

Quarterly Activity Report: January 1st to March 31th 2005
IALC Sustainable Development of Drylands in Asia and the Middle East Project
Yemen Component – Human Resource Development

Principal Contact: Octavio A. Ramirez, New Mexico State University
E-mail: oramirez@nmsu.edu, Phone (505) 646-3215

Progress Made this Quarter:

1. This quarter's activities started with a mission by Drs. Bill Gorman and Carlos Rosencrans from January 1st through January 20th 2005. Substantial planning and preparation for that mission took place during the previous quarter. The purposes of that mission were:

- a) To work with the faculties of agriculture at the Universities of Sana'a, Aden, Dhamar and Ibb on further developing and improving project proposals that will enhance the economic development of the agriculture sector and improve the incomes of rural people. This was a follow up to the project planning effort started by Rich Phillips in October of 2004 and is part of the process of getting the Universities ready to engage in extension/outreach-oriented projects.
- b) Present seminars and workshops on project planning techniques, methods for effective extension programs, and how to do marketing plans, business plans and economics and financial feasibility studies.
- c) Workout details of subcontracts to the Universities so project funds can be transferred in a timely and efficient manner.

This mission benefited significantly from the presence and support of the IALC Sustainable Development of Drylands in Asia and the Middle East Project Director, Dr. Bob Freitas. A summary of the mission's accomplishments includes:

- a) Further development of the University of Sana'a project proposal "Conservation of Water by Improved Irrigation Systems and Management Practices with Strawberries as the Demonstration Crop." The complexity of the proposed project makes it an ideal candidate for advanced project planning techniques, particularly Critical Path Methods (CPM). The group was introduced to the concepts of CPM methods for project planning and management. Approximately two days were spent on applying the technique to the proposed project. These sessions were highly beneficial in 1) refining the design of the project, 2) identifying the times and costs of all activities that must be accomplished, 3) specifying the proper sequencing of tasks, and 4) establishing an effective management and monitoring process. In short, major strides were made in the detailed planning of the project scope and project execution. Considerable consensus building, particularly regarding using strawberries as the demonstration crop, was achieved. Seminar presentations were made at the University of Sana'a on 1) Project planning techniques, 2) How to do market research and prepare marketing plans, 3) Project feasibility analysis, and 4) Effective extension strategies. Attendance to these seminars was excellent.
- b) The Aden project planning meetings and seminar sessions held at the Faculty of Agriculture facilities about 40 km north of Aden were well attended. Participants included professors with expertise in most of the needed technical areas, three

representatives from the Extension Service and the Dean and two faculty members from the University at IBB. The project team at Aden University, in close cooperation with the Extension Service, selected tomatoes as the focus crop for their demonstration project. Agreement was reached on a general plan to work with Extension in selecting three to four farmers willing to cooperate in planting tomato demonstration plots and holding demonstration field days. The demonstration field trials will be based on “known best practices” with the idea of showing farmers they can increase yields, improve quality, reduce losses to diseases, use approved chemicals properly, improve marketing practices, and conserve water. Tomatoes are an important crop in the area but most farmers are not following best management practices. Discussion sessions focused on 1) current status of tomato production, 2) marketing practices and market outlets, 3) designing the demonstration plots, 4) creative ways to extend the information from the demonstration projects to farmers, particularly since most of their farmers have little or no reading skills, 5) the need for a detailed description of the complete supply chain for tomatoes from the grower through the wholesale distributor as a bases for improving the overall efficiency of the system. The seminar sessions focused on 1) what was expected of them with respect to the USAID sponsored projects, 2) suggestions for more effective project planning, 3) analysis of markets and 4) introduction to CPM methods. The strongest point of this project is the cooperation of University and Extension to use known technologies to improve a major segment of the agricultural industry in the region.

- c) The mechanisms to transfer funds from the USAID/IALC/NMSU Cooperative Agreement to the Universities of Sana’a and Aden, and to execute and properly monitor and account form all of the project expenses were discussed with authorities from these two universities. Agreement was reached in this regard.
- d) NMSU had not received written proposal plans from the Universities of Ibb and Dhamar prior to the January 2005 mission to Yemen. This is understandable as originally it was thought that they would be cooperating through joint projects with Sana’a and Aden. However, during this visit, both institutions expressed a strong interest in having their own projects. Faculty from Ibb participated in two days of the discussions at Aden and faculty from Dhamar participated in some of the seminars held in Sana’a. However, they did not benefit from the same level or intensity of training and project evaluation, as did the faculties of Sana’a and Aden. It was concluded that NMSU would have to work more closely with these two universities during future visits.
- e) The need for NMSU to have an in-country representative was discussed with Mr. Dorvin Stockdale and Dr. Bob Freitas. With this need in mind, the NMSU Project Team and Bob Freitas met with Dr. Towfick Sufian, Vice Rector for Graduate Studies & Scientific Research, Sana’a University. He expressed interest in working as an NMSU in-country representative if appropriate arrangements could be made.

