



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

MAKING EVALUATION WORK FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SDG 4 TARGET 5: EQUALITY AND INCLUSION IN EDUCATION

IOS Evaluation Office
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Equity is key to the Global Goals

Equity and gender equality in education sit at the heart of the international development agenda – particularly under SDG 4 Target 5:

By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

International organizations recognize that now, as never before, relevant and contextualized evidence, driven in part by robust evaluation data, is needed to track and strengthen progress on educational equity.

Scope and Approach

Purpose

- Commissioned by the evaluation offices of UNESCO and five others.
- Explore evidence gaps and summarize 'what works for advancing gender equality and equity for vulnerable groups.
- Consider opportunities for greater collaboration and learning to support country progress on SDG 4.5.

Methods

- Search for publicly available, independent, education program evaluations from 17 organizations.
- Systematic review and analysis.
- Explore responses to the synthesis findings with national stakeholders in five countries.

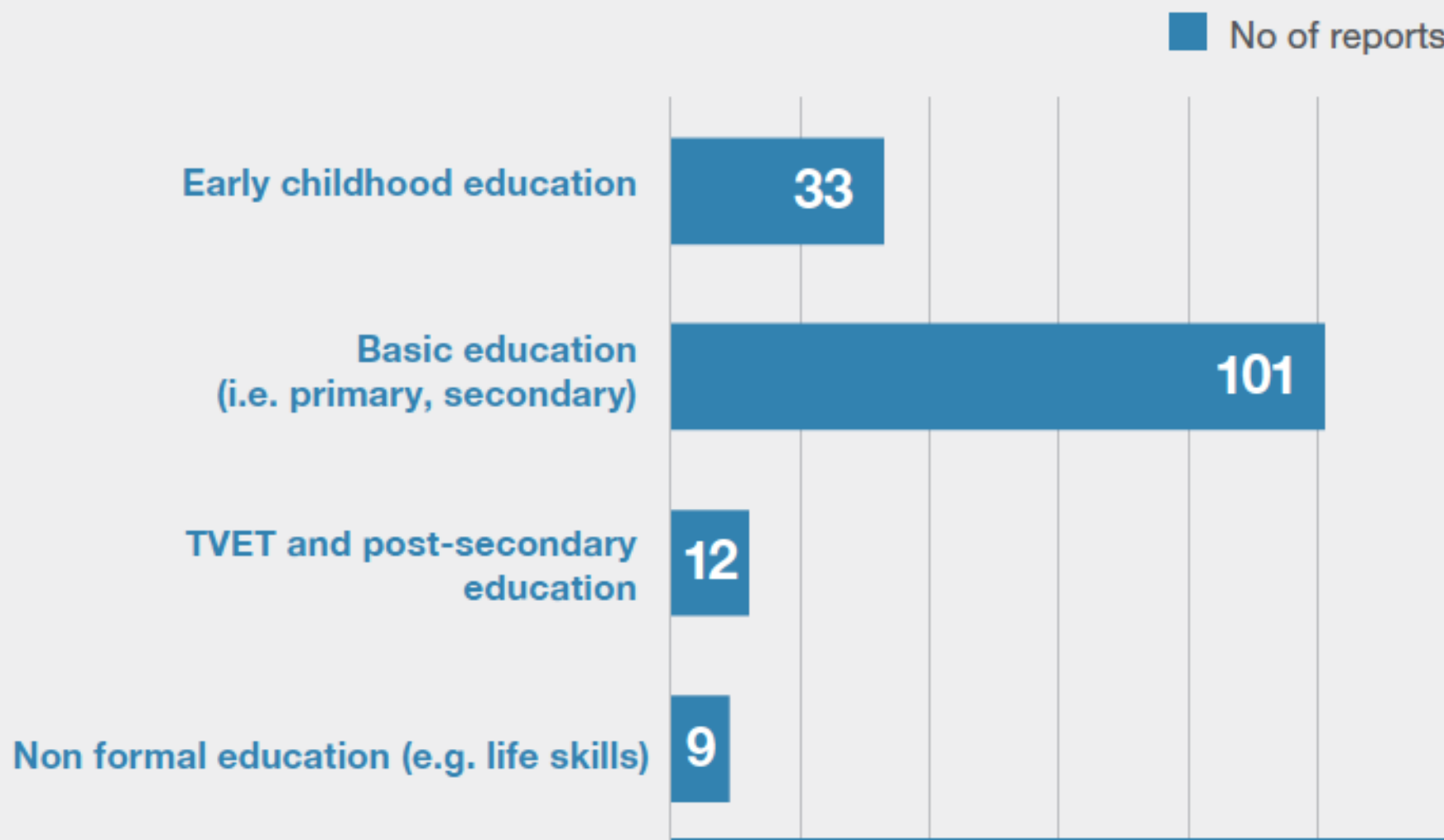
Mapping the Evaluations

- 147 of 156 education evaluations found in our search have a focus on equity issues. (30-40 per year).
- The main equity outcomes evaluated = access and participation.
- Unique data set:
 - Largest number evaluations are of programmes in sub-Saharan Africa.
 - Many set in contexts affected by conflict and crisis.
 - Strong qualitative data about education programs.

