusion, without real engagement.

LATE 1990s - 2000s

INVITED IN

"A participant."

An explicit equity turn is made; affected groups participate in and shape evaluations; culture and context are treated as central, and evaluators take on a moral obligation to challenge injustice.

2010s - TODAY

AT THE CENTRE

"A partner and decision-maker."

Those most affected help set the questions, define what success means, and own the findings. Objectivity, rigor and validity are themselves contested and made plural.

AND NOW?

AND NEXT?

"An owner?"

Accountable to whom?
Designed by whom?
Owned by whom?
Every evaluation still answers these questions, by design or by default.

The next stance is unwritten, and it is being decided in rooms like this one.

The equity lens is not an add-on box to tick; it must permeate our mindset and our practice

Equity-centred evaluations celebrate those we serve as active agents in the evaluation process

Their knowledge is recognized as equally *valid* and *valuable* as other forms of knowledge.

1 Make the invisible visible

Who is missing from the picture, and why?

- Reach the most vulnerable, not just the most accessible.
- Measure what matters, not only what is easy to count.

→ the affected become **VISIBLE**

2 Shift what knowledge counts

Whose knowledge is treated as evidence?

- Weigh plural knowledge and methods. Lived experience as evidence.
- Make the evaluator's own subjective experience explicit.

→ and are recognized as **KNOWERS**

3 Carry voice into the room

Whose decisions does the evaluation change?

- Participatory by design, transformative by intent.
- Findings made actionable for those most affected.

→ and act as **DECISION-MAKERS**

Power analysis: who decides, who benefits, who is missing, and what keeps it that way.

UNICEF experiences

We will focus on three recent UNICEF equity-centred evaluations.



Case 1: Community Mobilization and Adolescent Participation



Case 2: Early Childhood Transfer



Case 3: End Child Marriage

Initiative >	Case 1: Community Mobilization and Adolescent Participation	Case 2: Early Childhood Transfer	Case 3: End Child Marriage
Geographic level >	Sub-national	National	Global (multi-country)
Sector >	Emergency response	Social policy	Child protection
Country >	Brazil	Peru	Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Yemen & Zambia

Case 1. Evaluation of Community Mobilization and Adolescent Participation in Emergencies (Brazil)

A humanitarian evaluation that treated displaced adolescents as evaluators.

1 Make the invisible visible

WHO IT REACHED

Adolescents, Indigenous communities, refugees and migrants affected by the Venezuelan displacement crisis in Roraima; groups that standard humanitarian assessments routinely overlook.

WHAT IT MADE VISIBLE

Their real priorities and lived realities were surfaced as evidence, not left as background to a caseload count.

2 Shift what knowledge counts

WHAT COUNTED AS EVIDENCE

Lived experience, community listening and participatory evidence were weighed alongside technical data.

WHOSE KNOWLEDGE SET THE STANDARD

Adolescents acted as community mobilizers, data collectors and communicators; authors of the evidence, not only its subjects.

3 Carry voice into the room

HOW IT WAS OWNED

Findings put sustainability and local ownership at the center of the conversation.

WHAT IT CHANGED

They shaped how adolescent participation and accountability mechanisms are built into future humanitarian and public-policy responses.

Case 2. Evaluation of the early childhood cash transfer of the JUNTOS programme (Peru)

A rigorous impact evaluation that judged success by who it reached, not by the average.

1 Make the invisible visible

WHO IT REACHED

The poorest families of JUNTOS programme – pregnant women and children under one – in rural and Amazonian districts where malnutrition is highest and health services hardest to reach.

WHAT IT MADE VISIBLE

Results were disaggregated by sex, mother's education, language and geography, revealing not just whether the transfer worked, but for whom.

2 Shift what knowledge counts

WHAT COUNTED AS EVIDENCE

A counterfactual impact design drawn from five government datasets; rigor was paired with cost-effectiveness analysis.

WHOSE KNOWLEDGE SET THE STANDARD

Success was judged by reach to the poorest, not the average. The results helped identify how to better support less-educated and Indigenous-language mothers.

3 Carry voice into the room

HOW IT WAS OWNED

Designed and conducted jointly by UNICEF and Peru's Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion, with a technical reference group that carried findings into national policy.

