

A picture's worth a thousand words - using photos in social research in Pakistan

'Visual ethnography' involves the use of photos as an aid in education and workshoping. This technique has recently been successfully used to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of poverty in Pakistan, particularly related to mango, citrus and dairy farmers.

This social research forms part of a larger research program (Australia-Pakistan Agriculture Sector Linkages Program, ASLP), which aims to improve livelihoods of the rural poor in Pakistan through enhancing the dairy, mango and citrus industries.



Women discussing citrus value chain issues

Baseline surveys of around 750 households across Pakistan provided information on village demographics, including family size, income, land ownership, education levels and use of technology (mobile phone and computer). Survey teams then worked closely within **selected villages, particularly through facilitated workshops, to identify the locals' priorities related to food security and income generation.** Separate workshops were held for men and women.



Project co-leader Prof Barbara Chambers with photos of mango value chain prioritised by village women based on their training needs

The workshops featured the use of many photos taken in Pakistan to promote discussion. Photos typically depicted best-practice examples of every stage of the agricultural value chain, such as soil preparation and irrigation, pruning and harvesting, postharvest processing and transport, marketing and banking.

In communities where the rate of illiteracy is very high (especially among women), the photos trigger people to discuss their experiences, and help them understand new concepts. The workshop participants discussed what constraints they face, and what they find easy or difficult to do. They prioritised their needs and interests based on their own abilities and potential.

For example, women in a Sindh village in the Mirpur Khas region said they needed training on commercial mango pickling and juice preservation, and how to best feed their cattle.

Men in the same village prioritised training in pesticide management, furrow irrigation, nursery management and mango harvesting. Both women and men expressed interest in working in groups to buy inputs (seeds, fertiliser, etc).

The social project's results have been shared with each commodity team in the AusAID-supported ASLP (for dairy, mango and citrus) to help inform their future biophysical and market research.

A program of recommended interventions that address the **villagers' identified** priorities has been designed. The ideas will be funded from the project and trialled over the coming years, and baseline survey work will then be repeated to judge the adoption, adaption and success of new tools and practices.

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Photos provided courtesy of the Social research project team*



Men's workshop rating training needs in the dairy value chain in a dairy-farming village, Lahore