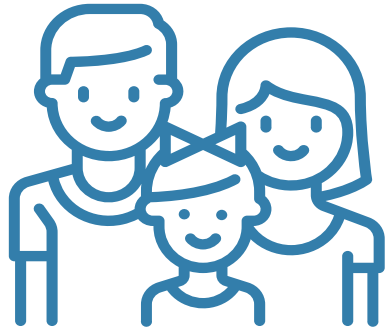
Geographical Spread of the Evaluations

- 73 low and middle income countries
- 53% situated in Sub-Saharan Africa
- 10-12% in other regions
- None in Pacific region and very few in Europe and North America.

Levels of Education Evaluated in Program Evaluations



Evaluations by Level of Intervention



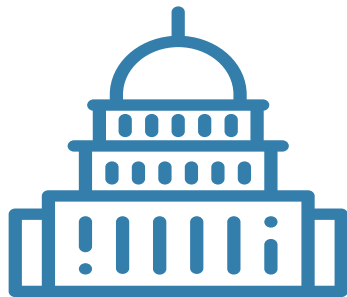
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Children, Families
and Communities



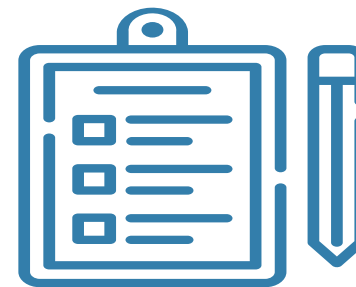
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Teachers teaching,
schools



