



# Aik Saath



ایک ساتھ  
‘Together’

## Program Update

Edition #2 | March 2018

Welcome to the first Aik Saath newsletter for 2018. Aik Saath is an Urdu phrase meaning Together. This is a very appropriate name for a complex program covering multiple agricultural products. Each Aik Saath project involves numerous partners in Australia and Pakistan, comprising many different sets of skills. This newsletter provides an update on the progress of these projects as well as exploring the many aspects of **collaboration** involved.

The Government of Pakistan collaborated with Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) to design Aik Saath. Together, they identified agricultural value-chains where Australian and Pakistani knowledge and research have great potential to achieve the program goal:

**That rural poor, particularly women, living in the Punjab and Sindh significantly and equitably benefit from improvements in strategic value chains.**

Effective value-chains rely on collaboration between chain participants – building or strengthening value chains requires a wide range of different problem-solving skills. It also depends on working closely with smallholders to ensure solutions are practical and appropriate to community life.

For more background on the program, please refer to <http://aciargov.au/publication/fs2017-aik-saath-avccr-briefs>



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## Collaboration: when 1+1>2

The Aik Saath program is managed by ACIAR – an organisation with 30 years' experience in Agricultural Research for Development (R4D). ACIAR and the Government of Pakistan have incorporated a wide range of different research skills into the program. This **collaboration** between physical sciences, market analysis and social sciences is crucial to developing new ways to think about and address problems and opportunities.

### Collaboration equals innovation.

Michael Dell, CEO of Dell Technologies

Sharing perspectives between technical specialists and marketing specialists can often be particularly challenging as they tend to see the world quite differently and talk about it using different languages.

However, such **collaboration** is vital to ensuring that technical findings are meaningful - both to smallholder families and to the consumers who may buy their produce.

This linkage to current or potential consumers can only be profitable for farming families if effective and efficient value chains are in place that transmit clear signals about market demand and the competitive environment. Again, **collaboration** is vital and, in line with the market perspective of Aik Saath, this must involve businesses along the value chain, including those providing inputs such as seeds, crop protection and technical advice.

Aik Saath projects seeking these commercial partnerships are also aware that such **collaboration** is crucial to scaling out and sustaining the project outcomes in order to achieve the desired long-term impacts. Other collaborators such as NGOs, Donors and other Australian programs in Pakistan are also vital to ensuring that Aik Saath's Research drives lasting and widespread Development impacts.

### Collaboration (noun)

the action of working with someone to produce something

en.oxforddictionaries.com

Another way to provide a long-term impact is to leave a robust legacy of increased capacity among program participants. All ACIAR projects are known for this and Aik Saath is no different – each project aims to foster high-level technical and research skills in their teams. At the program level, the coordination team is complementing this with professional development opportunities. Those to date are summarized in the final section of this newsletter and cover diverse topics from gender dynamics and data collection to market systems development and videography. Each topic is relevant to every team and therefore ripe for **collaborative** learning.

Future priorities for professional development will depend on the teams, but perhaps the biggest legacy of all from Aik Saath could be the skills, commitment and appetite for applying **collaboration** to address the needs of tomorrow.

## Aik Saath Project Updates

### DAIRY\_BEEF



#### Implementing the Whole-Family Extension Approach (WFEA):

Involving all members of smallholder families means that new ideas are adopted much more readily. This concept, WFEA, has

arisen from a decade of intensive “research into extension” by the Dairy\_Beef team.

Now, the question is whether or not the WFEA can be equally effective when delivered by people outside the project team. An inception workshop to introduce this component of the dairy\_beef project was a resounding success. Twenty-two organisations participated and eight organisations immediately initiated collaborative research arrangements. Within a few months there were 19 organisations on-board, with eleven agreements signed. Dozens of field staff from these organisations have been trained in WFEA at the first two training seminars. This pioneering concept - partnering with value chain participants to scale out and sustain the provision of technical and market skills to farming families – is of great interest to the other Aik Saath teams.

