

IALC-USAID Sustainable Development of Drylands
Trip Report – Visit to Pakistan and Afghanistan
By John W. Santas and Oval Myers, Jr.
January 6-25, 2009

Introduction:

Since initiation of the Afghanistan-Pakistan component in late 2002, Dr. Santas has visited Afghanistan a total of 5 times and Dr. Myers has made a total of 10 visits. During our January 2009 visit we exchanged comments frequently and repeatedly about the positive changes that have taken place since our first visit in October 2003, and the incredible acceleration in the pace of development activity. Whether measured by dollars invested, donor organizations involved, number of projects in operation, expatriate presence or any other criteria; the progress we have witnessed in Afghanistan during the six years of our participation in the development process has been impressive indeed. We hope for matching progress in the security situation, which will allow the development process to continue and gather momentum.

Executive Summary

1. After examining a wide range of alternatives, we decided that a series of short-term training programs on “Research and Demonstration Methodology and Interpretation” will be the best way to use funds that have been allocated for that purpose in FY09 IALC Cooperative Agreement budget. (January 18 notes provide details).
2. Our working relationship with the NWFP Agricultural University (NWFAU) in Peshawar, Pakistan has been in place for more than 25 years. An “Agreement of Cooperation” was prepared by our Pakistani partners, presented at a January 10 meeting, and will be incorporated as part of a Memorandum of Understanding renewal and extension; thus continuing this relationship through 2014. (see January 10 notes)
3. The timing of our visit to Afghanistan coincided with the annual review of USAID-funded agriculture projects. Our participation in the January 20-21-22 “Agricultural Partners Workshop” was an informative and enriching part of our visit.
4. Useful information was gathered on Afghanistan’s system of Vocational Agriculture High Schools. We were interested in learning more about these schools because they provide pre-service training for most of the field-level extension staff who are employed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL). Graduates of these schools therefore, are responsible for most of the “technology transfer” that takes place among producers at the village and farm levels. (January 19 notes provide details).
5. A portion of our time was spent giving direct assistance to the “Afghanistan Water, Agriculture and Technology Transfer” (AWATT) Project. This is a legitimate use of IALC Cooperative Agreement resources because our previous Human Capacity

Development activities and accomplishments will flow into the AWATT project and serve as a foundation for many of the tasks undertaken during the next 2-3 years.

Routing:

Outbound: Champaign/Chicago (AA) - Chicago/London (AA) - London/Islamabad (PIA) - Islamabad/Kabul (PIA)

Inbound : Kabul/Delhi (IA)- Delhi/Chicago (AA) – Chicago/Champaign (Amtrak)

Daily Log of Activities:

Tuesday, January 6 – Depart Illinois

Wednesday, January 7 – In transit through London/Heathrow

Thursday, January 8 - Arrive Islamabad 8:25 a.m. and transfer to Serena Hotel

Thursday, January 8

On arrival at Islamabad International Airport we were met by Dr. Abdul Qayyum Khan, Director of our Illinois Field Office and his driver, Afzal Sher. Before settling into our rooms at the Serena Hotel, we had about two hours of project-related discussion with Dr. Qayyum.

We were fortunate that a three-day Islamic holiday, known as “10th Maharam”, allowed Qayyum to be away from his normal duty station in Kabul and his responsibilities as the AWATT Project Chief of Party. Although his duty station is Kabul, Dr. Qayyum continues to maintain his residence in Islamabad. Dr. Qayyum informed us that he would be with us for the duration of our time in Pakistan and would travel with us to Kabul on Monday, January 12.

Although our original plan consisted of traveling directly to Peshawar by road on arrival January 8, Qayyum confirmed his preliminary advice that the security situation would prevent our travel to Peshawar and require us to remain in Islamabad. Arrangements have been made for a delegation of eight from the NWFP Agricultural University in Peshawar to meet with our threesome at the Serena tomorrow, January 9.

Friday, January 9

Dr. Qayyum received word that the NWFP AU delegation would not be coming to Islamabad. The son of a principal member of that group (Ghulam Habib) had been killed in an automobile accident. Our meeting is postponed until tomorrow.

Saturday, January 10

The AU-Peshawar group arrived at about 10:00 and assembled in a conference room at the Serena. The group consisted of :

1. Vice Chancellor Said Khan Khalil
2. Dr. Jamal, Chair of Water Management
3. Dr. Naeem, Dean of Plant Protection
4. Dr. Akmal, Chair of Agronomy Dept.
5. Dr. Qureshi, Chair of Livestock Mgt.
6. Rizwan Ahmad, Planning Director
7. Dr. Farhatullah, Chair of Plant Breeding and Genetics. (Dr. Farhatullah also has administrative responsibility for the "Linkage Activities" grant that NWFPAU has received from the Government of Pakistan's Higher Education Commission (HEC).

