Quarterly Report

January 1 –March 30, 2007

For

Sustainable Development of Dry Lands in Asia and the Middle East
Funded by USAID in cooperation with the

International Arid Lands Consortium
Arid Land Study Center
University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona

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Project Overview

        With the strong support of USAID and TAC of IALC the ongoing efforts toward the revitalize of agricultural education program in higher education institutions in Afghanistan has achieved a significant progress through the establishment of two Agriculture Electronic Libraries (AEL) in the Faculties of Agriculture at Kabul and Nangarhar Universities in 2004 and 2006 respectively. The foundation of distant teaching and learning has been established and in due time it could be expanded to link major US universities with these institutions for the advancement of science based education system in Afghanistan.

Project Name: Establishment of Teaching and Learning Technology Center for Nangarhar University, Faculty of Agriculture, Jalalabad, Nangarhar, Afghanistan.

Overall Project Goals:

        The objective was to establish an information resource center for the development of modern agriculture in Eastern Afghanistan. This was accomplished by creating a fully equipped and operational Agriculture Electronic Library and technology teaching and learning center at Nangarhar University in Jalalabad, Afghanistan. The center is housed and managed by the faculty of Agriculture.

Current quarter (January 1- March 30, 2006)

Introduction

        The higher education system in Afghanistan is in need of continued support to train young Afghans and the farming community in market oriented agricultural production. The IALC Sustainable Development of Drylands in Asia and the Middle East has focused on the agricultural sector in Afghanistan. The attention to this most important sector will help more than 85% of the Afghan population. During the meeting in Washington D.C. the USAID team, the TAC board and the IALC members were supportive of the project. It was suggested that the use of solar panels for electricity generation be investigated in order to overcome the dependency upon unreliable electric power.

Observations:

        Another major concern is the lack of communication networking throughout the university. The computer facility still lacks internet capabilities, inhibiting university staff access to online databases, e-mails, etc.

        Currently the faculty does not have a library, and there are no resources of any kind (primary, secondary or tertiary) available at this time. The students relied completely on verbal dictation and notes provided by faculty members. There is no way for determining validity of the information or possibilities for updating educational levels. Lack of such vital resources results in the loss the free thinking capabilities, spirit of

investigation and experimental studies. The World Bank is interested in funding the library sciences development in the country, but the process will take long time. What we have achieved in a short period with a modest budget is very efficient and effective, but needs to be further expanded and provided with the necessary support for continuity.

Achievements:

1. Updated the USAID team on the activities and performance of the project in Afghanistan during the Washington, DC visit on February 27, 2007.
2. Participated in the TAC meeting in Washington D.C, on February 28, 2007.
3. Communicated with the dean of college of agriculture in Nangarhar University.
4. Arranged for the maintenance of photocopy machine through personal contacts.

Following quarter: (April 1-June 30, 2007)

Recommendations: These suggestions holds true for the sustainability and continued upgrade of this center**.**

1. Work with the faculty and administration to find funds for the rehabilitation of the teaching facilities and faculty offices.
2. Identify resources to be used for the teaching of English language and computer literacy and facilitation of research on campus.
3. Identify potential donors for the expansion of this center.
4. Look into sustainable alternative sources of electricity (solar panels or generators)
5. Work with other organizations to facilitate internet in order to enable the faculty and students to access online information.
6. Assist in curriculum development and help locate textbook for faculty and students.
7. Help coordinate faculty to establish contacts with local and international resources in attaining international research grants.
8. Provide faculty with training and teaching resources to encourage field experiments on campus and on farmers' fields.
9. Gather information and estimate costs of providing internet connectivity to this center.
10. Visit the staff of TEEAL at Cornell University to exchange information and improve knowledge about digital library resources.