WHAT IT CHANGED

Evidence informed a budget increase for JUNTOS, an anaemia-support plan across 669 highly vulnerable districts, and a pilot to better reach less-educated households.

Case 3. Evaluation of Global Programme to End Child Marriage (Multi-Country)

A global evaluation that let the realities of the most at-risk girls redraw the programme.

1 Make the invisible visible

WHO IT REACHED

The evaluation asked whether the programme reached the girls most at risk, including social minorities, girls with disabilities, and pregnant or married girls.

WHAT IT MADE VISIBLE

It named the sub-national data gaps that keep those girls out of view.

2 Shift what knowledge counts

WHAT COUNTED AS EVIDENCE

Country case studies, text analytics and adolescent girls' own perspectives were treated as evidence.

WHOSE KNOWLEDGE SET THE STANDARD

Girls' realities revealed the norm change that the standard results framework was under-measuring.

3 Carry voice into the room

HOW IT WAS OWNED

The evaluation was built for learning at every level: country, regional and global.

WHAT IT CHANGED

Findings shaped the next phase's design, pushing contextualized theories of change so under-served girls' realities steer programming.

Plurality of knowledges and evaluation cultures

Just as people carry different knowledges, institutions carry different evidence cultures.

At the federal, state, municipal and civic level – each carries distinct cultural norms and practices.

It can serve as a source **strength** and resilience.



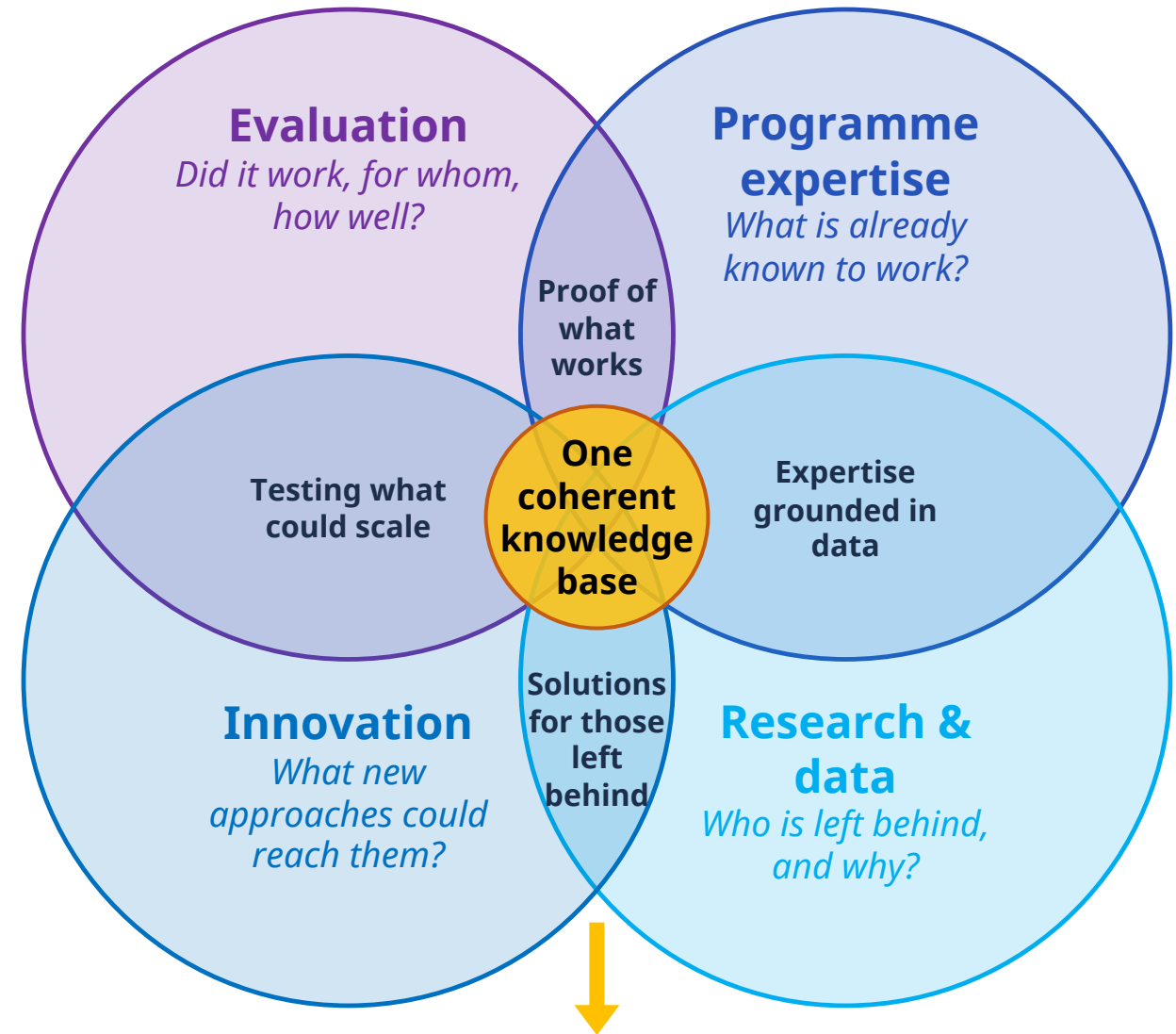
Towards knowledge ecosystems with a shared equity purpose

