

Afghanistan-Pakistan Activities
Quarterly Report XIX
(April– May – June 2007)
Sustainable Development of Drylands Project
IALC-UIUC

Principal Accomplishments this Period and Plans for the Next Quarter:

- A. The April 4 to 22 field visit completed by our Senior Advisor (Dr. Myers) was funded primarily by the HED Project at Balkh University. In addition to his work on that project, Dr. Myers accomplished the following in support of Cooperative Agreement objectives while traveling with our Field Office Director, Dr. Qayyum.
1. Contact with the Education Office at USAID-Kabul led to preliminary information on a forthcoming RFA for a university-development project titled “Afghanistan Water, Agriculture and Technology Transfer Program”. Only U.S. Land Grant Colleges and Universities will be eligible to apply for this project, which is being designed to strengthen the higher education sector in Afghanistan.
 2. Made preliminary contact with BearingPoint Inc., the consulting firm that has been selected by USAID to implement the “Afghans Building Capacity (ABC) Program”. This is a comprehensive human capacity development project that will provide training across all sectors, including agriculture. We are pursuing the possibility of assisting BearingPoint in the planning and delivery of their agricultural training programs. This offers the long range potential of our component receiving supplemental support through the ABC project.
 3. Contact with the FAO representative in Kabul revealed their interest in sponsoring a one-month course on home-based processing of fruits and vegetables. There is also on-going discussion about the possibility of FAO contracting with the Illinois Universities to carry out an Oilseeds Sector Survey, beginning with Balkh and Herat Provinces later this year. The short course funding from FAO is now firm. Twenty participants will be involved, with training conducted at the Tarnab Agricultural Research Institute, Peshawar.
 4. Courtesy calls were made to maintain our working relationship with: The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) Extension Department, the ASAP Project office in Kabul, the Ministry of Higher Education and the Kabul University Faculties of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine. Key among these linkage visits, was time spent at the NWFP AU in Peshawar to strengthen and reinforce the institutional collaboration that is so critical to our component, i.e. Human Capacity Development for the Agriculture Sector in Afghanistan.

- B. Much time this quarter was given to making preparations and arrangements for the Illinois visit of Dr. Abdul Qayyum Khan and to activities carried out during his May 30 to June 16, 2007 TDY. Given that his last US visit was in June 2005, we used Dr. Qayyum's time, in his capacity as our Field Office Director, to make contacts and to advance our agenda in a number of areas that are specifically related to the scope of work we are pursuing under the IALC/USAID-ANE Cooperative Agreement. Examples of these activities and our various accomplishments are:
1. Participation in the June 3-5 annual meeting of the Association for International Agriculture and Rural Development (AIARD), which became a valuable professional improvement experience for Dr. Qayyum and an opportunity to network with development practitioners from a range of organizations, agencies and institutions. This meeting was held in Washington D.C.
 2. The AIARD meeting was followed by a productive round of discussions between the three-person Illinois team and the USDA Afghanistan Reconstruction Team, which is part of the FAS Office of Capacity Building and Development. Given the similarity of our mandates and agendas, this type of communication continues to produce immense mutual benefit as our activities and interests continue to intersect. This is indeed a synergistic relationship.
 3. While in Washington D.C., we were received at the Embassy of Afghanistan for a productive meeting with the Ambassador and the Commercial Attache. One year earlier, these two members of the Diplomatic Corps had visited the University of Illinois; so they have a good understanding of our activities. They appreciated our taking time to maintain this relationship and appreciated being updated on our efforts to strengthen the agriculture sector in Afghanistan.
 4. Time spent with Dr. Marvin G. Weinbaum, Scholar-in-Residence at the Middle East Institute, provided useful insight and information. Dr. Weinbaum is a former UIUC Political Science Professor and has spent the past ten years in Washington. He is a recognized authority on South Central Asia, with a deep, deep understanding of Afghanistan-Pakistan historical and political relations.
 5. A visit was made to BearingPoint headquarters in McLean, VA to meet with individuals who manage the ABC project. They were given an explanation of the training programs we have delivered to the agriculture sector in Afghanistan since the 2003 initiation of our activities. We are considering ways that our resources might contribute to their multi-sector capacity building challenge.
 6. Prior to departure from Washington, a courtesy call was made on our project CTO, Dr. John Wilson. This was Dr. Wilson's first opportunity for a face-to-face meeting with Dr. Qayyum, but they have many AID acquaintances in common.

