Scope of Work 2005-2006

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, funded 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, to train library staff and faculty, and to purchase equipment and materials (including CD-ROMs, Internet resources, and textbooks). Efforts are being made to leverage this progress into support for an expanded activity to advance and provide critical assistance to the agricultural and veterinary sciences education programs at the regional universities as well as at Kabul University.

New Considerations: The University of Arizona Libraries (UAL) have become involved in the digital libraries initiative in Afghanistan and were recently awarded a sub-contract by Washington State University (WSU) to help develop digital library systems for five higher education institutions in Kabul and to provide training for Afghan librarians. To this end, project coordinator Atifa Rawan and another UAL systems librarian visited Kabul in November 2005. Consideration is now being given as to how to best integrate the AEL with this new USAID-supported program. In addition, it was recently learned that Dr. Wassimi has left ICARDA and will no longer be available to assist with in-country AEL activities. Thus, the new collaboration with WSU may be an opportunity to move in-country AEL support to WSU program coordinators.

REVISED Proposed Activities for 2005-2006

Three target activities are proposed for the FY 2005-2006 funding from the IALC totaling an additional $40,000 (see attached budget):

1) Ongoing maintenance and support for the AEL will be continued, including purchase of the LAN TEEAL, Internet access to the CABI Compendia, and salaries for Mr. Zekrullah Safi and Mr. Mohammad Haroon Zareef. Additional materials also will be provided to the Veterinary Sciences library and possibly for Mr. Madidi in exchange for his translation services.

2) Continued training workshops will be provided as needed and coordinated with the WSU effort to ensure the widest possible benefits for Afghan higher education library and College of Agriculture personnel, faculty, and students.

3) Assistance will be provided to Nangarhar and potentially Herat University libraries by identifying and purchasing appropriate agricultural electronic resources to support their Colleges of Agriculture curriculum. In addition, library staff and others from these Universities will be supported to attend trainings in Kabul as appropriate.

Due to changes in the College of Agriculture construction, renovation, and infrastructure as well as the new eQuality Alliances program, we have decided to postpone indefinitely the previously suggested "Forum on the Role of Agricultural Information and Libraries in Rebuilding the Higher Education System in Afghanistan." However, we plan to continue to look for opportunities to alert key officials in USAID and other organizations as to the importance and effectiveness of this project, and also prepare a pre-proposal for integrating the AEL program into the eQuality Alliances program.