Complex, multi-layers organizations work across different sectors to produce and use different types of knowledge and evidence.

Beyond each specific mandate, there is a common knowledge base which all actors within the system rely on.

Equity-centred evaluations are part of this shared foundation: they turn plurality into purpose and purpose into change.

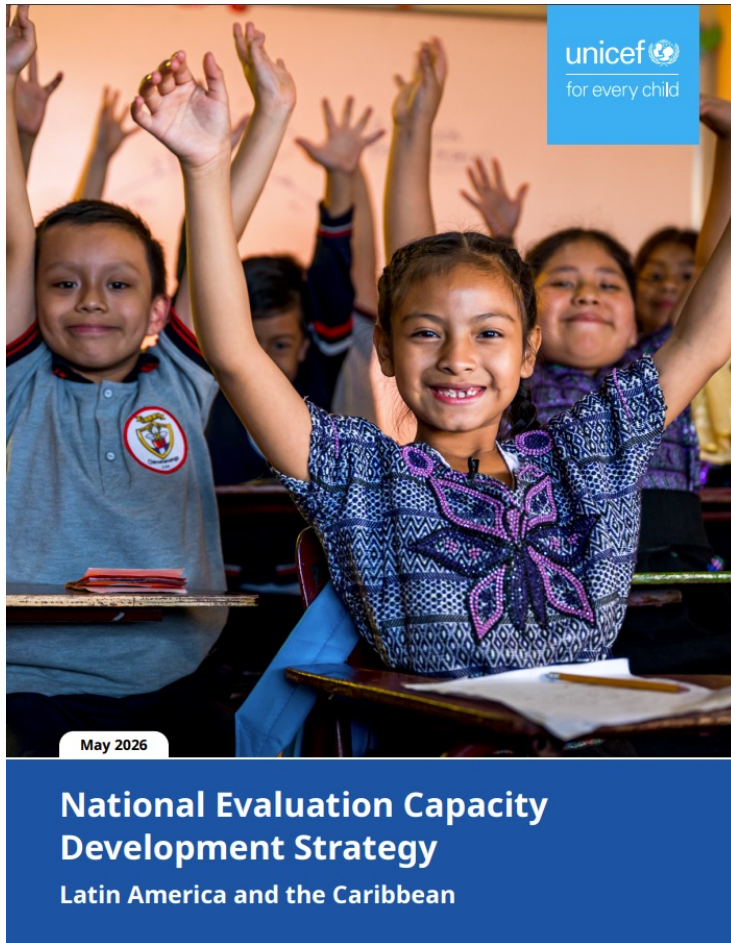
One coherent knowledge ecosystem responsive to equity dimensions



Guidance for policymakers & implementers
What to do, for whom, and how, backed by evidence

National Evaluation Capacity Development Strategy

Latin America and Caribbean



Scan the QR code to learn more



The force of our collective action

Brazil's vibrant evaluation community – across government, academia, civil society and the United Nations – lives and breathes pluralism.

It is poised to lead equity-centred evaluation for the Global South and beyond.

To ensure that this pluralism addresses existing, and even worsening, deprivations in a unified and sustainable manner, we must work together. With common purpose and hope.

“Não há mudança sem sonho, como não há sonho sem esperança.”

- Paulo Freire

Obrigado!