

Agha Ali Akram

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Education

Ph.D. Environmental Economics, YALE UNIVERSITY, 2014

Masters Environmental Management, YALE UNIVERSITY, 2008

B.Sc. Computer Science and History, LAHORE UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES, 2004

Work Experience

Assistant Professor of Economics, LAHORE UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES, 2018 – Present

- Teaching: Quantitative methods for impact evaluation, climate change economics, development economics, environmental and resource economics, health economics.
- My research work is applied and solution-oriented, spanning a diverse range of sectors including agriculture, water, public health and climate change. I use experimental methods and advanced quantitative analysis for evidence-based decision-making.
- I have over a decade of experience and expertise in:
 - designing and executing impact evaluations (using randomized trials and quasi-experimental methodologies);
 - building economic cost-benefit analyses;
 - developing, testing and deploying surveys in challenging developing country settings;
 - cleaning, manipulating and statistically analysing large datasets using Stata.

Economist, UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP), 2017 – Present

- Manage a team of data analysts to provide design input and quality control for a portfolio of impact evaluations using a diverse set of impact evaluation methodologies (cluster randomized trials and matching designs) across 11 countries for climate change adaptation projects.
- Lead the development of baseline and endline reporting guidelines to be used across the UNDP impact evaluations portfolio.
- Develop content and lead sessions on cost benefit analysis and impact evaluation for workshops with UNDP and government personnel across multiple countries.
- Liaise with academic and government partners to provide technical guidance to develop UNDP's global electricity access map.
- Developed economic cost-benefit analysis models, analysed results and authored reports for climate change adaptation and risk management projects in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal valued at over \$100 million.

Principal Investigator, INNOVATIONS FOR POVERTY ACTION, 2018 – Present

- Co-led the design and management of a multi-year randomized control trial to study the impact of evidence-based therapies on mental health and labor market outcomes for youth in post-conflict Sierra Leone.
- Led the design, extensive testing and deployment of two rounds of an innovative and customized youth labor market survey of 1,151 vulnerable youth that reliably captured youth labor market participation and performance.
- Led cost-effectiveness and return-on-investment analysis for this project using experimentally generated benefits estimates and an ingredients approach to costing.

Agricultural Economist, UNITED NATIONS FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO), 2016 – 2020

- Designed, tested and deployed a large-scale impact evaluation that used difference-in-differences combined with coarsened exact matching of a climate change adaptation project in Thailand covering a total of 600 farmers, as part of the Integrating Agriculture in National Adaptation Plans (NAP-Ag).
- Liaised with government (Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives), private sector researchers (Thailand Development Research Institute) and FAO.
- Developed a cost-benefit analysis model with a highly usable interface (Excel) and detailed user manual that

enabled policymakers to run their own analyses for Thailand climate change adaptation project; I integrated the results from the large-scale impact evaluation into this cost-benefit model.

- Designed and delivered three multi-day training events over 50 FAO and government personnel (in Thailand and Uruguay) on design and analysis of impact evaluations for NAP-ag project.
- Wrote technical guidance materials on impact evaluation, including an Impact Evaluation Manual and a case study describing the large-scale impact evaluation climate change adaptation project in Thailand.

Visiting Fellow, YALE UNIVERSITY, 2016 – 2017

- Collaborated with Robert Mendelsohn to develop publications from my work on drinking water and irrigation in agriculture (see co-authored papers with Mendelsohn in list of publications).

Postdoctoral Fellow, EVIDENCE ACTION, 2014 – 2016

- Co-PI on a project that measured the direct and spill-over impacts of a seasonal migration subsidy using a saturation design randomized controlled trial with 5,792 participants across 133 villages in Bangladesh (with Mushfiq Mobarak, Yale University and Shyamal Chowdhury, University of Sydney). Managed academic and research implementation partners; conducted statistical and econometric analysis; co-authored academic paper and briefs.
- Initiated entry of, and built and managed partnership to establish Evidence Action's Deworm the World Initiative in Pakistan, including liaison with the Punjab Government and local implementing partners.
- Co-designed an evaluation of conditional cash transfers to increase vaccination rates in Pakistan (with Rachel Glennerster, University of Chicago and Esther Duflo, MIT).

Research Consultant, UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP), 2012 – 2014

- Created and conducted five multi-day training sessions (in Thailand and Bangladesh) on cost-benefit analysis, statistical analysis and GIS for government officers as part of the Capacity Building Program on the Economics of Climate Change Adaptation (ECCA).
- Designed and tested a survey instrument that was deployed across five countries in Asia-Pacific to understand the impact of climate change on agriculture (1,429 farmers).
- Co-authored the "Economics of Adaptation Toolkit." and created guidance notes for and conducted sessions with UNDP personnel on design of rigorous impact evaluation for projects in Samoa and Africa.