Dr. Farhatullah had worked with a cross-section of faculty and administrators to prepare an "Agreement of Cooperation" which had been transmitted to us before our departure from Illinois. This three-page document presented details on linkage activities that could be pursued among the NWFPAU/UIUC/SIUC group. In addition to serving as a guide for our January 10 discussion, this agreement will eventually be placed under our umbrella-type Memorandum of Understanding which was most recently renewed in January 2005.

On behalf of his university, the Vice Chancellor expressed satisfaction with having been part of our effort to train Afghan agriculturalists. He recognized the fact that by the time our program ends in September 2009, more than 500 Afghans who hold key positions in the agriculture sector will have completed training programs that were organized and delivered by the NWFPAU. Within this group, 20 will be M.Sc. graduates, twenty-four researchers received specialized short-term training and about 460 will have completed month-long technical short courses. The Vice Chancellor recognized the need and opportunity for the NWFPAU to remain involved in the development of Afghanistan's agriculture sector after September 2009. One part of his response to this challenge will be the establishment of an International Programs Office on their campus. The Director of that office would be dispatched to Kabul to make contact with various government agencies and development assistance organizations. This will be a first step toward the long range goal of their becoming a regional center of excellence in agricultural education and research.

Also discussed was a small USDA grant to SIUC for enabling linkage activities between the NWFPAU and Nangarhar University in Jalalabad, Afghanistan. This opportunity was well received by the Vice Chancellor and those present. If possible some activities will begin this year. This is an example of the value in maintaining our linkages.

Some of the time together was used to update us on changes and to explain the growth and expansion that has taken place at the NWFPAU since the TIPAN project ended in 1994. Challenges remain, but remarkable progress has been made. Discussion continued through lunch and until the delegation departed at 4:00 p.m. for return to Peshawar.

Sunday, January 11

The highlight of the day was brunch at the Islamabad Club with Dr. Qayyum and members of his family. The day off was also used for report writing and work on email.

Monday, January 12

We left for the airport at 10:00 a.m. to get on our 1:00 p.m. departure for Kabul. On arrival we were met by Mr. Nassery, the AWATT Liaison Officer and assisted through immigration and customs. The driver (Salim) took us to the AWATT compound for a look around and an exchange of greetings with staff who were present. Then Qayyum accompanied us the Safi Landmark hotel, where we checked in at about 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday, January 13

Went to the AWATT Compound and got settled into what will be our home base and work stations for the next ten days. We participated in a meeting with a delegation of six representing the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC), who had come to discuss their potential subcontract with AWATT. This subcontract will give AWATT access to the IFDC network of demonstrations and their multiple years of experience in that activity. A "Training Perspective" was useful in this meeting, because it became obvious that the IFDC relationship with agricultural extension staff at the provincial and district levels will also be useful. This IFDC relationship will give the AWATT project a direct connection with field-level extension staff and will facilitate the project's capacity building efforts by providing a clear picture of who needs training and the nature of training that is needed.

Wednesday, January 14

We were invited to an 8:30 a.m. meeting with the Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL). This came about because we encountered a ministry advisor (a GTZ employee) on the flight from Islamabad. This advisor was aware of the Minister's interest in rehabilitating citrus orchards near Jalalabad and had suggested that our connection with the NWFPAU and the NWFP research system might serve as a source of technical assistance and nursery stock. Everyone agreed that the NWFPAU system has the capacity to handle this type of request. It is just a matter of getting the right people in contact with each other.

The Minister (H.E. Asif Rahimi) along with his Senior Advisor (Alison Rhind), then gave us an informative description of the current "Afghan National Development Strategy" (ANDS) and the five year plan for the Agriculture and Rural Development Sector within that national strategy. They gave us details on the role MAIL and MRRD (Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development) will play in this five year plan.

Back at the AWATT compound, we worked with Qayyum to fine-tune and sharpen the power point presentation that will be used for the USAID Agricultural Partners Workshop (the annual project review) which will be held January 20-22. We had learned in our earlier discussions, that the Minister and his staff will also attend this workshop. We also used some of the day to edit and sharpen a tri-fold brochure that is being produced to explain the AWATT project to the general public. We ended the day by participating in the Dari language class that is given to the AWATT field team on a twice weekly basis.

