Parental engagement in schools makes parents feel part of their school and improves relationships between schools and the community, increases student achievement, reduces absenteeism and restores parents’ confidence in their children’s education. Importantly it is about change of attitude on school ownership and transparency which bring impacts on students learning and academic performance of the school.

Before the establishment of Parent Teacher Partnerships (PTPs), EQUIP-Tanzania baseline survey found that there was low involvement and engagement of parents and other community members on matters concerning school development, learning and child welfare. This resulted in parents not contributing to school development as parents and community members had little opportunity to participate in school and classroom matters. The study also found that participation of parents were mostly limited to attending school meetings as requested by the school management. It was for these reasons, and the importance of communities in driving school improvement, that EQUIP-Tanzania focused significant efforts on the establishment of PTPs.

EQUIP-Tanzania is a £90m, UKAID-funded education programme supporting the Government of Tanzania to improve the quality of learning outcomes in primary schools, particularly for girls. It focuses on system-led, cost-effective improvements that deliver change in ways that can be replicated at national scale. EQUIP-Tanzania began implementation in 2014 with five regions and has since expanded to reach the nine regions of Dodoma, Katavi, Kigoma, Lindi, Mara, Shinyanga, Simiyu, Singida, and Tabora, now covering over 5,196 primary schools and over three million pupils.

72% of PTPs have received training, provided by EQUIP-Tanzania.
Implementation

PTPs are designed as class-based groups of parents and teachers established to bring parents closer to the classroom. PTPs are intended to consist of one father and one mother from each of the seven standards, and seven teachers. The focus is on classrooms, with parents actively supporting classroom activities and helping to address problems such as pupil absence and dropout, and teacher absence. PTPs are also meant to come up with their own priorities based on specific class needs.

The purpose in supporting the establishment of PTPs is to increase parents’ representation and bring them closer to the classroom in order to develop stronger home-school partnerships. The responsibilities, roles, and activities of PTPs are meant to be decided at school level based on each school’s needs and priorities.

Starting in 2015, EQUIP-Tanzania worked with PO-RALG and MOEST on the best way to introduce the Parent-Teacher-Partnership (PTP) in its seven regions of Dodoma, Lindi, Kigoma, Simiyu, Shinyanga, Mara and Tabora. Guidance on the PTP selection criteria was developed in line with PTP grant guide in 2015. The guidance stipulated that the number of PTP members should be 21, the process of applying for the PTP grant and what it should be spent on. The guides were distributed to all schools in seven regions. PTPs were further extended to two other regions of Singida and Katavi, as EQUIP-Tanzania expanded, in 2018.

All schools in EQUIP-Tanzania regions received a PTP grant in 2016 to support PTPs to carry out activities based on their priorities for school improvement activities and another grant between end of 2017 to early 2018 to address girls’ education including retention, welfare and successful transition to secondary schools. The provision of first PTP grant was for extracurricular activities and general school improvement, and the second PTP grant was for girls’ education activities. Both grants were Tanzania shillings (TZS) 550,000 per school. To spend the grants, the PTP had to develop a work plan and submit it to the School Committee (SC) for approval if it was in line with the Whole School Development Plan. Head Teachers had to send a monthly report on activities completed and expenditure to the WEO, who then reported this to District office.

PTP formation training was linked to School Committee training, with two days spent on SC training and one day for PTP formation training. EQUIP-Tanzania and PO-RALG trained Training of Trainers (TOT) at regional level, the participants being District Community Development Officers (DCDOs), District Education Officers (DEOs) and Quality Assurance Officers (QAs). These trainers were responsible for training Head Teachers and WEOs at ward level. HTs and WEOs conducted orientation training to School Committee members by taking them through PTP formation guide with clarifications on how PTPs are formed. Training content included how to formulate PTP, how to use the PTP grant, how to apply, and how to record spending and develop reports. All schools already had their own bank accounts to receive capitation grants so the PTP grant went to the same account.

Within the year, 96% schools in the initial seven regions formulated a PTP by following all the required procedures and reported to PO-RALG through WEOs and DEOs. Soon after the formation of PTPs, all schools in seven regions received their first PTP grant by January 2016. The grant was given to support school development and extracurricular activities due to challenges observed in schools - most of resources required repair and renovations – and the existing capitation grant was not enough to cover all the costs.

