

Afghanistan-Pakistan Activities
Quarterly Report XXIII
(April – May – June 2008)
Sustainable Development of Drylands Project
IALC-UIUC
SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND FORWARD PLANS

Financial Projections and Expenditure of Core Funds

In preparation for a May 29 meeting of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Training (APT) Group, the Business Manager for our component (Amy Leng) reviewed the rate at which core funds were being spent and constructed a number of scenarios that would expend our accumulated carryover core funds prior to the September 30, 2009 expiration of the IALC/USAID-ANE Cooperative Agreement that has funded our work since late 2002.

Our spending or “burn” rate has been considerably less than had been anticipated when core funding budgets were constructed the past two years. This slower spending rate is due to the fact that supplemental funding sources have been used to cover some costs (salaries and travel) that would normally have been charged against core funds. These supplemental sources were: MAIL (for M.S. degree students), FAO (for the Oilseed Survey), HED (for Balkh University) and the recently-initiated AWATT Project.

Based on existing projections, accumulated core funds will be sufficient to cover operating costs for both the on-campus office and the field office until the September 30, 2009 expiration of the Cooperative Agreement. In addition to covering these operational costs, the carryover balance will be sufficient to cover delivery of a few more Human Capacity Development Programs and Activities. Options considered for use of these funds were:

1. Translation, reprinting and distribution of technical short course manuals.
2. Send selected NWFP AU faculty to Afghan Universities as Visiting Professors.
3. Send “Office of International Programs and Services” consultants to NWFP AU.
4. Deliver custom-designed short term training programs in Afghanistan.

Option 4 is presently receiving our attention and is likely the direction in which we will move. Reasons for this decision are: Too few courses have been held in Afghanistan up to this point, and, it has become increasingly difficult for Afghans to secure visas to enter Pakistan for training. These training programs would be tailor-made and likely will be a departure from the previous format of month-long courses that are attended by twenty participants. Dr. Qayyum has begun gathering suggestions on topics for training from his MAIL contacts. Thus far, topics suggested are:

1. Research Methodology

2. Extension/Outreach Communications
3. Integrated Pest Management
4. Preservation of Fruits and Vegetables
5. Animal Nutrition

The suggestion was also made that a study tour be arranged, so a selected group of Afghan scientists could learn about the research systems in Pakistan.

Dr. Qayyum's Annual TDY

This visit took place during the May 24 to June 6 period. He spent productive blocks of time at both Illinois Universities and was able to participate in the May 29 APT meeting. June 1-4 were spent in Washington D.C. networking at the annual meeting of the Association for International Agriculture and Rural Development (AIARD). While in Washington, our team also met with collaborators at USDA/FAS/ICD and at Chemonics International. These types of visits and networking activities are essential to coordination of our respective programs in Afghanistan.

NWFPAU Linkage Strengthening

Two NWFPAU representatives visited the Illinois Universities (UIUC & SIUC) in early April to implement linkage activities that are being funded by the Government of Pakistan's Higher Education Commission. The visitors were: Dr. Farhatullah, Director of Advanced Studies and Research and Dr. Naeem, Professor of Entomology and Controller of Examinations. The re-linkage with our sister institution in Pakistan, initiated in late 2002 by the IALC/USAID-ANE Cooperative Agreement, has created a three-university consortium which is definitely having a positive impact on the agriculture sector in Afghanistan and on the region.

As an example, near the end of this quarter we received an interesting request from USDA. They would like the Illinois Universities to facilitate a series of workshops that would assemble selected NWFPAU representatives and Nangarhar University representatives, to identify and describe joint activities that would stimulate development and enhance quality of life in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), that border both Afghanistan and Pakistan. We will definitely explore this opportunity and hopefully bring faculty members together to brainstorm about a problem and potential outreach opportunity in their own respective backyards. A proposal spelling out an action agenda will likely result from these meetings.

Complementarity with AWATT

As the AWATT project begins to gather momentum, we continue to identify accomplishments realized through our component that will contribute to the achievement of AWATT objectives. For example, training materials that were developed by our component during the past six years may become useful resources in AWATT Training Programs. Graduates of our technical short courses may become in-country AWATT cooperators. We believe that the ten MAIL Extension Department staff who are now enrolled in M.Sc. programs at NWFPAU will also become key players in AWATT project activities after their May 2009 degree completion.