Peter Wynn and Anam Afzal presenting the development of the WFEA extension model



*“The Dairy\_Beef team are excited about this model for scaling out the extension approach we developed in our earlier work.*

*We want to share what we are learning with the other Aik Saath teams to apply in their projects”*

Dr Hassan Wariach, Pakistan project manager, Aik Saath Dairy\_Beef project

Dr Tony Dunne with participants in training program in value chain analysis



**Understanding beef value chains:** After ten years in the previous program, the team’s focus has broadened from milk production to seeking entry to the beef market. This requires a whole new set of skills in the value chain approach. An intensive program of capacity building with the dairy-beef team has built the team’s knowledge, skills and application of the Value Chain Analysis (VCA) process.

The training involved a series of workshops separated by periods of extensive field research (walking the chain and interviewing participants). This provided opportunities for “learning by doing”, closely monitored by an experienced value chain practitioner / trainer from Australia.

**Livestock team gender training:** Following whole-program gender inclusiveness training (see later in this newsletter), the livestock team continued to develop their understanding of the importance of individual agency, agreeing to define this as:

*“Agency may include the ability to choose goals and act upon them”.*

The project exists to identify key issues for farmers and what sort of changes might address these. However, the training has highlighted that existing norms and values within a household and within a community might make some changes difficult or might result in, for example, excessive workloads for some family members. Therefore, the team will pay even closer attention to observing impact at the household level from their technical recommendations. This approach was captured in the dairy-beef project’s intended gender outcome: *“The agency of members of the smallholder farming families is enhanced through equal engagement in the AVCCR project activities”.*

For further information contact the project leaders:

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## SMALL RUMINANTS



The 12-month exploratory Small Research Activity (SRA) was successfully completed, having captured extensive information on the small ruminant production system in Pakistan. While doing so, the team also developed a vital network with value chain participants, governments, universities and NGOs.

The primary goal of the SRA was to identify researchable topics for a larger project. The findings were presented and discussed at a major workshop in November 2017.

“goats are easy to care for and we can do this single-handedly every day” “...we use them as a bank”

- Female farmer interview, Sheikhpura

**Female farmer has built feed bowls next to her goats in a tethered system in Materi**



An extension of time and resources has been approved to enable the SRA to undertake further R4D until the full project commences later in the year.

This work will focus on the first key finding of the SRA: that the major limitation to the mutton value chain is on-farm constraints. The extension activities will start to investigate how we can improve nutrition of animals to start to address this issue. This work will complement that planned for the full proposal and the extension work also enables the strong relationships built over the past 12 months to develop into solid, ongoing collaborations.

For further information contact the project leaders:

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## PULSES



The Government of Pakistan has expressed great interest in the pulses sector and in the potential of the ACIAR projects to provide insights. There are three ACIAR projects covering different aspects of this important group of products.

Firstly, researchers at the University of Western Australia and the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC) have studied the impact of current policies on the viability of pulses under current and potential future economic conditions. The team designed a model to analyse the impact of these policies, and potential reforms, on prices, production and producer/consumer welfare. Farm-level modelling relies on data collected from a survey of 180 farmers in KP, Punjab and Sindh provinces. Final presentations to federal and provincial policymakers are planned for early April in Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad.

Researchers from Charles Sturt University lead the second pulses project, which focuses on the three areas of People, Production and Post-Harvest. The People component will establish Groups for Collaborative Research. These farmer-driven groups will dictate research priorities based on their experiences in each of six project sites, with 15 families involved per site. The initial round of interviews with participating pulse growers took place in December.

The third pulses project takes a value chain perspective and aims to build capability at producer level as well as to facilitate linkages with value chain partners. The design phase for this project started with a collaborative workshop in July 2017. This involved members of the Policy and Production projects above, growers, researchers and value chain participants.

All three of these ACIAR Pakistan pulse projects shared information and confirmed collaboration plans at a workshop in Wagga Wagga in November. The value chain proposal is in the final review process and is expected to be operational by mid-year.

