

Afghanistan-Pakistan Activities
Quarterly Report XXII
(January – February – March 2008)
Sustainable Development of Drylands Project
IALC-UIUC

Principal Accomplishments this reporting Period

1. The previous two quarterly reports have carried updates on our response to the RFA for a USAID- funded project titled AWATT (Afghanistan Water, Agriculture and Technology Transfer). In early March, after a series of clarification requests and re-submissions, we were informed that our consortium of four universities had been selected to implement the AWATT Project. USAID-Afghanistan has awarded a Cooperative Agreement to New Mexico State University (NMSU) in their capacity as the lead institution in this consortium. NMSU will award sub-contacts to its three partner institutions: Colorado State University, Southern Illinois University and the University of Illinois.

The effective dates of our Cooperative Agreement/Prime Contract are March 3, 2008 through March 2, 2011 and the total amount programmed is \$20,000,000. Representatives of the AWATT Project partner institutions met at NMSU March 27-29, 2008 for a planning session. Principal items among the various outcomes of this planning session were the Inception Report and the Life-of-Project work plan/matrix. These documents will be at the center of discussions taking place in Kabul during an April 7 to 15 Post Award Conference that has been called by USAID-Afghanistan and the project CTO, Michael Satin. A team of four NMSU representatives will travel to Afghanistan for this Post Award Conference.

Although our selection for the AWATT Project is a direct result and spin-off of the Illinois presence in Afghanistan that has been funded through the IALC/USAID-ANE Cooperative Agreement, it is important to point out that the IALC was not a party to the proposal that we submitted in September 2007 and that the IALC is not among the partner institutions that are responsible for implementation of the three-year AWATT Project.

2. While in Afghanistan for work on assorted training activities, our Field Office Director (Dr. Qayyum) contacted various cooperators to apprise them of our selection for the AWATT Project. Contacts were made with counterparts and cooperators at Herat University, Kabul University and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL). Another reason for Dr. Qayyum's Herat University visit was to deliver a fully executed original of their MOU with the UIUC/SIUC/NWFPAU consortium. Dr. Qayyum will also visit Balkh University and Nangarhar University to brief them on the AWATT Project. Reports from Dr. Qayyum indicate that our cooperators welcome the news of our involvement in the AWATT Project, have pledged their full support, and look forward to a continuing relationship with the Illinois Universities during the three-year life of this project. A key part of our AWATT Project strategy consists of establishing regional centers at Herat University (West), Balkh University (North) and Nangarhar University (East); so the enthusiastic response reported by Dr. Qayyum is welcome news. Our relationship with these regional universities will make an

important contribution toward achieving AWATT Project objectives. Dr. Qayyum is assisting the NMSU team with transportation and lodging arrangements during their April 7 – 15 visit to Kabul. He will represent the Illinois Universities in the Post Award Conference.

3. The ten M.Sc. students who are funded by the Afghan Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) are making steady progress toward degree completion. Most will complete their coursework during the 2008 spring semester and will use the summer for field research activities. Dr. Qayyum has been busy arranging for the support and inputs needed during the research phase of their M.Sc. programs. He also provided them with an advanced-level English language training course during the February 11 to March 15 period. An additional enrichment experience will consist of a study tour, using the first week of April to visit the Agricultural University and the Agricultural Research Institute in Faisalabad as well as Agricultural Research Institutes in Lahore and Islamabad and Barani University.
4. Our report for the third quarter of 2007 gave details on a USDA-funded short course on Soil and Water Analysis that was delivered at the Shesham Bagh Research Station in Jalalabad. A follow-up activity related to this course deserves mention. Our eleven-day, July-August 2007 course caught the attention of DAI (Development Alternatives Inc.), a USAID contractor engaged in project activity in the eastern region of Afghanistan. DAI representatives sensed a continuing need to make use of the soil testing laboratory in Jalalabad and the need for training of lab technicians as well as extension workers and other clients who use the services of the soil testing lab. DAI elected to use the model and approach that we had followed, so they sought advice and counsel from Dr. Qayyum. He welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with DAI, seeing this as an important contribution to “Human Capacity Development for the Agriculture Sector in Afghanistan”. Dr. Qayyum shared his expertise at various points during the February 23 to March 5, 2008 course and was a featured speaker at the closing ceremony.

Plans for the Quarter Ahead

5. AWATT implementation activities will gather momentum during the upcoming quarter. While meeting our commitment to this new project, we will also keep our attention focused on the tasks and challenges that are included in the FY08 Scope of Work. This attention to existing plans is part of our continuing effort to generate supplemental funding.
6. The upcoming quarter will also include Dr. Qayyum’s annual visit to Illinois, now scheduled for the first 10 to 14 days of June. His time on campus will be used to plan for the close-out of IALC Cooperative Agreement activities, with core funds likely to be exhausted in late 2008 or early 2009. While he is here, our three-person team (Myers/Qayyum/Santas) will work on supplemental funding possibilities that are identified in the FY08 Scope of Work.