

## **Improving Quality and Access: A Village Health Committee Bridges the Gap between the Community and Healthcare Providers**

The village health committee of Photo Burfat, a small village in Tando Allah Yar, Sindh, meets once every three months. During these meetings, problems being faced by local residents in accessing healthcare are discussed. Some common problems raised are the unavailability of a healthcare provider at the health facility, a lack of medicine and equipment at the health facility, and poor attitudes of the healthcare provider toward the patient. Problems reported by residents are passed on to a union council health committee, which represents all of the village level committees in the union council, and takes action to resolve the issues raised by people seeking healthcare by liaising with the government health department.

Managed entirely by the people themselves, village health committees established in 23 union councils across Sindh are playing an important role in encouraging communities to access public health facilities. Each village health committee comprises of men and women from the community who are provided information about the importance of institutional healthcare and informed about health facilities and services available nearby.

In Photo Burfat, the Lady Health Worker, Meeran, is also a member of the village health committee. When Meeran joined the committee, she reported that she was having trouble convincing some families in the village to have their children vaccinated. The village health committee set up a meeting with the families to educate them on the need for vaccinations and addressed their concerns and misconceptions regarding vaccines. Resultantly, all of the children were immunized.

Village health committees like the one in Photo Burfat serve as a mechanism for identifying gaps in the public healthcare system. Their involvement in the union council health committee and, through it, with healthcare providers and the government health department has ensured accountability for improved healthcare services across Sindh.



*Lady Health Worker Meeran, giving a child a Polio vaccination*