The second PTP grant aimed to enable schools to provide targeted support for girls. Experience gained from the first PTP grant helped to establish and design of specific activities that targeted girls. Given the transition rates for girls from primary to secondary levels are lower as compared to boys, the grant aimed to address girl’s education challenges, ensuring improved access through enrolment, retention and effective learning so that they can successfully finish primary school and transition to secondary school. The grants manual clarified the rationale for supporting girl’s education and challenges facing girls. WEO and HT had to orient schools at zero cost, after the completion of orientation training, WEO sent a report to DEO.

96% of schools

Within the year, 96% schools in the programme regions formulated a PTP.
Impact and Outcome

At the time of EQUIP-Tanzania’s Endline report\(^3\), published in 2019, 99% of schools have a PTP, similar to the situation at Midline\(^4\). This is a significant and large change from Baseline, when only 14% of schools had a parent–teacher group, defined as a group that includes parents and teachers and that meets regularly.

The provision of training for PTPs has increased significantly since Midline. At Endline, 72% of PTPs have received training, provided by EQUIP-T, WEOs, head teachers, or other official government agencies, on their responsibilities and roles, a significant and large increase from 39% at Midline.

Through PTP interventions, parents have contributed significantly to schools’ performance through different activities, including provision of meals in schools, the construction of teachers’ houses, classrooms and pit latrines, controlling absenteeism and drop outs. Others include provision of sanitary pads to girls in upper primary classes and participating in educating pupils on health and cleanliness issues.

The proportion of schools where the PTP took some action to improve education in the last school year has increased significantly since Midline. At Midline, the PTP took action to improve education in 47% of schools, compared to 68% at Endline, based on head teacher reporting. At the same time, only 10% of parents of Standard 3 pupils report that the PTP took some action to improve education. This is likely related to the finding that at Endline only 23% of parents of Standard 3 pupils are aware that a PTP exists at their child’s school. Among parents who are not members of a PTP, only 9% have attended an information meeting about the PTP at their school, which to some extent may help explain their low awareness levels.

By far the most common action taken by PTPs to improve education in the last school year was to improve pupil attendance and punctuality. At Endline, 46% of PTPs took such action, compared to 31% at Midline. Among PTPs, 10% took action to improve school infrastructure; 9% took action to provide school feeding (which increased significantly from about 1% at Midline); 8% took action to improve teacher attendance and punctuality; and 6% took action related to Income Generating Activities (IGAs). 2% or less of PTPs took actions to provide extra-curricular activities, extra tuition classes, extra TLMs; for community members to assist in the classroom; fundraise; or improve pupil welfare. These findings indicate that raising pupil attendance is considered a top priority by PTPs. It is possible that the significant increase in PTPs providing school feeding is related to this, as it is associated with higher pupil attendance (Drake et al., 2016).

Activities implemented using PTP grants

Using the Kobo system (2018), a total of 2,296 schools reported back on the type of activities that took place using the PTP grant 1. In most schools where the PTP was active, the grant was spent according to the guidelines and contributed to children enjoying learning.

Use of the first PTP grant by number and percentage of schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Furniture purchase</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stationaries</td>
<td>1,411</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning materials</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School repairs</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of schools implementing inclusive education activities with the second PTP grant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls education</td>
<td>1,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special needs</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child protection</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Mwanulu Primary School, Shinyanga, parental involvement in the PTP has resulted in a coordinated effort with teachers encouraging better students behaviour in the classroom that facilitates better teaching and learning and ensuring pupils improve their academic performance.

“Parents are more active, they attend meetings and we plan together, pupils’ attendance has increased from 68% last year to 85% this year and performance from 71% to 100%.”

PTP chairperson of Mwanulu Primary School, Shinyanga.

“The establishment of the PTP has increased the effort to follow up on those children who do not attend school frequently. Before, School Committees were not much involved in this, we now have reduced truancy which was also a cause for poor performance of the school.”

