

REFANI Study Visit, Islamabad – 27th March-4th April 2015

A brief overview of the recent visit

As part of ENN's role as an academic lead in the DFID funded 'Research on Food Assistance for Nutritional Impact (REFANI) Consortium project, Principal Investigator (PI) Bridget Fenn travelled to Pakistan to conduct her second field visit. This visit was designed to coincide with the busy preparation period before data collection starts in June, as well to support the first site visit by the REFANI Cost Effectiveness Analysis (CEA) Research Officer, Lani Trenouth. The trip was supported in-country by ACF Pakistan.

Bridget's specific objectives were: 1) to spend time with the REFANI team in Pakistan in order to finalise the quantitative questionnaires, continue planning for the qualitative research, discuss the likely livelihood zones and potential villages to be included, and prepare for baseline data collection; 2) discuss the implementation of the CEA component; 3) discuss how the interventions would be implemented; and 4) hold a national level meeting to present REFANI to a range of stakeholders in Pakistan.

The trip was a great success, showcasing the strong performance of the Pakistan-based REFANI team so far as well as the support and commitment of ACF Pakistan to the REFANI study. There was an opening day on 'Planning and Eventualities' in preparation for the baseline survey, which addressed areas such as the operational challenges of collecting data in Dadu, Sindh province (e.g. the need for buffer villages to reduce the likelihood of tensions arising between the different intervention arms, as well as how to manage working conditions during the summer, when temperatures in Dadu can be in excess of 50°C). Over the following days discussions were held on randomisation, the development of sensitisation materials, training documents for the Research Data Collectors (RDCs), finalisation of the quantitative tools and drafting the qualitative research plan. There were also a number of very fruitful meetings with the ACF Pakistan team responsible for implementing the programme under study.

The national level meeting was generously hosted by the World Bank. Both Bridget and Lani gave presentations to over 30 attendees from the Pakistan government, UN agencies and the wider international and national NGO community (See the attached documents for the presentations). Following the presentations there was a Q&A session where the main topics of discussion were on coverage, how to define 'village', the importance of capturing women's empowerment, the need for a clear communication and dissemination strategy especially at the grassroots level, and discussions around the CEA. REFANI was very well received and generated a lot of interest, which the team will build on as the study goes forward. We will continue to keep our ENN web visitors updated on our progress with this important and exciting research over the coming months.