

Quarterly Activity Report: July 1st to September 31th 2004
IALC Sustainable Development of Drylands in Asia and the Middle East Project
Yemen Component – Human Resource Development

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Progress Made this Quarter:

1. As stated in the previous quarterly report, at the request of USAID/Yemen, a second fact-finding and planning mission took place from June 17th through June 30th 2004, with the aim of expanding the scope of our component activities beyond the University of Sana'a to include the faculties of agriculture of Thamar, Ibb and Aden Universities as well. The general objective of this mission was to establish the foundations and develop work and implementation plans for a three year program to strengthen the teaching, research and outreach capacities of the four faculties of agriculture at Sana'a, Thamar, Ibb and Aden Universities and to support their involvement in agricultural outreach and extension so that they can more directly contribute to the development of Yemen's agricultural sector and to the alleviation of rural poverty in this country. The mission involved intensive work visits with each of the four faculties of agriculture, which resulted in the following accomplishments:

- a) Explanation and discussion of the general objectives of our Yemen program component.
- b) Assessment of their faculty and infrastructure resources.
- c) Evaluation of their educational, training and technical support needs.
- d) Determination of their willingness and capabilities to become involved in extension-oriented projects, and their relative technical strengths in this regard.
- e) Identification of specific extension-oriented projects in which they might be willing and able to lead and/or participate.

This mission culminated with meetings to present conclusions and recommendations and a tentative three year plan of activities. The plan of program activities was well received by the formal representatives of the four faculties and by the USAID/Yemen officials involved with our program.

2. A three year work plan and an implementation plan for the first year of activities, and their corresponding budgets, were developed during the first two weeks of July, based on the information and discussions that took place during the June 2004 mission. The main activities in the three year work plan include:

- a) Assistance in curriculum development focusing on undergraduate and graduate programs in agribusiness, agricultural economics, and agricultural extension/education;
- b) Intensive in-country training in the areas of agricultural extension and education, project development, management and evaluation, and selected agribusiness management and agricultural economic analysis tools;
- c) Limited technical support for the development and implementation of extension-oriented PL-480 projects and for writing small PL-480 grants to improve the faculties' library resources;

- d) Informational visit of selected academic authorities from the four faculties of agriculture to New Mexico State University;
- e) Limited M.S. level training in agricultural economics and agribusiness at NMSU; and
- f) Exploring the possibilities of expanding the program to other key agricultural disciplines in the future.

It was concluded that additional program funding would be useful for implementing activities c) and e) above at more desirable levels.

The intensive in-country training program will be designed to be particularly useful in better preparing the faculties for the development and implementation of extension-oriented projects and activities. In addition, it will strengthen the faculties' capacity to establish and operate their planned "Consultancy Centers" and to organize and deliver other community outreach programs.

Given that neither the faculties of agriculture nor the extension service offices have access to operational resources for applied research and extension activities, the plan stresses that the funding of such expenses through PL-480 projects is essential to capitalize on the capacity-building and the access to technical support provided by the IALC/NMSU program.

We recommended that these PL-480 projects: 1) Are awarded to specific faculty members (PIs) at lead universities through the incipient Consortium of Agricultural Faculties, 2) Focus on using available expertise to train and support extension agents and farm leaders throughout Yemen, but might involve some problem-solving research, 3) Mostly fund essential equipment and operational expenses, 4) Be cooperative, involving other universities and the extension service, and the ARA when applied problem-solving research is involved, 5) Are technically supported and monitored by the IALC/NMSU.

It was concluded that the Sana'a and Aden faculties could effectively work on three or four mid-size projects at a time, while Thamar and Ibb should focus their limited faculty resources on one or two projects at the most. If properly organized and fully engaged, it was estimated that the four faculties could be capable of effectively spending between U.S. \$1.2 and U.S. \$1.5 million towards the essential equipment and operational expenses needed to implement eight to ten three-year-long extension-oriented PL-480 projects.

PL-480 Project ideas identified during this mission include: 1) The operation of demonstrative school farms at all four universities, including a small budget for the improvement of the faculties' library resources; 2) The development of a country-wide database on the basic characteristics, prices, costs and returns of the most important crop and livestock production systems; 3) A multidisciplinary project to improve the management of major crops in Yemen; 4) An information transfer project to improve the nutrition of the farm family; 5) A technology transfer project for improving the post-harvest handling and marketing of perishable agricultural products; 6) An extension-oriented project to improve livestock nutrition and healthcare; 7) A technology demonstration and information transfer project to improve irrigation water use efficiency.

Finally, considering that the IALC/NMSU Program activities described above were decided upon in consultation and agreement with official representatives from the four faculties involved in the incipient Consortium of Agricultural Universities, this consortium is expected to play a central role in facilitating and supporting the implementation of this program. The IALC/NMSU Program will obviously strengthen the consortium through the implementation of the planned activities. Subject to funding availability, the IALC/NMSU will remain open to additional training and technical assistance requests from the consortium. In particular, the possibilities for expanding the program's activities to include training and technical support in other key agricultural fields will be explored during the second and third years of program implementation.

The year one implementation plan included more detail on the scope, timing and the IALC/NMSU program team members to be involved in specific actions from October 1 2004 to September 31st 2005. Both documents were delivered to USAID/Yemen with copies to the IALC Sustainable Development of Drylands in Asia and the Middle East Project Director on July 16th 2004. These plans were subjected to further discussions and negotiations through e-mail during July and August. The final plans included an additional \$200,000 earmarked to support extension oriented "School Farm" projects at the Universities of Sana'a and Aden.

3. Mr. Wadea Al-Sattar, the Agricultural Specialist at USAID/Yemen in charge of coordinating activities with our component, visited New Mexico State University during the last week of August. IALC Project Director, Dr. Bob Freitas, traveled from Arizona on a very-short notice to meet Mr. Al-Sattar and to participate in the key meetings that took place during the first day of his visit. The IALC/NMSU project team took advantage of this opportunity to familiarize and inform Mr. Al-Sattar about NMSU's research and extension capabilities in agricultural sciences and their application to drylands agriculture, through an intensive program of on- and off-campus meetings and field visits. A final agreement about the work plans and budgets was also reached during this visit.

4. Planning for an early October visit to Yemen by Richard Phillips took place in September. The main objectives of this mission were to conduct the first stage of the project management training program; to begin the process of planning the "School Farm" projects at Sana'a and Aden Universities; and to participate in a workshop jointly organized with ICARDA to inform representatives from key agricultural sector entities about USAID/Yemen planned programs and activities. This mission took place from September 27th through October 14th.

Two intensive training sessions of project planning and management were conducted, one at Aden and one at Sana'a University. Thamar and Ibb administrators and faculty members were invited to participate in the training sessions held in Sana'a and Aden, respectively. Due to the high cost of the trade-marked materials needed for this training, total participation was limited to 30 individuals. This training covered: 1) professional skills development and high performance team (HPT) training; 2) project selection and key stakeholder expectations; 3) project planning and management process; and 4) project focus, accountability and execution. The professional skills and HPT training drew on a variety of resources. Participants received a two-day *FranklinCovey® Project Management Course*, adapted to the Yemen working environment. When completed, this training will provide participants with skills that are critical to the

economic and environmental sustainability of all projects. It will leave in place project management professionals that can continue to serve as a resource for their country.

This training was also used as a means to assist the Aden and Sana'a faculties in beginning the process of planning on-campus "School Farm" projects. In fact, as it pertains to those two faculties, this training was the first step in the planning of these projects. Richard Phillips spent additional time with each of the faculties helping them apply their newly acquired skills and knowledge to begin the planning of various extension-oriented projects, including "School Farm" projects. Mr. Phillips will remain available via e-mail, phone or videoconferencing for follow up support and consultation on the planning of the projects being undertaken by the four faculties. He will conduct a second follow up and consultancy visit in the early summer of 2005.

Activities Planned for Next Quarter (October 1st to December 31st 2004)

1. Technically, most of the previously discussed mission by Richard Phillips will take place during the October 1st to December 31st 2004 quarter. Although significant follow up communication activities from New Mexico State University will take place after this visit in order to make progress in the development of the "School Farm" project proposals, the next mission by Jim Libbin and Bill Gorman will not take place until January of 2005. That mission will focus on curriculum development, agribusiness marketing training, and finalizing the "School Farm" project proposals. A significant amount of time will also be spent the following quarter in the planning of that visit.