Consultant, INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE (IFPRI), 2012

- Designed and developed survey instruments to collect water use data in irrigated agriculture in Pakistan; incorporated in IFPRI's Pakistan Rural Household Panel (2012-2014) which surveyed 2,090 households.
- Conducted institutional mapping exercise across multiple government and non-governmental stakeholders and co-authored a report on the policy landscape of agricultural water management in Pakistan.

Program Assistant, WORLD CONSERVATION UNION (IUCN), 2005 – 2006

- Conducted research and wrote short reports on the Clean Development Mechanism and its potential in Pakistan.

Team Leader, LAHORE UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES (Pakistan), 2004 – 2005

- Designed and led the development of an innovative approach to urban air pollution monitoring, the Volunteer Internet-based Environment Watch (finalist at the Stockholm Challenge 2006) and secured \$73,400 in funding.

Research

Working Papers

- "Labor Market Impacts of a Mental Health Intervention for Vulnerable Youth in Sierra Leone" with Leslie Alex (IPA), Jordan Farrar (Boston College), Robert T. Brennan (Boston College), Ryan Borg (Boston College), Arja Dayal (IPA), Simo Goshev (Boston College) and Theresa S. Betancourt (Boston College)
 - See Innovations for Poverty Action policy brief "[Integrating Cognitive Behavioral Therapy-based Interventions and Employment Programs for Youth in Sierra Leone](#)"
- "Effects of Emigration on Rural Labor Markets" with Mushfiq Mobarak (Yale University) and Shyamal Chowdhury

(Sydney University)

- See National Bureau of Economic Research working paper No. w23929, "[Effects of Emigration on Rural Labor Markets](#)"
- See Innovations for Poverty Action policy brief "[The Impact of Migration Subsidies on Rural Labor Markets in Bangladesh](#)"
- See The International Growth Center policy brief "[No Lean Season: Reducing Seasonal Poverty](#)"
- See Copenhagen Consensus Smarter Solutions for Bangladesh "[Seasonal Migration](#)"
- "Learning During a Pandemic: Experimental Evidence from an Online Platform in Pakistan" (*under review*) with Hadia Majid (Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan).
- "Protecting Nutrition Gains during the Pandemic" with Akib Khan (Uppsala University, Sweden), Hina Khalid (Information Technology University, Pakistan), Takashi Kurosaki (Hitotsubashi University, Japan) and Abu S. Shonchoy (Florida International University)
 - See [policy brief](#).
- "Coupons for Condoms: Can Condom Uptake be Improved by Enhancing Access and Reducing Social Anxiety?" with Faisal Bari (Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan) and Mahrukh Khan (Center for Economic Research in Pakistan)
- "Do Conservation Messages Save Water in Unmetered Settings? Results from an Experimental Study in Islamabad" with Sanval Nasim and Syed Hasan (Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan)

On-going Research

- Low-cost techniques to reduce vaccine hesitancy and increase vaccine uptake in Pakistan. With Hina Khalid (Information Technology University), Ashely Fox (SUNY at Albany), Chad Stecher (Arizona State University) and Amira Jadoon (U.S. Military Academy at West Point). Funded by Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP).
- Scale-up of National Institutes of Mental Health funded U19 Youth FORWARD project to improve mental health and employment outcomes for vulnerable youth in a post-conflict setting (Sierra Leone). With Theresa Betancourt (Boston College), Nathan Hansen (University of Georgia) and Alethea Desrosiers (Boston College).
- Improved learning and habit formation to increase uptake of health technologies (chlorine) in the developing world, in collaboration with Interactive Research and Development. With Jed Friedman (World Bank), Reshma Hussam (Harvard University), Gabriella Fleischman (Harvard University) and Akib Khan (Uppsala University).
- A Ricardian analysis of agriculture in Africa. With Babatunde Abidoye (UNDP), Sudha Kanan (Michigan State University), Kehinde Oluwaseun Omotoso (University of South Africa) and Alefa Banda (UNDP).
- Impact of low-cost demand-augmenting and price information provision services to reduce spoilage for street-vendors selling fresh produce. With Saher Asad (Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan).

Published Papers

- Akram, A. A., & Mendelsohn, R. (2021). Diaries to Increase the Adoption of Chlorine Tablets for Water Purification by Poor Households. *Water Economics and Policy* (forthcoming).
- Hasan, S. M., Akram, A. A., & Jeuland, M. A. (2021). Increasing Willingness to Pay for Urban Drinking Water Service: Evidence from Lahore, Pakistan Utilities Policy. *Utilities Policy* (forthcoming).
- Akram, A. A., & Mendelsohn, R. (2017). Agricultural water allocation efficiency in a developing country canal irrigation system. *Environment and Development Economics*, 1-23.
- Mobarak, Mushfiq & Agha Ali Akram (2016). Seasonal Migration to Increase Incomes of Poor Households in Bangladesh. *Bangladesh Priorities*, Copenhagen Consensus.
- Akram, Agha Ali (2013), "Is a surface-water market physically feasible in Pakistan's Indus Basin Irrigation System?" *Water International*, Vol. 38, Issue 5.

