

**Quarterly Report**

**April 1 –June 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**

**By**

**Nasrat Wassimi, Ph.D.  
Research Scientist, Office of Arid Land Studies  
University of Arizona  
Tucson, Arizona**

## **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. Two similar centers are planned for two universities in Yemen (Aden & Ibb) and it is planned to be completed toward the end of the year.

## **Current quarter (April 1- June 30, 2007)**

### **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. All of the faculty members in the college of agriculture have received training in the use of TEEAL and they are using it to prepare power point presentations and lectures.
2. Students of the senior year have also been trained in the use of TEEAL and students are preparing their senior class seminars based on research information obtained from TEEAL
3. Prepared, concept note, budget and scope of work for the extension of this activities to two universities in Yemen.
4. Contacted the president of Nangarhar University and discussed with him the sustainability of the center.
5. Communicated with the dean of college of agriculture in Nangarhar University to explore possibilities of internet connection to the center.
6. Arranged for the maintenance of photocopy machine through personal contacts.
7. Contacted the authorities in Aden and Ibb but did not receive any response.
8. Arranged for the trip to Yemen with Dr. Jim Libbin of NMSU but due to security concerns in Afghanistan and no response from Yemen, it is postponed till Mid October 2007.
9. Gathered information and estimate costs of providing internet connectivity to this center.
10. Contacted colleagues to lend money for the maintenance of operation in the center.

**Following quarter: (July 1-September 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. Provide faculty with training and teaching resources to encourage field experiments on campus and on farmers' fields.

7. Visit the staff of TEEAL at Cornell University to exchange information and improve knowledge about digital library resources.
8. Trip to Yemen and Afghanistan in October 2007.
9. Work on a manuscript related to the work done in Afghanistan