For further information contact the project leaders:

Policy project: Dr Liz Peterson University of Western Australia [Liz.Petersen@tpg.com.au](mailto:Liz.Petersen@tpg.com.au)

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Value Chain project: Dr Rajendra Adhikari, University of Tasmania [rajendra.adhikari@utas.edu.au](mailto:rajendra.adhikari@utas.edu.au)



## HORTICULTURE



Finalising this complex multi-crop, multi-disciplinary and multi-agency proposal was a lengthy process. However, although this delayed the formal sign-off until February, the project team has been fully engaged in preparatory activities. An inception meeting held at CABI office in Rawalpindi in January involved team members, partners and representatives from associated organisations.

### Mr Dave Preston (DFAT) addressing inception meeting



### Working group from ten partner agencies developing detailed workplans



Participants agreed on the collective goal of the project, captured as:

### **“Strengthening vegetable value chains in Pakistan (SVVCP) for greater community livelihood benefits”**

They also worked in specialist groups to develop work plans for 2018 in Social Science; Production Horticulture; Postharvest Horticulture; Value Added Product Development; and Marketing and Outreach (Extension and Scale Out).

In April, a nine-day Walk-the-Chain and Value Chain Training field visit will consolidate value chain concepts among the diverse partners while comparing issues between the different crops under study. This will be closely followed by a visit by the Social Science Team, including collaborating NGOs Mojaz Foundation and WADO. This will assess and engage project sites and communities. Meanwhile, Research Associates are being appointed to facilitate partner organizations in project implementation.

For further information contact the project leaders:

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### Horticulture Project partners



## PROGRAM COORDINATION

Aik Saath has a part-time Program Coordinator, Gerard McEvilly, who supports the skilled and experienced teams involved in the development and management of Aik Saath. Coordination duties are shared with the ACIAR Research Program Managers responsible for the individual projects as well as the ACIAR Country Manager Pakistan Dr Munawar Kazmi and assistant Noor Batool and DFAT's Development Co-operation team in Islamabad.

There are two broad but overlapping aspects of the coordination task: (1) Ensuring that Aik Saath receives effective oversight and **Governance**; and (2) Facilitating **Collaboration** – both within AVCCR and with other Australian, Pakistan Government or development partner programs.

**Governance** includes an annual meeting of the Reference Committee. This comprises senior representatives of Pakistani partners in the Aik Saath program, from National and Provincial governments, major universities and research institutes, together with officials from Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and ACIAR.

The Reference Committee helps ensure that the program remains aligned with high level policy initiatives, such as Pakistan's Agriculture and Food Security Policy, released in June 2017, which expands on Pillar IV (Water, Energy and Food Security) of the Pakistan Vision 2025.

Another key aspect of governance is a system to **Monitor** and **Report** on progress over time. This should also make it easy to look back after the program is finished and **Evaluate** how well the projects achieved their objectives and to capture **Learnings** in the process. Such a system is known as **MERL**.

To address this need, a two-day workshop in July enabled each team to map the Impact Pathway or "Theory of Change" for their project.

This shows how each activity leads to an output which helps achieve intermediary outcomes, then end-of-project outcomes – all focussed on the eventual long-term impact.

Importantly, this underlines how long-term impact can only be expected if plans and partnerships exist for sustaining and scaling out the project outcomes.

The workshop helped team members develop a shared vision of their ultimate goal and the logic of selecting certain activities rather than others (and the assumptions and risks inherent in those choices). It also confirmed the shared vision and goal of the Aik Saath program as a whole and ensured that pro-poor, women empowerment and value chain are the focus for all.

**MERL specialist Ted Rowley demonstrates escalating levels of complexity from Simple to Complicated to Complex to Chaotic**







As a result of the workshop, team members:

1. Developed a shared vision of the ultimate goal of their projects.
2. Established the logic of selecting certain activities rather than others.
3. Considered the assumptions and risks inherent in those choices.
4. Confirmed the shared vision and goal of the Aik Saath program as a whole.
5. Ensured that pro-poor, women empowerment and value chain are the focus for all.

The Impact Pathways have now been further developed by the teams into MERL plans which identify indicators. These indicators answer specific questions about progress through a planned data collection process. This information will be collated at program level, providing a smooth pathway to monitoring and reporting for **governance**.