44

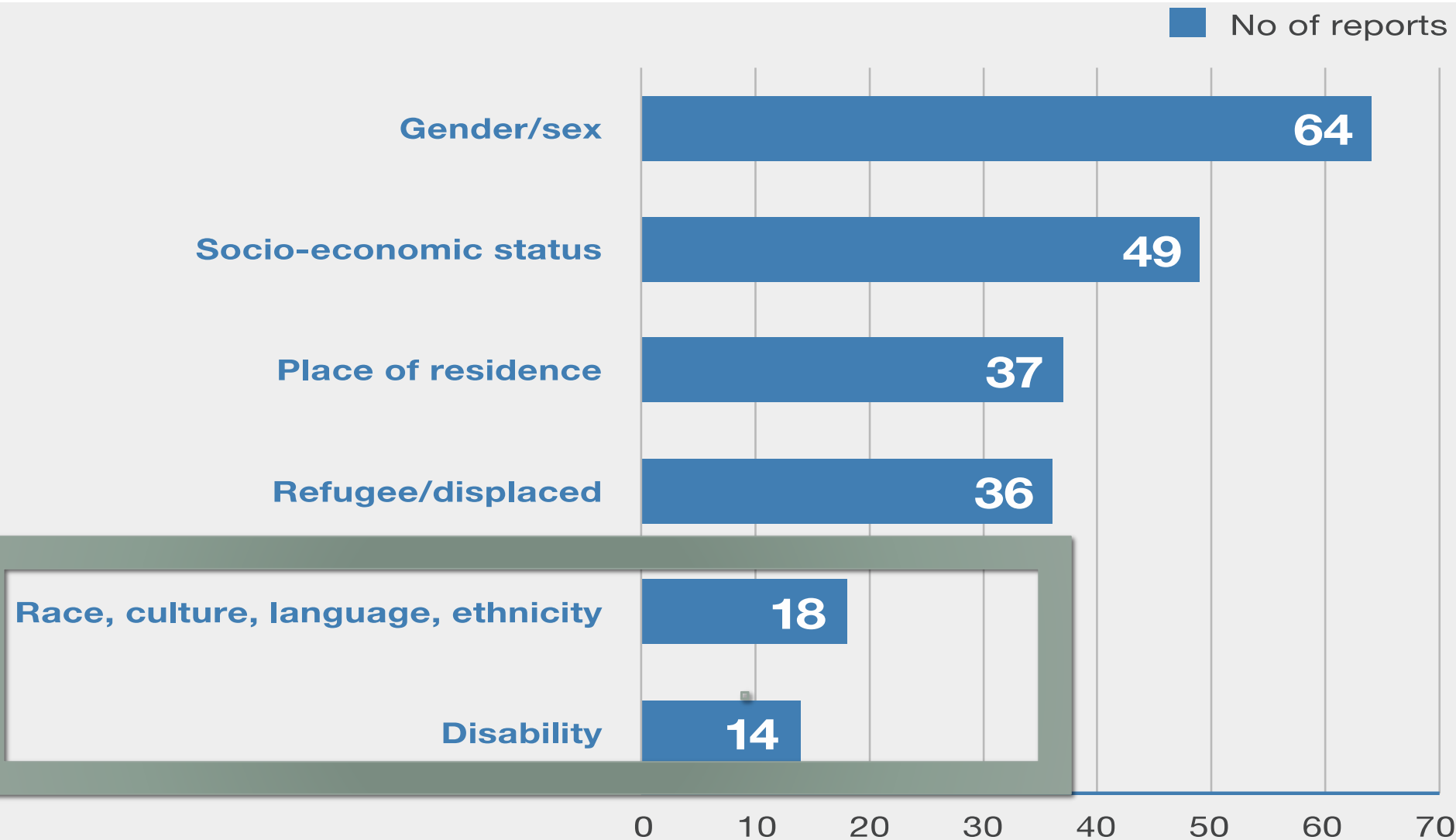
Systems/sector



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Global, thematic

What target populations are expected beneficiaries in the activities being evaluated?



What questions are considered in the evaluations?

1. Aimed at understanding the **effectiveness of an organization** in delivering an intervention or programme of interventions.
2. Typically sought to answer questions related to all five OECD-DAC criteria.
3. Coverage of **efficiency** and **impact** are notably weak.
4. Little information on cost-effectiveness.

What methodologies are used in the evaluations

1. Pragmatic mixed methods approach.
2. The availability, quality and comparability of data on equity is a noted limitation.
3. Inconsistent use of “theory based evaluation” and comparative methods.
4. Relatively few evaluations use rigorous quantitative methods.

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Evaluation with Quantitative Counterfactuals

Randomized control trial	3
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Quasi-experimental design	17
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Natural Experiment	8
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Children and Households

Strongest evidence:

- **Conditional cash transfers** improved school attendance among children in poor households in several contexts, as did unconditional transfers in others. They can serve to boost enrolment for girls in schools where gender parity has not been achieved and can reduce children's work and household chores.
- **School feeding programs** have strong positive effects on primary school enrolments, particularly in areas of high food insecurity. Unintended results identified include overcrowded classrooms, sometimes aggravated by the conversion of classrooms into food storage and eating places and additional demands on teaching staff and school management, which may detract from their core educational roles.
- More evidence needed on community information campaigns and non-formal and alternative skills programs.

Teachers and Schools

- Very limited evidence on success of interventions that target learning outcomes – teacher development, pedagogy.
- Some evidence to suggest that improved teacher training increases school completion rates, especially for girls, in some contexts.
- Programmes for building new schools reduced school drop-out and improved perceptions of the quality of school, and the provision of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities increased school enrolment in arid, pastoralist areas.
- ICT and online learning, reported mixed results.
- Interventions to support the education of children during emergencies demonstrate rapid increases in enrolments

Systems/sector level reform

- Evidence mainly focused on implementation challenges of complex reforms.
- Suggestive evidence questioning effectiveness of results-based aid; and highlights negative equity impacts of some forms of school based management and decentralization.
- Capacity building and in particular capacity to develop and use good quality data an ongoing challenge.
- There is enormous opportunity to coordinate better across organizations to ensure both cross-agency and country-level learning and exchange about sector wide reform.

Evidence from the Evaluations

Strongest Evidence

- Strongest impact = cash transfers and school feeding.
- Implementation challenges of complex reforms.
- Capacity development.
- Mixed outcomes of new forms of development financing (e.g., results-based aid).
- Equity challenges in complex decentralisation reforms.

More Evidence Needed

- What works to improve equitable learning outcomes?
- How to improve outcomes for those with disabilities, or disadvantaged by ethnicity, language?
- Which non-formal, second chance learning, and non-formal TVET initiatives should be scaled up?
- How do the programmatic approaches of different agencies compare?

Lessons from Evaluations of School Feeding Programmes

- 20 evaluations in 16 countries in the data set.
- Among the most narrow of the interventions studied (though different approaches highlighted.)
- Strongest evidence is on impact on participation in school.
- Sustainability and impact on quality are concerns.

Two ways in which WFP evaluations can be improved:

- Measure impact on learning
- Use standard cost benefit analysis to allow for comparison to other possible interventions.

Country Responses

1. Countries want to be more involved in the planning and design of evaluations – including in the identification of questions, topics and designs.
2. They highlighted joint evaluations among donor organizations as the gold standard, especially for complex sector level programs.
3. Creation of plain language summaries and evidence synthesis and better dissemination strategies needed.
4. Need to integrate program evaluation evidence with other forms of evidence.

Recommendations

1. Address evidence gaps.
2. Contribute to stronger and more consistently available data.
3. Strengthen evaluation methodologies
4. Synthesize evidence and collaborate to make it more useful to national stakeholders.