Thursday, January 15

Our first item of the day was to resume work on the AWATT brochure. The inside panels of this brochure will change each quarter to feature a project activity that is completed or underway. This first issue explains Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) activities that were carried out during the fall quarter of 2008. Given that UIUC Professor Burton E. Swanson is the driving force behind the PRA/SREP process, I gave careful attention to the description of this activity in the brochure. Using PRA as a feature in the brochure makes a clear statement that AWATT leadership is committed to moving through the PRA process and on to the steps that follow, eventually making the extension system more market-driven and producer-focused. We also discussed the timetable Dr. Qayyum is following to bring in the next two NWFP AU consultants (Professors Zaidi and Malik) to continue the PRA work.

We discussed another AWATT training activity that will have a positive impact on the MAIL Extension Department. This is training at an institution in Hyderabad, India that is known by the acronym MANAGE. This is a center of excellence in Extension Management and Administration. The two-week training program at MANAGE has been approved by the CTO in AID-Kabul and Dr. Qayyum has already selected a group of eight senior-level individuals who have the requisite language skills. Their travel clearance documents are moving through the IROA system in Kabul. Ideally this training can take place in February or March. Dr. Qayyum had originally planned to accompany this group to India to make their training as relevant as possible. Current India-Pakistan tensions will prevent Qayyum from making this trip. Our plan therefore, it to ask Professor Swanson to meet this group in India and be on the ground in Hyderabad to monitor their training.

Friday, January 16

Some of our one-day weekend was used for rest and reading. This was the day that Roger Beck (AWATT Co-PI at NMSU) arrived, so Qayyum, Myers and Santas had lunch with him at the Intercontinental Hotel and used that time for project-related discussion.

Saturday, January 17

Both of us had a large volume of email, as well as accumulated messages from previous days; so the morning was used for that. During lunch we took advantage of Dr. Beck's presence to discuss a wide range of topics on AWATT project management and administration. We are nearing closure on how to use the "training programs" balance in the IALC Cooperative Agreement and should wrap that up tomorrow. After lunch our foursome visited MEDA (Mennonite Economic Development Associates) to discuss cooperation on the "Gender Roles" portion of the AWATT project. Then we visited the IFDC compound to plan activities under the AWATT/IFDC subcontract that has been submitted for approval to USAID-Kabul. The involvement of Mr. Salik (IFDC Afghan Agronomist) in the March series of short-term trainings will be a good way to bring IFDC into the UIUC/AWATT scope of work.

Sunday, January 18

We started the day around the table in Qayyum's office, with the IALC-funded training programs as the first item on our agenda. Over the past 2-3 months we have been considering a list of potential topics and NWFP AU faculty members that might deliver short-term training programs in Afghanistan. Our objective has been to make the most productive use of the \$60,000 balance in the training line of our FYO9 budget. This process came to closure when we reached consensus that the training will be on "Research and Demonstration Methodology and Interpretation". The lead instructor will be Dr. Paigham Shah. His Ph.D. is in Agronomy from the University of Illinois. He spent the 2005-2006 academic year at the University of Kabul as a visiting professor, teaching Research Methodology. He authored a "Crop Production Manual" which has been translated to Dari and distributed widely within Afghanistan. Dr. Shah is also co-author of a Research Methodology textbook that is being used widely in Pakistan. Paigham will be assisted by Mohammady Salik, Manager of an IFDC project known as FARMS. Mr. Salik is an Afghan, with extensive experience in conducting on-farm trials in all parts of the country. This course is expected to be delivered to groups of approximately 20, covering a five to six-day period, at four locations during the month of March. Locations will be: Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad and Kabul.

Monday, January 19

Worked on emails and spent the balance of the morning discussing AWATT project management issues with Roger and Qayyum. After lunch the four of us went to Kabul University to see our old friend Md. Yasin Mohsini, Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture. The university is actually closed during January and February, but Dean Mohsini was in the office. We briefed him on the December 29-31 workshop at SIUC for the Afghan Merit Scholars at Purdue and informed him that four of his faculty were in that group of 11 M.S. students.

Although this was a courtesy call we asked Dean Mohsini, from his position as the patriarch of agricultural education in Afghanistan, to describe the system of Vocational Agriculture High Schools. He was pleased to do this, and well qualified, because he had attended one of these schools as a youth. His explanation included the following points:

- These schools offer a three-year course of study, including of about 50% practical work.
- Thirteen of these schools are currently open and operating throughout Afghanistan.
- Students enter these schools after completing six years of primary education and three years of intermediate school.
- Upon completion of the 3 year course of study, some students begin university-level, four-year B.S. degree study (as Dean Mohsini did), but many enter the work force by taking positions in the public sector such as extension advisors with the ministry.
- These schools are under the Ministry of Education, not Higher Education or Agriculture.
- Enrollment in these schools currently ranges from 25-100 students, with 200 considered the upper limit at most locations.
- In most cases these schools are "attached" to a university, with the university taking a "big brother" role to maintain standards and ensure quality.