Importantly, by jointly developing the MERL system the Aik Saath teams have identified many links and potential synergies between projects, with scope for **collaboration**. There will also be program-wide training to ensure the MERL system provides a valuable project management tool, rather than being seen as burdensome “box-ticking”.

Some **collaboration** aspects of program coordination are internal to Aik Saath, as above. Another internal aspect is identifying and addressing **professional development** needs and opportunities across the projects, as covered in a later section of this update.

As well as keeping in regular touch with project leaders, the Aik Saath coordination team facilitate an Annual Meeting for more in-depth interaction. The 2018 meeting will be held in the week commencing 6<sup>th</sup> May and will involve all ten ongoing ACIAR Pakistan projects. This builds on the success of September’s all-project meeting of Australian team members in Canberra.

#### Current ACIAR projects in Pakistan



ADP/2014/043: Policy & Institutional Reforms to Improve Horticultural Markets in Pakistan










ADP/2014/045: Efficient participatory irrigation institutions to support productive and sustainable agriculture in south Asia



ADP/2017/004: Developing modern value chains of pulses in Pakistan

CIM/2014/081: Mitigating the effects of stripe rust on wheat production in South Asia, Eastern Africa & Australia

-  CIM/2015/041: Increasing productivity & profitability of pulses production in Cereal based cropping systems in Pakistan
-  HORT/2016/012: Strengthening vegetable value chains in Pakistan for greater community livelihood benefits
-  LPS/2016/011: Improving smallholder dairy and beef profitability by enhancing farm production and value chain management
-  LPS/2016/096: Smallholder goat value chains in Pakistan challenges and research opportunities
-  LWR/2015/036: Improving groundwater management to enhance agriculture and farming livelihoods in Pakistan
-  LWR/2015/074: Developing approaches to enhance farmer water management skills in Balochistan, Punjab and Sindh in Pakistan
- CIM/2016/174 Improved mungbean harvesting and seed production systems for Bangladesh, Myanmar and Pakistan
-  ADP/2016/043 Economic analysis of policies affecting pulses in Pakistan



A further opportunity for internal collaboration was the special smallholder-focused event in Lahore on 14-15<sup>th</sup> March for World Water Day. Organised by the team from “LWR/2014/074 Developing approaches to enhance farmer water management skills in Balochistan, Punjab and Sindh in Pakistan”, this included participants from a range of projects.

### Did you know?

Rust diseases of plants are caused by fungal pathogens. The three rust pathogens that attack wheat can devastate production, especially in the developing world.

ACIAR has undertaken rust research in Pakistan on these wheat pathogens since the early 1980s.

Currently, ACIAR funds Professor Robert Park and his team from the University of Sydney as part of a global program to combat Stripe Rust of wheat. In December, the team announced a significant breakthrough in separate research on stem rust- a DNA test that can quickly tell whether or not new strains of stem rust are able to overcome a resistance bred into current wheat varieties.

This discovery has significant implications for the current ACIAR project, which aims to develop similar diagnostic tests for the wheat stripe rust pathogen.

<https://sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2017/12/22/wheat-disease-breakthrough-to-help-feed-the-world.html>



## Aik Saath Partnership Updates

There are also many opportunities for external collaboration, most immediately with other DFAT initiatives in Pakistan as well as with related work by ACIAR in other regions, as follows:

### COLLABORATION WITH OTHER DFAT PROJECTS IN PAKISTAN

#### Linkages with DFAT's Market Development Facility (MDF)



Partnering with MDF offers great potential synergies. Combining the technical know-how from the Aik Saath teams with the market insights and value-chain connections generated by MDF may reveal new opportunities.

In November, Aik Saath and MDF signed an MOU listing the most likely areas for collaboration. These include AVCCR sharing its expertise, such as advising on technical aspects of proposals for MDF support. (Given the constraints of project resources, this may include recommending external specialists.) MDF will share its expertise, such as by identifying potential businesses in the selected value chains that are willing and able to engage with local farmers either through providing better inputs or by providing improved access to markets.

