

To finalise my MSc studies in the programme *Sustainable International Agriculture at the Universities of Kassel and Göttingen*, I decided to write my master thesis about the working conditions of women in the peri-urban dairy production in Faisalabad, Pakistan. In this specific case, dairy farming is mostly based on water buffaloes.

For the data collection I went to Pakistan for 3 months and interviewed 73 women. These female farmers told me about their hard work and about the often very low payment. As ICDD scholar I wanted to find out if the work of the female labourers is decent. Generally women are employed for numerous tasks in animal husbandry. They collect the fodder, feed and water the buffaloes and they are also producing dung cakes (round-shaped and dried cow manure) with bare hands. All of them have long working days and beside the farm work they have to manage the housework...

In my last weeks in Punjab I invited some of the women for group discussions about their work-related problems, and together they should identify some solutions and opportunities to improve the situation. I have seen a lot of problems and poverty during my stay, but I also enjoyed the great hospitality and I learned so much about the Pakistani culture.



ICDD Report for the MSc thesis Research Grant

To collect the data for my thesis about the situation of working women in peri-urban dairy buffalo units in Faisalabad District (Pakistan), I spent three months at an ICDD partner university: the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF).

The results of the research project are going to be published in the form of a master thesis within the MSc program “Sustainable International Agriculture” within the specialisation “International Organic Agriculture” at the University of Kassel (sub-campus Witzenhausen) and the University of Göttingen.

The supervisors for the thesis in Germany are Prof. Dr. Eva Schlecht and Prof. Dr. Ulf Liebe, whereas my supervisors at the UAF were Prof. Dr. Muhammad Younas and Prof. Dr. Asif Ali.

The aim of the research project was to characterise the decency of work (or its deficits) and the remuneration of female labour in peri-urban dairy production units of Faisalabad. The results are also part of a PhD study which is carried out by ICDD scholar Miss Saadia Hanif. She will evaluate the socio-economic situation of the same households, within the framework of her research entitled: "Comparative study on economic viability and working condition at peri-urban dairy farms in Punjab."

Methods

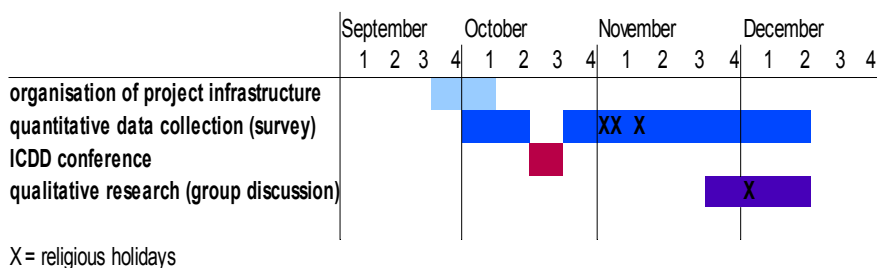
The farms which took part in this study were chosen by snowball sampling at the earlier stage of the research project by Tariq and Haggmann (2009). At that time 145 dairy farms in the peri-urban area were chosen and the mostly male household heads were interviewed in the framework of a baseline survey. Out of these, we selected 55 farms where women are involved in animal husbandry. Additionally, 18 female farmworkers from the visited city quarters were randomly chosen and interviewed. With the help of a translator the working women answered my semi-structured questionnaire in face-to-face interviews. Out of the total 73 interviewees, from whom mainly quantitative data was collected, 2 groups of female working women were selected for the qualitative part of the study. Two group discussions were held at the UAF campus. In the first meeting only female labourers were participating, for the second group discussion female small scale farmers were invited. Each of the groups had a size of 8 participants. As the qualitative part should find out more about the problems the women are facing, participatory research tools were used. A moderator introduced the sessions and explained the procedure to the women in their local language Panjabi. In the first part the women were asked to create a chart on which they described their work-related problems. In the second round the participants gathered and discussed possible solutions. Finally a non-governmental organisation, Rural Poverty Alleviation Project (RPAP), explained the system of micro-credits as one opportunity to improve the situation to the women.

Time frame

For the data collection I spent nearly 3 months in Pakistan, namely from the end of September until the third week of December 2011.

The first days were used to organise the stay and accommodation, and clarify the procedure of the interviews, the transport and translator. At the first of October the questionnaire was tested in the field. After a short evaluation of the test we started our interviews. In the third week of October I participated in the annual thematic ICDD conference held at UAF. In the first weeks of November and in the first week of December it was not possible to conduct interviews because of governmental and religious holidays. From the end of November until mid-December the qualitative methods were prepared and the two group discussions took place on the 26. November and on the 10. December 2011.

Time frame of data collection, Pakistan 2011



After completing 73 individual interviews and two group discussions, I gave a presentation about my master program, the ICDD and the research project at the UAF. It was meant to show students and teachers what I have done during the 3 months and to discuss the problems of the women working in the peri-urban dairy farms.

