

## **Quarterly Progress Report**

### **Rebuilding the Agricultural Information System for Institutions of Higher Education in Afghanistan: Status, Issues, and Future Plans**

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**Project Overview:** To support ongoing efforts to revitalize the overall agricultural education program in higher education institutions in Afghanistan, this preliminary project, supported by the IALC, has taken the first steps toward developing a modern agricultural information system. The opening of the first electronic library (called the Agriculture Electronic Library(AEL)) in the Faculty of Agriculture at Kabul University was accomplished in the spring of 2004. Since that time, personnel have been hired to maintain the facility, trainings of library staff and faculty have been conducted, and equipment and materials purchased (including CD-ROMs, Internet resources, and textbooks). It is the intent of this highly successful project to leverage current progress into support for an expanded activity to advance and provide critical support to the agricultural and veterinary sciences education programs at the regional universities as well as at Kabul University.

#### **Recent Accomplishments**

##### *Personnel, Salaries, and Operations*

As of May 15, 2005, the salary of the Field Coordinator, Mr. Khalid Madadi, was raised from \$60 per month to \$100 per month. In addition, Rahima Noori, was hired to be assistant coordinator of AEL at a salary of \$60 per month. This has made it possible to expand the hours the facility is open and to cover times when Mr. Madadi is fulfilling his numerous teaching responsibilities outside of the AEL. They each work 20 hours per week to assist faculty and students in using AEL resources. The AEL is open from 8:30 am-4:00 pm every day except Friday. On May 22, Mr. Madadi sent an email indicating that over 50 people use AEL each day.

The project has received a very reasonable quote for purchasing the LAN version of TEEAL from Nicole Joos, TEEAL Coordinator at Cornell University. She also gave permission to give the current AEL CD-ROM set to the Veterinary Sciences Library after AEL converts to the LAN version.

##### *Equipment*

To date 7 computers have been purchased for the AEL, with 5 connected to the Internet. In May 3 computer desks and 7 chairs, as well as supplies and software, also were purchased and

installed. In addition, 3 Intel Pentium Processors and 3 stabilizers were purchased (one of each for the College of Veterinary Science Library).

### *Training/Staff Development*

Atifa Rawan visited Kabul from May 7-17, conducting three training sessions for faculty and students of the Colleges of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences at Kabul University. The trainings, “How to effectively use TEEAL, AGORA, and selected agricultural internet resources” were conducted May 9,10, and 11. Twenty-seven students and faculty attended, including 2 faculty from the College of Agriculture at the University of Nangarhar (see Appendix A). In addition, Atifa provided intensive trainings for Ms. Noori and Mr. Madadi and gave them teaching aids to support their recently established AEL training program. Participant response to the workshops was overwhelming positive. Comments made on the workshop evaluation forms included “please keep in contact with us and inform us about new information that may come in the future,” “good balance and nicely arranged programme for practice to apply whatever had been learned during lecture,” and “I will be able to apply what I have learned to teaching and research.”

### *Electronic Resources and Print Publications*

Carla Casler worked with John Santas, University of Illinois, to identify print materials for the AEL to support both the Faculty of Agriculture and short-term training programs. Dr. Santas organized the delivery of 5 sets of a 6 textbook series for the AEL, as well as one set for the Arid Lands Information Center. Field Director, Mr. Madadi, received the textbooks from Dr. Abdul Qayyum Khan, Director of the University of Illinois Field Office at the North West Frontier Province Agricultural University (NWFP AU) in Peshawar Pakistan. An additional 100 textbooks were purchased on agricultural topics relevant for Pakistan and Afghanistan and delivery was facilitated with the help of Mr. Murad Ali Mohmand of the National Book Foundation in Peshawar, Pakistan. Plans are also being developed to digitize manuals used in the NWFP AU short courses; the first one, *Manual for Preservation of Fruits and Vegetables* in English and in Dari, was provided by Dr. Santas (see also Appendix B for a list of selected electronic resources).

### *Meetings and Funding Discussions*

During her stay in Kabul, Atifa met with Barry Primm, Deputy Mission Director, and Rick Scott, Program and Project Development Officer Director at the USAID/Kabul office, to discuss possibilities for additional support for the development of the agricultural information system in Afghanistan and to brief them on progress made to date.

In addition, she met with Lane Lee Smith, Telematics Coordinator at UASIA/Kabul, Dr. Ghani, Kabul University President, and a representative from the British Council about the automation of Kabul University Library system. Dr. Ghani is very committed and supportive of this project and our proposal to expand the activities in Kabul and to include the regional universities. He offered to help seek financial support for the project. Atifa also gave both Dr. Ghani and Mr. Smith a proposal from the University of Arizona to provide additional support for other agriculture education-related efforts.

Atifa has agreed to co-lead a digital libraries initiative for Afghanistan with Rahina Popal, Head Librarian, Kabul University Library in order to harmonize eQuality Alliance visioning efforts coordinated by Lane Smith and Maria Beebe, WSU Center to Bridge the Digital Divide.

Project team members met also with Dr. David Sammons, USAID Special Advisor for University Relations and Agricultural Research, Training, and Outreach, when he visited the University of Arizona on March 4, 2005. The discussion focused on how to best interact with USAID programs, possible USAID funding for continuing the project, and on the possibility of cooperating with Purdue University by linking the Agriculture Electronic Library (AEL) and Purdue's nearly adjacent computer room. Preliminary contact was made with Dr. Kevin McNamara from Purdue, and who is also the primary contact for the USDA Agriculture Education Project for Afghanistan, to follow-up on this idea. Further discussions on this issue are planned for the future.