Aberman, Noora-Lisa, Wielgosz, Benjamin, Zaidi, Fatima, Ringler, Claudia, Akram, Agha Ali, Bell, Andrew Reid & Issermann, Maikel, (2013), "The policy landscape of agricultural water management in Pakistan", No. 1265, *IFPRI Discussion Papers*, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

Akram, Agha Ali & Sheila Olmstead (2011), "The Value of Household Water Service Quality in Lahore, Pakistan", *Environmental and Resource Economics*, Volume 49, Number 2, 173-198.

Akram, Agha Ali (2009). "Indus Basin Water Resources", *Tiempo*, No. 70.

Akram, Agha Ali & Muhammad Jahangir Ikram. "Air pollution monitoring through a volunteer internet-based network", *Environment and Urbanisation*, April 2007.

Akram, Agha Ali (2006). "The Conflict Between Russia and Chechnya: A Historical Analysis", *Islamabad Papers*, Institute of Strategic Studies in Islamabad.

Scientific Review Service

- Environment and Development Economics
- Climate Change Economics
- International Journal of Water Resources Development
- Biological Conservation
- Journal of Environmental Management
- National Science Foundation
- BRAC

Other Professional Activities

- Associate and Director, WASH (Water, Sanitation, Hygiene) Programs, IRD-PAKISTAN
- Affiliate, INNOVATIONS FOR POVERTY ACTION
- Research Fellow, CENTER FOR ECONOMICS RESEARCH IN PAKISTAN
- Research Affiliate, INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMICS ALTERNATIVES
- Research Affiliate, CONSORTIUM FOR DEVELOPMENT POLICY RESEARCH
- Fellow, MAHBUB-UL-HAQ RESEARCH CENTER (LUMS)

Scholarships and Awards

LUMS Faculty Initiative Fund (2021), \$6,550

Impact of low-cost demand-augmenting and price information provision services to reduce spoilage for street-vendors selling fresh produce. With Saher Asad (Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan).

Kurita Water and Environment Foundation Grant (2020), \$3,720

Promoting water purification: The role of learning, habit formation, and social norms (Pakistan).

LUMS Faculty Initiative Fund (2020), \$6,200

Increasing contraceptive uptake in Pakistan, in collaboration with Rahnuma Family Planning Association of Pakistan. With Faisal Bari (Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan) and Mahrukh Khan (Center for Economic Research in Pakistan).

LUMS Faculty Initiative Fund (2020), \$6,480

Online teaching platforms: A panacea to Pakistan's educational woes. With Hadia Majid (Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan).

World Bank Strategic Impact Evaluation Fund (2018), \$93,800

Reducing child stunting through better learning, in collaboration with Sukoon Water (Pakistan). With Parves Shonchay (Florida International University), Akib Khan (Uppsala University), Takashi Kurosaki (Hitotsubashi University) and Hina Khalid (Information Technology University, Pakistan).

World Bank Strategic Impact Evaluation Fund (2018), \$94,500

Improved learning and habit formation to increase uptake of health technologies (chlorine) in the developing world, in collaboration with Interactive Research and Development. With Jed Friedman (World Bank), Reshma Hussam (Harvard University), Gabriella Fleischman (Harvard University) and Akib Khan (Uppsala University).

Shahid Hussain Foundation (2019), \$7,060

Reducing child stunting through better learning. With Hina Khalid (Information Technology University, Pakistan).

LUMS Faculty Initiative Fund (2018), \$8,210

A randomized controlled trial to assess effectiveness of the in-home Growth Monitoring Tool (GroMoTo) in addressing childhood stunting

National Science Foundation (2012), \$31,000

Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant for Research in Economics; used to fund my dissertation research on improving chlorine tablet uptake by poor households in Pakistan. With Robert Mendelsohn (Yale University).

Yale Institute of Biospheric Studies Grant (2012), \$5,000

Water Use in Pakistan's Agriculture: Efficient Water Allocation in Pakistani Agricultural Production. With Robert Mendelsohn (Yale University).

John F. Enders Fellowship (2012), \$3,000

Improving drinking water quality amongst poor households in Pakistan.

Tropical Resources Institute Fellowship (2010), \$4,450

Assessing Climate Change Impacts on Agricultural Input Choices. With Sheila Olmstead and Robert Mendelsohn (Yale University).

Environment Protection Agency, Government of Punjab (2008), \$58,700

Volunteer internet-based environment watch (version 2). With Jahangir Ikram (Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan).

Fulbright Scholarship (2006)

Funding for Masters in Environmental Management at Yale University.

Leland Burt Scholarship (2006)

Funding for Masters in Environmental Management at Yale University.

PTCL R&D Fund (2004), \$14,700

Volunteer internet-based environment watch (version 1). With Jahangir Ikram (Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan).