Governments in developing countries often support school management committees as a way to get parents and community members involved in education to improve the quality and ensure community voices are heard. However, these committees aren’t always very active and it’s not clear how to get them to work more effectively. This evaluation aims to measure the impact of different approaches to strengthen parents’ involvement in school committees and school operations. The results will provide governments with further understanding of what approaches can work, including whether creating virtual networks through text messaging is effective.

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In rural Sindh, three different approaches to improving community involvement are being tested, both separately and together. The first promotes community involvement through a text messaging service to keep community members and teachers up to date on issues surrounding school management and the grant. The anonymous platform allows people to discuss concerns and exchange information on schools and school committees using text messages. The second promotes community involvement through facilitated village meetings to give people information about their rights, responsibilities and resources for school management. The third tries to revitalize the school committees by holding new elections and training committee members.

““In our country, one of the biggest problems is no one monitors the education system, the system has been left in the lurch by the leadership,” said Hamzo Khan Tagar, a senior program manager in the government’s Reform Support Unit. “Communities need to be able to manage and monitor their own schools. Most importantly, they can monitor how government funds can be better utilized and reduce the rate of corruption in public education.”

Impact is already being seen in the government’s Boys Primary School in Deh No. 22 Jamrao village in Sanghar District. The text messaging campaign improved people’s awareness about the grant and the school committee’s plans. The committee is successfully encouraging out of school children to go to school, and the community supported using the annual grant to repair another school after flood damage. Community members have “developed a sense of ownership towards the School Improvement Plans,” said the school committee chairman, Mitha Khan.

However, gains have been uneven across the three districts. Poverty has hampered progress in many areas, even when the pilot does get people more involved. In the Allah Bux village in Matiari District, the school committee chairman has gone door to door to encourage parents to enroll their children in school. It’s not always enough. The children are often hungry and can’t concentrate in school. Or they may only attend for a few months before leaving to help their family work in the fields.

“There are many children in Pakistan whose talents will never see the light of day because the system continues to fail them,” says Salman Asim, the project’s lead researcher and an economist at the World Bank. “To save those millions of dreams, it is important to invest in innovative interventions. The pilot project is one such example of creating pressure points at the community level to offset a weak and underperforming education system.”

Even before final results are in from the impact evaluation, the Government of Sindh is using what it has learned to improve other programs. The text messaging platform used to get community members involved in discussions about the schools was so popular that the education ministry has created similar systems for people to register complaints, among other things.

“The response of the community to the text messaging platform that was introduced through the impact evaluation was the thing that struck us the most,” said Sania Khursheed, from the government’s Reform Support Unit. “We thought that people aren’t going to respond or use it, but their response was incredible. We realized that people needed a medium through which they can contact us, not just for the school committee issues, but for other things too.”

Mohammad Nasim Qureshi, a program manager in the Reform Support Unit, says impact evaluations make a difference. “On the basis of these findings, the government can develop a strategy for community development throughout Sindh province. This study helps us reach our goals.”

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**Evaluation Sample:** 287 villages, 500 schools  
**Final results expected:** 2016  
**Policy Tools:** Text messages, meetings, elections and capacity building  
For more information about the evaluation, please contact Salman Asim at sasim@worldbank.org