- C. Back on campus, we assembled and submitted final documentation that will allow us to receive \$11,979 from USDA and use those funds to provide eleven days of training in Jalalabad, Afghanistan on soil analysis procedures and laboratory skills in general to scientists working at the Shesham Bagh Research Station. Since these grant funds are not a Mission buy-in, they will be processed directly through UIUC. It should be noted however, that our IALC project led to this call for Illinois assistance.
- D. In response to an invitation extended by the USAID representative who is officed at the U.S. Consulate in Peshawar, a proposal was prepared to present our ideas and recommendations on programs and activities that will expand and strengthen the outreach dimension of the NWFPAU. This includes the delivery of training programs to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and specific ideas on improving Afghanistan-Pakistan cross-border relationships. This proposal was completed during Qayyum's Illinois TDY and was submitted on June 15, 2007. Our proposal includes a two-year budget totaling \$1,596,000. This is proposed as a Mission buy-in. If funded, totally or in part, it will be passed through the IALC Cooperative Agreement as was the case with the Pakistan Mission buy-in initiated in late 2004.
- E. Taking advantage of Qayyum's presence, an APT meeting was held on June 13. The agenda which guided our discussions during that meeting is attached. The group was informed on the process underway to secure a no-cost Cooperative Agreement extension, allowing us to use accumulated carry-over core funds to continue operations in the campus and field offices as long as those funds would permit.

After hearing our estimate that core funds would keep our team in operation until December 2007 or January 2008; and after hearing about difficulties Qayyum has experienced in getting Afghan government clearances for participants in the next two technical short courses (postponed from the May dates and tentatively re-scheduled for July), the recommendation was made that carry-over core funds that were previously allocated to the short courses be reprogrammed and used to cover salaries for our three-person team, travel costs and office operations. The APT Group emphasized the importance keeping our field office in operation and maintaining a presence on-the-ground in Pakistan and Afghanistan as long as funds will permit. This will also allow us to continue to seek direct Mission funding via the core project and to attract funds from other sources, such as the FAO course funding cited in A 3 above. Implementation of this recommendation will result in our operating at the current level, in the field and on campus, until at least September 30, 2008.

- F. The final days of this quarter were used in preparing our response to a "USDA Invitation for Expressions of Interest: Improving Capacity of the Afghanistan Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) to Deliver Extension Services". This invitation asks responders to concentrate on: 1) Strengthening the MAIL capacity to produce and distribute extension messages and materials and, 2) Strengthen the MAIL ability to field well-trained extension staff in the area of tree crop horticulture production and processing. Our response, with a budget totaling \$ 289,850.00, was submitted to USDA prior to the July 3, 2007 deadline.

- G. Continuing attention was given to institutional linkages with support for this activity coming from residual funds in the Islamabad buy-in. Mohammad Yasin Mohsini, Dean of Agriculture at Kabul University, spent one week (June 23-30) in Pakistan. Dean Mohsini met with the Vice-Chancellor and other NWFPAU faculty members, after which he attended the National Weed Science Society Conference in Lahore. During this time he made useful contacts with educators and research scientists in both the NWFP and Punjab Province. The MAIL Director General of Extension and Agriculture Development, Dr. Fazeluddin Fazel, planned to accompany Dean Mohsini on this visit, but had to remain in Afghanistan at the Minister's request.
- H. Items arising from the above, that will require follow up next quarter are:
1. Check on release of the university-development RFA from USAID-Kabul.
 2. Continue dialogue with BearingPoint on our involvement in the ABC project.
 3. Begin work on food processing short course requested by FAO-Kabul and continue negotiations on FAO support for an Oilseed Sector Survey.
 4. Delivery of USDA-funded soil analysis training in Jalalabad.
 5. Monitor buy-in proposal submitted to USAID-Peshawar.
 6. Monitor Expression of Interest submitted to USDA.
 7. Develop FY08 budget for reprogrammed carry-over core funds.

AGENDA

Afghanistan-Pakistan Training (APT) Group Meeting
Wednesday, June 13, 2007
Farina, Illinois

1. Termination of core funding through USAID/ANE Cooperative Agreement and two-year no-cost extension to allow for Mission buy-in contributions.
2. Review of April 4-22, 2007 field visits by Oval & Qayyum.
3. Closure of HED Balkh University Faculty of Agriculture Project.
4. Review of June 6-7 contacts in Washington by Myers/Qayyum/Santas.
5. Update on ten M.Sc. students from MAIL (Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock) Extension Department enrolled in Peshawar and Faisalabad.
6. Comments on technical short courses at NWFP AU set for July.
7. Other updates from the field office.
8. Potential for project activity in oilseed production and processing.
9. Potential/possibility for university development projects in Afghanistan.
10. APT input to summer (August 8) meeting of IALC Technical Advisory Committee in New York City.