NMSU component team members engaged in significant follow up activities after the January mission. Specifically:

- a) A detailed trip report was prepared by Drs. Gorman and Rosencrans, which was forwarded to USAID/Yemen, USAID/ANE and the IALC Sustainable Development of Drylands in Asia and the Middle East Project Director on February 28th. An NMSU team meeting was conducted to discuss the progress achieved during that mission.
- b) Project proposals from the Ibb and Dhamar faculties, received in early February, were meticulously reviewed by NMSU team members assigned to support these two faculties. Timely feedback was provided to the faculties towards the improvement of their proposals.
- c) A detailed subcontract document specifying the procedures to govern the transfer, utilization and accountability for the funds transferred to the Universities of Sana's and Aden for the purposes of implementing their project proposals was developed and forwarded to USAID/Yemen, USAID/ANE and the IALC Sustainable Development of Drylands in Asia and the Middle East Project Director for comments and approval.
- d) In early March, additional meetings were conducted to plan Rich Phillips' upcoming mission, specifically to coordinate for an effective follow up to the activities conducted during Drs. Gorman and Rosencrans visit.

Other major activities during this quarter included:

- a) The NMSU team leader, Dr. Octavio Ramirez, traveled to Washington DC during the first week of March to make presentations and answer questions about the activities and accomplishments of the Yemen component to USAID/ANE officers and to the Technical Advisory Committee of the IALC Sustainable Development of Drylands in Asia and the Middle East Project.
- b) In response to a request from Dr. Freitas, Dr. Ramirez prepared a one-page "visual communications" pamphlet about the Yemen component. This was sent by e-mail to Dr. Freitas on March 22nd.
- c) The planning and preparation of Rich Phillips' mission scheduled for April 1st to April 21st with a stop in Washington DC for meetings with Dr. Scott Christensen and other USAID/ANE officials during the last week of March. The dates and a detailed schedule for this mission were sent to USAID/Yemen via e-mail on March 9th requesting comments and feedback. Because no response was received until March 28th, when country clearance was denied without explanation, planning and preparation for that mission continued and Rich Phillips traveled to Washington DC. After consultation with USAID/Yemen, Dr. Scott Christensen recommended postponing this mission on March 30th.
- d) Frequent e-mail and phone communications between Dr. Octavio Ramirez, and Drs. Bob Freitas and Scott Christensen were maintained during the first two weeks of April, in an attempt to reach a compromise with USAID/Yemen that would allow for

a continuation of the Cooperative Agreement, three-year Scope of Work and one-year Implementation Plan which were mutually agreed upon by USAID/Yemen-ANE and IALC-MNSU on September 6th 2004. Our understanding of the reason for USAID/Yemen's decision to halt implementation of the Cooperative Agreement is a lack of satisfaction with the Yemeni Universities' progress in the development of their field projects and with their overall commitment to take full advantage of the NMSU training and technical assistance resources being made available to them through the Agreement. We have made it clear that we do not concur with this assessment. Although progress is being made at a pace short of the standards that one would apply to Western (developed country) universities, a lot has been accomplished in only six months of work under very difficult conditions.

- e) In response to a request from Dr. Christensen, Dr. Ramirez also developed a detailed chronology of key events during the elapsed timeframe of the Cooperative Agreement, a summary of the progress to date, and a proposal outlining which of the original activities in the Scope of Work the NMSU team would like to continue with given USAID/Yemen's decision not to add anymore resources into the Agreement. This was to be used in a conference call between USAID/ANE and USAID/Yemen to negotiate the future of the Agreement. The conference call was originally scheduled for April 5th. It was postponed twice due to personal reasons involving USAID/Yemen officials (first Dr. Doug Heisler and then Mr. Dorvin Stockdale) and, on April 11th, delayed indefinitely because of security concerns in that country.
- f) From January 15th through February, Dr. Ramirez and other NMSU team members worked intensively on a planning proposal for the Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Cooperative Research Support Program (SANREM-CRSP), entitled "Sustainable Agriculture Impact and Devising Socio-Economically Feasible Alternatives to Qat Production in Yemen." Writing proposals such as this to enhance the scope of activities funded under the Yemen Component was envisioned in activity six of the Cooperative Agreement. On February 1st, Dr. Ramirez e-mailed to USAID/Yemen (Dr. Heisler and Mr. Stockdale) the suggested title and abstract for this proposal and requested feedback from the mission. On February 23rd, having received no response from USAID/Yemen mission, and with clearance from Dr. Christensen, the NMSU team submitted the proposal to SANREM-CRSP. After additional requests from Dr. Christensen, on March 1st, USAID/Yemen (Mr. Stockdale) notified NMSU by e-mail that "we at USAID do not find this topic to be suitable for research in Yemen." Further efforts through Dr. Christensen to reach an agreement with the mission on modifications to the proposal that would make it agreeable to them failed and the submission was withdrawn on March 14th.

Activities Planned for Next Quarter:

At this point, given the impasse with the USAID/Yemen mission, the activities planned for the second quarter of 2005 are on halt.