

# The EquiPar Tool pilot evaluation – report summary

## January 2025

Partnerships are fundamental to global health research, with equity and inclusion being central to their success. The EquiPar Tool was developed to support equitable partnerships at the level of the individual research project, prompting research teams to systematically consider and address partnership issues. EquiPar was piloted over a six-month period with six diverse research projects involving LSHTM and low and middle-income country partners. This brief summarises the findings of the evaluation of this pilot, and the recommendations for next steps.

The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) is committed to fostering research partnerships that prioritize understanding, fairness, context awareness, trust, and mutual knowledge exchange from the outset.

However, historical legacies of colonization, power imbalances, disparities in opportunities and resources, perceived knowledge hierarchies, and cultural norms can all lead to inequitable partnerships, particularly in collaborations involving institutions from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Recognising the need to address these challenges, a group of staff at LSHTM developed the [EquiPar Tool](#), to support equitable partnerships at the level of the individual research project.

Drawing on established guidelines and staff experience in global health research, EquiPar was designed to prompt research

teams to systematically consider and address partnership issues. It covers three themes: (i) People Management and Relationships, (ii) Research Activities and Outputs, and (iii) Contracting and Resource Management.

Under each theme are domains which contain a set of open-ended questions for project teams to reflect upon, together with links to helpful resources.

To assess whether EquiPar would be a useful tool for wider adoption, and to gather insights for its improvement, it was piloted over a six-month period in 2023 with six diverse research projects involving LSHTM and LMIC partners.

### Use of EquiPar

The pilot was evaluated to assess the perceptions and experiences of LSHTM staff and our partners in using EquiPar in their teams.

We explored how and why teams used EquiPar, their views on its

usefulness, changes made to their partnership as a result, challenges encountered, and suggestions for improvement. The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, including an anonymous online survey (n=26 respondents), in-depth interviews (IDIs) (n=22), and four workshops.

### Methods

All participating projects had engaged with EquiPar in some way. A majority of survey respondents had reviewed the Tool, over a third had participated in EquiPar-focused meetings or workshops, and around a quarter had discussed it during regular project meetings. Projects chose different strategies for using EquiPar; for example, three projects developed EquiPar-related surveys for their team members, and two projects used a “Traffic Light Tool” to highlight domains needing attention.

### EquiPar content

Most respondents viewed EquiPar’s content as comprehensive and well-structured. Its flexibility was valued, with the potential to use it across multiple issues, activities, and stages in the project cycle. Many participants found EquiPar user-friendly, though a minority struggled to understand it due to linguistic barriers, or found it complicated and lengthy.

### Perceived usefulness

Overall views on EquiPar’s usefulness are positive. The survey found that 100% of LSHTM



and 80% of partner respondents found it to be 'quite' or 'very useful'. Around half of LSHTM and partner respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it had led to positive changes.

All LSHTM respondents and over two-thirds of partners agreed or strongly agreed that they would use the tool again, and more than two-thirds would recommend it to others.

A key benefit of the tool was in enhancing awareness and encouraging reflection on equity issues. While many team members spoke of already being committed to fostering equity, they appreciated the structured framework EquiPar provided for addressing fairness and equity.

It was said to have empowered several partners to question inequitable practices that may otherwise be normalised, and also helped to highlight some unexpected concerns. For example, in addition to raising Global North-Global South disparities, attention was also drawn to inequities related to gender and professional hierarchies.

A key benefit of EquiPar was said to be in acting as a catalyst for dialogue, facilitating open conversations, and in some cases promoting deeper reflection and critical thinking.

In terms of changes stimulated by EquiPar, some respondents mentioned taking a more process-orientated approach to their partnership, placing greater emphasis on communication, expectations, and opportunities for all team members. Using EquiPar was also said to lead to greater clarity on roles and resources required, contributing to mutual respect and understanding.

In some projects drawing attention to equity issues had prompted additional capacity-strengthening activities, or supported more inclusive authorship practices, and one project had found important links between EquiPar and their

environmental sustainability goals.

However, several respondents noted that it could be challenging to attribute specific changes to EquiPar, which formed just one contribution into broader, ongoing conversations about fair practices and equitable behaviours within their teams.

There was also some evidence that respondents had used EquiPar beyond the research collaborations included in the pilot. Several staff had found it useful in their other research partnerships, or in new funding proposals, and some had used it to support partnerships with non-researchers, such as community members or advisory groups.

### Enablers and challenges

Key enablers for EquiPar use included support from project leads, overall team interest in equity, having an EquiPar Champion within the project, and integrating EquiPar into the project planning process. Conversely, common challenges mentioned were time constraints, and a lack of funding for an EquiPar Champion. Respondents also noted that ingrained gender and professional hierarchies could be a barrier to frank discussion of equity issues. Finally, most participants felt that funder requirements and LSHTM's contractual processes created inequities that could not easily be dealt with at the level of individual projects.

### Conclusion

Overall, the findings indicate that EquiPar could be a useful tool for many partnerships, and warrants further investment, development and dissemination, both within and beyond LSHTM.

### Recommendations:

1. Make minor amendments to the EquiPar Tool content and wording, and enhance its readability and clarity.
2. Commission a designer to develop a user-friendly online version of the tool.
3. Develop enhanced guidance on options for using EquiPar within projects, ranging from a light-touch to an in-depth approach.
4. Review and expand the links to resources, examples and case studies.
5. Encourage use within LSHTM research partnerships, through awareness raising communications, orientation and training sessions, highlighting equitable partnerships issues in the Leo ethics form, and establishing a Community of Practice on Equitable Partnerships.
6. Disseminate information on EquiPar to the broader Global Health community, through publication, and the LSHTM website, newsletters and social media channels.
7. Address outstanding concerns with LSHTM structures and systems that inhibit equitable partnerships.
8. Continue to advocate for change to enhance equitable partnerships in the wider sectoral environment.

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For further details please see the full report of the EquiPar Tool Pilot Evaluation or contact [Catherine Goodman](#), [Ginny Bond](#) or [Meenakshi Gautham](#).