Finally, Atifa, the UA Library, and members of the UA's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences participated in meetings in December that resulted in several proposals to the Afghanistan University Partnership Program (AUPP). The library-related proposal focused on: 1) creating an online catalog for existing library collections at Kabul University; 2) assisting Kabul University Library to obtain access to scholarly journals in various disciplines for the faculty, students, and staff at Kabul University; and 3) creating a learning environment by combining the information and technology to facilitate learning and success.

#### *Special Recognitions*

Atifa Rawan received the American Library Association's Elizabeth Futas Catalyst for Change Award in Chicago, ILL, on June 21, 2005. This award recognizes and honors a librarian who invests time and talent to make positive changes in the profession of librarianship.

Professor Mohsini, Dean of the College of Agriculture, gave Atifa a letter of appreciation for her work and he sent a letter to USAID asking for continued support of the AEL.

#### *Publications and Presentations*

Casler, C.L. 2005. "One special library's international projects." Presented in Pre-conference workshop: Building digital library collections and services for libraries in the developing world, before IAALD XITH World Congress/USAIN Biennial Conference:  
[The Globalization of Information: Agriculture at the Crossroads](#), May, Lexington, Kentucky.

Casler, C.L., A. Rawan, and B.S. Hutchinson. 2005. "Library rebuilding in Afghanistan." Poster presented at the IAALD XITH World Congress/USAIN Biennial Conference:  
[The Globalization of Information: Agriculture at the Crossroads](#), May, Lexington, Kentucky.

Casler, C.L. 2005. "Afghanistan's first electronic library." *Arizona Land & People*, 50(1): 5-7.

#### **Proposed Activities for 2005-2006**

Three target activities are proposed for the FY 2005-2006 funding from the IALC totaling \$40,000:

1) ongoing maintenance and support for the AEL, including purchase of the LAN TEEAL and salaries for Mr. Madidi and Ms. Noori. If possible, additional materials also will be provided to the Veterinary Sciences library.

2) organize, host, and facilitate a “Forum on the Role of Agricultural Information and Libraries in Rebuilding the Higher Education System in Afghanistan.” This forum will be held at the University of Arizona, tentatively in February 2006, to bring together interested parties from U.S. academic institutions, the USDA National Agricultural Library, the Ministry of Higher Education in Afghanistan, Asia Foundation, and relevant U.S. government agencies, to discuss options, opportunities, and plans for coordinating and expanding support for current efforts to rebuild the agricultural education system. Invitations will be sent to selected individuals who have expressed interest in participating in the redevelopment of the agricultural information system in Afghanistan. This will be a two-day meeting with all meals provided by the IALC/AEL project. Also, funds will be provided to selected Afghan official(s) to cover their travel and participation costs. An IALC/AEL project website is currently in development and will provide access to information about the meeting as well as the entire project. Results of the meeting will be compiled into a report that will potentially be used as the basis for a collaborative proposal to support future agricultural information and library development activities.

3) conduct further in-country trainings at the AEL for library staff, faculty, and students on accessing agricultural information.

## Appendix A

### Attendees Workshop on Agricultural Information Resources May 9-11, 2005

1. Ghulam Rasul Faizy - Dept. of Plant Protection, College of Agriculture
2. Farid Ahmad Sherzai - Agronomy Dept., College of Agriculture
3. Noor Ali Noor - Economic and Extension Dept., Nangarhar University
4. Spien John - Animal Science, College of Agriculture
5. Zikrullah Safi - Agronomy Dept., College of Agriculture
6. Mohammad Sakhi Pameri - Faculty of Agriculture
7. Mohammad Akbor - Faculty of Agriculture
8. Suhaila Tamin - Faculty of Veterinary Science
9. Masood Patan - Animal Science Dept., College of Agriculture
10. Homayoon Milad - Agronomy, College of Agriculture
11. Mohammad Edris Raauf - College of Agriculture
12. Jawid A. Walizad - Agronomy, College of Agriculture
13. Abdul Qadir - Agronomy, College of Agriculture
14. Sher Ahmad - Plant Protection, College of Agriculture
15. Habibshah Mutawakel - Horticulture, College of Agriculture
16. Hafeezulla - Economic, College of Agriculture
17. Shakilla Sahill - College of Agriculture
18. Ghulam Rasoul Samadi - Horticulture, College of Agriculture
19. Bahar Akbarzad - College of Agriculture
20. M. Akbar Popal - Dept. of Plant Protection, College of Agriculture
21. Rahima Noori - Agronomy, College of Agriculture
22. Mir Aga - Agriculture Economics and Extension, College of Agriculture
23. Abdul Khalid Madadi - Plant Protection Dept., College of Agriculture
24. Asadullah Pyarookhil - Faculty of Veterinary Science
25. Ghulam Haider - College of Agriculture, Nangarhar University
26. Hayatullah - College of Agriculture
27. Noorgul H. - College of Agriculture

## **Appendix B**

### **Selected Electronic Resources Agriculture Electronic Library, Faculty of Agriculture Kabul University**

1. TEEAL - The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library
2. Access to AGORA - online
3. Forestry Compendium 2003 Edition
4. FAO Conservation Guides
5. Global Forest Resources assessment 2002
6. Corn Growth development and Diagnostics
7. FAO Land and Water Digital Media series (Conservation Agriculture
8. AGRIS 2002 (international Information System for the Agriculture and Technology)
9. Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries
10. Broad Leaf Weed seeding identification
11. Crop protection Compendium
12. Animal Health and Production Compendium (housed in the College of Veterinary Science)
13. Drip Irrigation (seminar handouts)
14. World book Encyclopedia (CD)
15. Merriam Webster Dictionary (CD)