An illustrated guide is in preparation to summarise the roles of MDF and Aik Saath and help team members of both programs recognise and promote opportunities for joint initiatives.

Aik Saath and MDF interact regularly, jointly assessing ideas from both programs for potential collaboration. This has led, for example, to links between the Dairy\_Beef project and Fauji Foods (a large food company who is now collaborating with the Dairy\_Beef team with Dairy extension activities)

MDF commissions regular studies to better guide its investments and many of these are highly relevant to the Aik Saath projects, including “Operationalising Women’s Economic Empowerment in a multi-country context” (published mid-2017). This uses case studies from three countries to illustrate how market system programs “grapple with, and can contribute to, women’s economic empowerment”.



### Linkages with the Australia Balochistan Agribusiness Programme (AusABBA, phase II)



AusABBA II was initiated in October 2017 and will address a range of problems in the agriculture sector of the South-Western border districts of Balochistan. The local participants engaged in the program have excellent production experience and strong links with farming communities.

However, the program is not designed to provide state-of-the-art R4D services. ACIAR projects do not generally operate in Balochistan, due to the security restrictions. These constrain Australian specialists from engaging in the hands-on problem definition and research that underpins ACIAR's success in R4D.

Nevertheless, in the previous ASLP program, the Dairy team provided training for AusABBA I participants who travelled to Lahore. AusABBA and [Aik Saath](#) have explored making similar arrangements where the two programs are addressing common issues.

Also, as with MDF, AusABBA needs the guidance of high-level technical expertise. This may be available within the [Aik Saath](#) teams or, indirectly through the wider ACIAR network.

In February, the three programs ran a joint workshop to shortlist issues that are relevant to all three programs and therefore high priority for collaboration. This will result in an operating framework covering the scoping, procurement and funding of such technical investigations.

# Professional Development

## GENDER INCLUSIVENESS

The goal of Aik Saath is to ensure that both women and men in smallholder families benefit from the research and the improved value chains.

The Aik Saath teams have agreed that this goal requires each individual team member to consider gender inclusion at every stage of their project activities. This approach is called “mainstreaming”. It contrasts with the common tactic of designating a gender specialist to address gender inclusion in isolation. The team approach means building awareness and knowledge of gender dynamics among all team members. The aim is *“to be competent enough to be gender inclusive and able to have productive conversations with gender specialists as needed”*.

With support from DFAT, Karen Iles, a specialist in understanding barriers to change in developing country settings, was contracted to establish the gender mainstreaming concept with team members. Karen worked closely with team leaders to design a three-day workshop in October, which was tailored to the needs of the projects. The planning part of the workshop enabled teams to analyse various aspects of their projects (project design, enabling partners and measuring change) to identify gender inclusiveness gaps.

Each project is now equipped with a **gender inclusiveness plan** focusing on the key areas covered at the workshop, including **professional development** regarding gender-focused skills and knowledge.

A short-term Gender Coordinator, Dr Kate Gomersall, will be supporting the implementation of these plans, including collaboration between the team social science specialists. Kate will also plan and facilitate discussion at the Annual Meeting in May about the options for ongoing support for gender skills development, application and evaluation throughout Aik Saath.



The learnings from this process have been incorporated in a major revision of the original Draft Gender Strategy. This will be further refined, based on input from other specialists, and formally launched in May. A brief is available to advise interested parties of the rationale and outcomes of the process. (*Pathway to Gender Inclusion Planning for Aik Saath - Summary*)

Throughout this process, the program coordinator has developed strong links with several complementary gender initiatives underway at ACIAR, including the ACIAR Gender Policy.



## TRAINING IN THE COMM CARE MOBILE ACQUIRED DATA (MAD) APP



As we know, the days of pencil and paper for analysing data are long gone. However, field data is typically recorded in the old-fashioned way, with paper records. With many researchers asking for support to develop electronic data recording systems from scratch, ACIAR commissioned a rigorous assessment of existing platforms for “mobile acquired data” (MAD). Consultants AgImpact found that Dimagi’s Commcare platform provided performance and usability benefits. Aik Saath’s Dairy\_Beef team assisted with the appraisal process and have since used Commcare on a routine basis, implemented via tablet devices. The team are

keen to assist other Aik Saath teams, as required.

