



Transforming lives through education

May 2014



Parents and Schools Working Together

Encouraging parental involvement in children's education is an important strand in the work of the Kusuma Trust (The Trust). Parental involvement in what? For what purpose? Parents' involvement in education includes participating in the governance and management of the school and supporting children's learning in school and at home.

Findings from international literature suggest that whilst positive parental attitudes and practices in the home have a significant and beneficial impact on children's attainment, parental involvement in the organisation of the school is not necessarily predictive of improved educational attainment among pupils. An evaluation of a programme that encouraged parents to get involved in school and home-based educational activities in middle schools in a deprived district in France contributed to an improvement in pupil behaviour and a drop in truancy rates, but not an increase in attainment¹.

A study of working class children (aged 3 to 11 years) from minority and majority ethnic backgrounds² found that students who succeeded against the odds came from families that had high aspirations for their children and who engaged in 'concerted cultivation' (e.g. parental encouragement and reward, support with homework, and the provision of supplementary tuition).

This finding is echoed in a recent evaluation of The Trust's Fellowship programme for high-achieving pupils from poor backgrounds³, which found that parents had high expectations for their children and viewed education as a positive investment in their child's (and the family's) future. Parents reported that their involvement was also influenced by their child's efforts and perseverance in the face of difficulties.

In relation to parental involvement in the organisation of schools, a survey of parents, children and teachers in 280 villages in Uttar Pradesh found that most villages had a Village Education Committee (VEC) but that most parents were not aware that it existed or what were the responsibilities of VECs⁴. Although evidence of the impact of parental involvement in the organisation of schools is mixed, researchers noted that parents and villagers wanted to improve local schools and that the interventions increased opportunities for collective advocacy efforts. This conclusion finds resonance with the work of The Trust in India. In one village, parents visited teachers who were routinely absent in order to hold them to account and to reduce teacher absenteeism. Other examples overleaf highlight the importance parents attach to their children's education.



A Kusuma Fellow studies at home in Sambalpur, Odisha.
Photo: Sam Strickland

**The Kusuma Trust UK
encourages parents to take an
active role in their child's education.**

1. Avisati, F. et al (2014) *Getting Parents Involved: A Field Experiment in Deprived Schools*, *Review of Economic Studies*, 81: 57-83. <http://tinyurl.com/nmvztof>
2. Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2010) *Learning in the home and at school: how working class children 'succeed against the odds'*, *British Educational Research Journal*, 36 (3): 463-482. <http://tinyurl.com/n6gmgjs>
3. Sequeira, S., and Xu Guo (2014) *Kusuma Ratna Fellowship Programme – Impact Evaluation Results*, London: Kusuma Trust
4. Banerjee, A. V., et al (2010) 'Pitfalls of Participatory Programs: Evidence from a Randomized Evaluation in Education in India', *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 2 (1): 1-30. <http://tinyurl.com/q95mngt>

**Our mission is to facilitate and increase access to education and other life opportunities
for children and young people**

Parents and schools working together

Chitraranjan Pradhan, head teacher of Parmanpur High School in Sambalpur, overcomes daily challenges with the help of the School Management and Development Committee (SMDC) and the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). A recent attempt to sink a new tube-well to secure a supply of water for the school was unsuccessful. Padmanabhan Nath, the Sarpanch⁵ of the local village and an active member of the SMDC, decided to take a proposal for accessing drinkable water to the district administration on behalf of the school, which he hopes will be successful. Mr Nath attended the school as a boy and said:

“There are so many more students in the school now that I feel it is my duty to see that school improvements go through as planned.”

Manoranjan Nath, President of the PTA and a member of the SMDC, is a local farmer and wants his son, a student at the school, to become a government employee. Mr Nath believes that a good education is critical to his son’s future. As a parent, he supports the school so that every student has the best chance to be successful.

The SMDC ensures that all financial records and procedures are transparent at the school. Mr Pradhan, a joint signatory on the school account, explains:

“I cannot make any payments for work completed unless the SMDC provide me with a completion certificate. The role of the community, SMDC and PTA is paramount for the school’s future, development and financing.”

The Trust aims to strengthen school governance and management in secondary schools by training head teachers and SMDCs on their roles and responsibilities. The Trust offers support to SMDCs on how to better manage school resources and facilities, improve classroom teaching and learning, develop annual school plans and budgets, and learn new ways to implement school policies and practices.



Members participating in an SMDC meeting at Salebhata High School, Sambalpur.
Photo: Sam Strickland

Local landowner donates land to school

Panchput High School is located in a remote area of Sambalpur. The school was upgraded to a high school in 2008 and subsequently awarded a government grant to construct a new building for secondary classes. The school was unable to start construction as additional land was not allocated for the building. With support from the Kusuma team, SMDC members identified suitable land close to the school. The SMDC met the landowner and discussed their plans for secondary students. As a result, the landowner agreed to donate the land to the school. Construction of the new building is due to commence in September 2014.

Community builds new road

Upgraded Upper Primary School Gopamau is located in a remote area of Hardoi in Uttar Pradesh. Every year, from July to September, flooding makes the school inaccessible. Students and teachers have to brave a muddy and water-logged narrow lane to get to school. With Kusuma’s support, Ms. Bina Nagpal, the school head teacher, discussed the problem with parents and the local community. When the school improvement plan, including a proposal for a new road, was shared with the local community, parents took interest and rallied to build a new road connecting the school to the main road with the help of the Gram Panchayat⁵.



The new road leading to the gates of Upgraded Upper Primary School Gopamau.
Photo: Kusuma Foundation

PTA lends a hand

In the Boys Government Inter College in Hardoi, the science block was deemed too dangerous for teaching and the school has no laboratory facilities. Siyaram Nirmal, head teacher of the school, has been working with the PTA to designate and clear a space to set up a new laboratory. Kusuma will assist the PTA to equip the laboratory with materials and furniture for interactive teaching and learning.

⁵ A Sarpanch is the elected head of a local self-governed institution at village or small town level in India known as a Gram Panchayat.