After the completion of the field work, I am now busy with data evaluation and thesis writing. I plan to finalise the master thesis until April 2012.

Women's tasks in dairy production

To characterise the work of female labourers in dairy production units the questionnaire asked for the type of work and how much time the women are spending daily for it. Mainly women are cutting and preparing the fodder for the buffaloes, feeding and watering the animals, helping with milking, cleaning the sheds from dung and preparing the dung cakes

which are mostly used as fuel for cooking purposes. Additionally to all these tasks the women are responsible to organise the household, including cooking, taking care of children and washing the laundry. Not only the number of working hours should be documented, but also facts about the working condition of women. A key question is of course if work such as dung scraping with bare hands can be called decent or not, from the women's perspective and from the perspective of outsiders. Further issues needing clarification are safety of work or the overall situation for women's health. There are serious health risks for the women like infection of the hands through daily contact with the cow dung, working under stressful weather conditions (hot summers, cold winters), no awareness about handling the fodder cutting machines, and the inhalation of the smoke emerging from burning dung cakes. Furthermore, the questionnaire asked about the emotions of women in general, if they feel forced to work or if they are allowed to improve the management of the animals / their daily duties. Last but not least, the monetary or in-kind payment of women for their services in the dairy units, their income from sale of products such as dung cakes was evaluated, so as to be able to decide whether peri-urban dairy units in the Punjab of Pakistan provide opportunities for productive employment and decent work of women, or whether specific aspects might need to be changed in order to better meet the MDG in this sector.

Positive and negative experiences

The overall impression of my stay at the UFA in Faisalabad was very positive. Unfortunately there are not many foreign students present at the university, which made my presence very special not only for me but also for the local teachers, students and farmers. I always have been treated as a very special guest and if I needed anything it was immediately provided, or if I had a problem everybody tried to solve it. This made my research going on very smoothly.

At the time of my arrival most things for my stay and research project had already been organised. A vehicle and a driver had been reserved for me, so I could easily start my interviews. Also a female translator, a local PhD student, had been contracted to help me with my interviews and their evaluation. A very big advantage for the research was that the translator came herself from a village community in the peri-urban area. Due to this she knew a lot about the situation of the women and was able to ask sensitive questions or get more information from the women in informal talks.

The driver was the same one who had taken Mr. Tariq and Mr. Hagmann to the farms in 2009. This made us save a lot of time in searching for the farms, even though house

addresses are always only given by the name of the neighbourhood and the name of the farmer.

For the group discussions Prof. Dr. Younas was organising the room at the faculty of Animal Husbandry at UAF and supported the events by organising food and tea for the women and drivers.

Of course there were also some negative things occurring during my stay. The power cuts were often annoying as well as the slow internet connection. This made computer-based research and documentation sometimes complicated.

Another point was that the driver was often asking for more petrol than the quantity we really needed, because he could get a personal benefit out of the petrol charge. Because of this we thought of changing the driver, but then my team and I decided not to do so hence he knew the research area and the way to the farms.

Actually the English skills of my translator could have been better. Sometimes we had to discuss for a while until we understood each other. Especially in the scientific research context it would have been better if communication had worked out easier. Still, I was very glad to work with my translator, because she had so much knowledge about my working field and was very much accepted by the women I interviewed.

The security issue is another point which has to be mentioned here.

As I was living on the campus in the girls' hostel, I had to be back to the hostel area before sunset, this means at round about 5:30 p.m. This made the days pretty short in terms of working hours. During the day I was free to move around the campus, but for example I was not allowed to cross the street to buy something at the bakery outside the campus. For shopping I always had to arrange something and there was always the rule of asking for permission if I wanted to go somewhere.

In terms of data collection and going for interviews I always went together with my driver and my translator. I never felt unsafe in any situation and all of the people have been very friendly and helpful to me. Still I had to follow the strict rules of organising at least two persons who had to join me (which I had to name to my supervisors, to check if they are trustful) and I was not allowed to go by rickshaw. This meant that if my driver was not available I could not go anywhere.

Also for my free time it was kind of complicated to find a way to do some sports activities, as women in Pakistan usually do not do sports.

In the end I want to mention that sometimes my job was not easy, from the emotional point

of view. Mostly I did 3 interviews at one day and often the women were telling us their life stories with all the positive and negative aspects. Due to poverty and hard working conditions many of them had to face a hard life. Some women were even crying during the interviews because they have no alternatives or opportunities in life. The saddest event was when one of my interviewees died after getting intoxicated by pollution. The toxin could not be identified, because the family was too poor to afford a blood test and so the 15-year-old girl died. In the end these examples show why research and documentation of problems is strongly necessary to finally find solutions to improve life and working conditions of these women. Overall my stay in Pakistan was a great experience and most of the time I enjoyed to work in such an interesting project. Even if it was often complicated, I am very glad that I took this opportunity.