This pool of MAD expertise in Pakistan has now widened to include staff from several partner institutions. This select group have been trained by AgImpact’s CommCare Certified staff. Three four-day sessions were spread over three months, during which each participant developed apps for use in their regular duties. The initial session trained ten candidates, from which a smaller group (5) was selected for advanced training in Dimagi’s App Building Module. All five participants excelled, becoming CommCare Certified on 15 December in Islamabad and becoming a further source of expertise for Aik Saath projects and their partners.



## VALUE CHAIN TRAINING

Aik Saath’s goal is to improve value chain performance for the benefit of smallholders. To support this, the coordination team are exploring options to mainstream value chain awareness and skills throughout the project teams.

The first opportunity, in late January, was a 4-day Market Systems Development (MSD) course. This was attended by six personnel from Aik Saath projects (and the ACIAR Country Manager, Munawar Kazmi) in Quetta, Baluchistan.





The course was initiated by MDF and also included eight AusABBA participants, providing a great opportunity to build links between the three programs. To highlight the principles of MSD, case studies from Pakistan were developed by MDF, assisted by the program coordinator, Country Manager and project staff.



While MSD starts from an overall market sector perspective, addressing systemic constraints around the poor, Value Chain Development works with specific participants to improve their capacity to deliver the right product, at the right price and the right time to consumers. These approaches are complementary, but differ in their focus.

The program coordinator has written a short briefing on broad approaches to Value Chain practice in the development context. This also highlights options for providing and scaling out professional development training. These options will be explored with teams at the annual meeting in May.

In the meantime, here are a few of the dozens of sources of expertise on MSD/Value Chains in international development in the coordination database:

BEAM Building Effective and Accessible Markets: <https://beamexchange.org/>

The Value Chains Knowledge Clearinghouse: <http://tools4valuechains.org/>

Value Chain Development Wiki: <https://microlinks.org/good-practice-center/value-chain-wiki>

## COMMUNICATIONS TRAINING

Effective management of communication is fundamental to achieving project and program goals.

Fundamentally, these goals require that some *change* to the status quo takes place.

At the Aik Saath gender workshop, participants were reminded that change is unlikely without taking the time to understand the context of the audience and tailoring communication accordingly.

As the projects and program progress, there will be an increasing need for professional development and/or support for teams in various aspects of communication methodology.

Communications also underpins both Governance and Collaboration:

**Governance** includes ongoing sharing with stakeholders both data and stories about project activity and outcomes. Importantly, this can feed into formal monitoring – the MERL workshop in July had a strong focus on this, including a Stakeholder Analysis exercise.

**Collaboration** is very difficult to achieve without communicating both efficiently (given resources are limited and some audiences are more important than others) and effectively (where both the message itself and the channel used is tailored to the specific audience).

The coordination team have developed a Communications Toolbox to assist project teams to build action plans based on their stakeholder analysis, and identify comms training needs. The Toolbox also emphasises the changing landscape of communication channels, including the transition from the written word to social media and video messaging.

In October, Country Manager Munawar Kazmi teamed up with videographer Conor Ashleigh as part of an ACIAR initiative to capture powerful stories on film from across their program. In-country partners also had the opportunity to attend a training session with Conor on how to firstly identify a memorable story and then tell it with pictures in a compelling way.

### NOTES FOR YOUR DIARY

DAWN Pakistan Food & Agri Expo Lahore Expo Centre - POSTPONED

Pulses Policy Forums 2-6 April Lahore, Islamabad, Karachi

Aik Saath Annual Meeting 6-9 May

UN International Day of Rural Women 15 October PODA Annual Conference

<http://www.poda.org.pk/programs/11/Annual-Rural-Women-Conference>

**Feedback or ideas for future editions? Please get in touch**

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