

Afghanistan – Pakistan Activities
Quarterly Report IV
(July-August-September 2003)

Sustainable Development of Drylands Project
IALC-UIUC

Introduction

Most of July and August were spent gathering input and assembling information that could flow into the proposal which requested a four-year extension of our Cooperative Agreement. Numerous drafts and iterations of the narrative and budget were submitted and reviewed at various levels, starting with the field office in Pakistan and proceeding through the progression of individuals to USAID/Washington. This process worked its way to a conclusion in early September, with a few delays due to vacation and annual leave plans of most project personnel. When the proposal was finalized, our attention during the month of September was given to preparations for an October TDY in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Activities of this period (July-September):

While assembling pieces for the Cooperative Agreement proposal, the Illinois-based project managers continued to monitor progress in the field as training programs actually got underway. Two organized short courses were completed during the month of August: 1) Enterprise Development and Management Skills (twelve participants); and 2) Irrigation and Water Management Practices (fourteen participants).

A third course was completed during the month of September. That course, “Post Harvest Management and Marketing Skills”, was delivered to seventeen participants. The attached summary gives detailed information on the forty-three participants who attend these one-month training courses. Also attached to this report are outlines which give details on content included and instructional methods used in all three courses. Summaries of the end-of-course evaluation forms completed by all participants are included. We are especially pleased that the three courses could be completed during year one of the Cooperative Agreement.

As was explained in the previous quarterly report, these three short course topics were selected as a result of a week-long visit to Kabul (June 15-22) made by Field Office Director, Dr. Abdul Qayyum Khan. During that visit he met with various organizations and ministries that were potential sponsors of short course participants. Dr. Qayyum made a follow-up visit to Kabul in late July, during which time he delivered tickets and advance information packets to all persons accepted for these courses. The packets were given to each sponsoring organization for delivery to their nominees. This visit was useful in providing answers to any remaining questions.

A pivotal event during August was the IALC Technical Advisory Committee meeting held on the 12th in Albuquerque. The Committee emerged from a closed session to express their deep dissatisfaction with the management of this component and their serious reservations as to whether activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan should be continued. The Committee cited a serious lack of information on this component and a lack of input into activities being carried out, especially in the area of topics selected for the first three courses. They also cited the potential of damage to the IALC reputation by affiliating with the NWFP-AU. In their view the risks of doing business in these countries and the chances of failure are too great.

Given that this component had already been written into the Cooperative Agreement extension proposal, the decision was made to proceed with the Afghanistan-Pakistan training activities. The UIUC project manager was informed, however, that the TAC group expected to receive complete information on what has been accomplished within this component thus far and what is planned for the years ahead. The Committee asked that the information from Illinois be channeled to them through the Project Director, Bob Freitas. That information was electronically transmitted to Mr. Freitas on August 14th.

With the extension of our agreement approved, the need for on-site long-range planning and a training needs assessment survey became more urgent and critical. Although travel warnings remained posted by the Department of State for both Afghanistan and Pakistan, we decided to move ahead with plans for a TDY in October. Coordinating all elements of this visit and getting all arrangements made, not the least of which is country-clearance, was a time-consuming task. The Illinois project managers (Myers and Santas) will be joined on this TDY by Project Director Freitas. Dr. Qayyum will be the fourth member of our team. Dr. Qayyum was asked to handle logistical arrangements and to make appointments with appropriate individuals and organizations in spite of his being fully occupied with the third short course during September.

Activities Planned for the Following Period (October 1 – December 31):

Plans were made for Myers and Santas to depart Illinois on October 8th for travel to Islamabad and to be joined by Freitas on October 12. This will allow Qayyum to have completed his responsibilities to the series of three courses. After business in Islamabad, the team will visit the NWFP-AU in Peshawar followed by a one-week stay in Afghanistan. Wrap-up contacts will be made back in Islamabad prior to an October 24th departure, which will have our TDY completed before start of the one-month Ramadan observance.

Our team believes that on-site contacts in Pakistan and Afghanistan are so important to the successful continuation of our training activities, especially at this juncture, that exemption from the existing State Department and University of Illinois travel ban is justified.