Assistant Head Teacher of Uhelela Primary School

A number of schools have been able to provide emergency sanitary towels for girls who were having a great challenge during their menstrual periods at school. In Lindi, some schools have special private rooms for girls. All these activities are being led by communities through PTP.

Further materials for PTPs addressing inclusion were printed and distributed to seven regions. EQUIP-T worked with Tusome Pamoja to develop this self-reading material for PTPs with the aim of addressing inclusion activities at schools. The content included equity and equality, how to overcome our challenges, the materials were distributed to seven regions in May 2019. In Katavi and Singida one-time grants have been provided to develop the materials.

2,296 responses from schools were able to report back on type of activities that took place using the PTP grant.
Lessons from Kigoma Region

There have been many positive reports on the involvement of the parents and the community in education matters through the PTP. In Kakonko District, Kigoma region, all 59 schools provide food and it is the parents who contribute to the schools feeding programme by giving five bags of maize per parent. This has contributed to improved school attendance and academic performance. It has also helped in removing the fear of food poisoning acts that were going on in many parts of Kakonko District where a number of seven teachers and two WEOs were poisoned and died through food poisoning.

PTP members strategised through meetings and came up with a message saying “within our society, there is a bad habit of jealousy and competing against each other, let us change and remove the hatred by starting afresh and saying no more poisoned fear in Kakonko District”. Leopard Michael who is a PTP member of Kanyamanza Primary School in Kakonko added “I now feel that I am part of school, I visit the school without any fear and I am able to talk to teachers.”

Lessons learned from PTPs

Guidance was given on how to spend the grant. 89% of schools spent their grant following the guidelines. By the end of 2016, some schools were yet to spend the first PTP grant due to appointment of new Head Teachers and the inactivity of some PTP members. To address this, DEOs supported them by resending some guidance manuals for orientation and, by early 2017, it was reported that all schools had spent their grant.

Community participation in school activities has been strengthened through the presence of the PTP in schools. Almost all activities conducted at school level are now being championed by the community themselves with support from teachers and pupils, as evidenced by the PTP survey 2018.

There is still some confusion among head teachers about the role of PTPs, compared to the role of School Committees (SCs). At Midline, the qualitative research found that head teachers were unclear about the difference between SCs and PTPs, and that they saw their roles as overlapping substantially. This remains an issue at Endline, with 18% of head teachers seeing the roles of PTP and SC as similar and 65% seeing them as only somewhat different, while 16% think the two roles are very different. Further training through district education meetings has been given to try to reduce this issue.
Sustainability and ownership is an important consideration in moving PTPs forward. PO-RALG is preparing implementation guidelines to scale up PTPs in all primary and secondary schools, although no directives from PO-RALG have yet been given to schools.

Providing better information and methods for communities to hold schools accountable for the level of community participation has increased and communities are now more involved in their local schools’ planning. The evaluation evidence so far shows that PTPs and noticeboards have been relatively successfully rolled out but are not widely known about by parents. PTPs still need to do more to bridge the gap between schools and the community. Most parents who are not on the PTP do not know about them. PTPs, however, serve other vitally important functions in terms of support in the classroom and improvement in learning environments.

Overall, the PTP initiative has had significant success. Almost all schools have a PTP, and most have had training. The activities that did take place were most commonly to improve pupil attendance and punctuality.

Parents have been inspired to monitor their children’s learning and performance at school, through parent sessions with teachers where parents can communicate any issues or raise queries with teachers. Parents’ sensitisation is increased through meetings with PTP members to insist on their responsibilities, especially the pastoralist communities who migrate with their children season by season.

PTP members have successfully engaged with parents to help them understand the importance of education. Parents are more active, attending meetings and collaborating with the schools on planning and the implementation of school activities. In most of the schools, PTPs have worked with the community to educate and mobilise them on the importance of providing meals to pupils. In many schools, pupils are now having porridge at school.

Furthermore, PTP members in most schools across the nine EQUIP-Tanzania regions have collaborated with the school leadership to improve school infrastructure including classrooms, toilets and the provision of school desks.

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1 EQUIP-Tanzania Baseline study, OPM, 2014
2 PO-RALG, BEMIS Report 2017

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