We are pleased to learn from Dean Mohsini that one of the Kabul University M.Sc. graduates under our IALC program at the NWFPAU is now Assistant Vice Chancellor of the University.

Our next stop was at the ASAP project office to meet with Tom Brown and Peter O'Farrell. Discussions there were on joint activities in the water and irrigation components of the AWATT project. We ended the day back at the AWATT compound for a trial run of the AWATT presentation (given in Dari by Agha Jabarkhil) to be used at the USAID Agricultural Partners workshop that will occupy our next three days.

January 20-21-22

Our foursome (Khan, Beck, Myers, Santas) spent this three-day period in the "USAID Agricultural Partners Workshop" which was held in the FAO conference room at the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) in Kabul. The program for this work shop is attached. This workshop was also referred to as the "2008 Year in Review" because it reviewed all projects being funded by AID-Kabul's Alternative Development and Agriculture (ADAG) Office. The AWATT project was included in that review. This was an excellent opportunity to network with other development practitioners who are implementing agriculture projects and to coordinate our activities. The need for three days to review agriculture projects serves as evidence that a huge volume of development assistance activity is being funded by AID-Kabul. Their \$1.5 billion per year disbursement level makes the Afghanistan mission the world's largest in dollar volume. It is important to also keep in mind that, in addition to USAID, there are many other donors and development assistance organizations operating in Afghanistan.

Friday, January 23

This was the "weekend", used for rest and preparation for departure.

Saturday, January 24

Left the hotel at 7:00 a.m. and went to the airport with Dr. Qayyum and AWATT Liaison Officer, Mr. Nassery. Departed at 9:40 a.m. for Delhi, where we spent the afternoon and evening waiting for our January 25 12:55 a.m. departure to Chicago. As we deplaned in Delhi we discovered that the Minister of Agriculture was on the flight with us, so we exchanged pleasantries and discussed the USAID Partners Workshop while walking through the terminal. After our 5:00 a.m. arrival in Chicago, we transferred via CTA to Union Station and used the Amtrak service for return to Champaign and Carbondale.

Agenda

Attendees may arrive starting 8:00 a.m. for Welcome Tea each day

Day 1 – Tuesday, 20 January 2009

8:30 a.m. – 10:10 a.m. First Morning Session

- Welcome
- Opening - Recitation of Holy Quran
- H.E Asif Rahimi, Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL) – Vision and program for agriculture in Afghanistan
- Loren Stoddard, Director, Alternative Development and Agriculture Office, U.S. Agency for International Development/Afghanistan - USAID agriculture and environment portfolio
- Introduction to workshop (agenda review)
- Chemonics – ASAP – Ag. Fairs and Value Chain

10:15 a.m. – 10:40 a.m. Break

10:40 a.m. – 12:20 p.m. Second Morning Session

- Opening
- Chemonics – ASAP – Farm Stores
- CNFA-AG DEPOT PLUS
- ICIMOD
- AWATT

12:20 p.m. – 1:20 p.m. Lunch

1:20 p.m. – 2:35 p.m. First Afternoon Session

- MAIL opening
- DAI-ADP-East
- CRS-ADA/GDA and CRS-Ghor Watershed Project
- ECODIT-BSP-NEPA

2:35 p.m. – 2:55 p.m. Break

2:55 p.m. – 4:20 p.m. Breakout Sessions

Creating Opportunities and Collaborations among Partners

- Breakout – Agribusiness
- Breakout – Natural Resource Management
- Breakout – Food Sufficiency and Security

4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Social Tea

Day 2 – Wednesday, 21 January 2009

8:30 a.m. – 10:10 a.m. First Morning Session

- Opening
- AECOM – ADP-North
- Chemonics-ASAP-NAIS and Chemonics-ASAP-FEWS NET
- DAI-LGCD
- IRD - AVIPA

10:10 a.m. – 10:40 a.m. Break

10:40 a.m. – 12:00 noon Second Morning Session

- MAIL opening
- Mercy Corps-AGDA
- AED-ARIES
- VEGA-P2K

12:00 noon – 1:00 p.m. Lunch

1:00 p.m. – 2:40 p.m. First Afternoon Session

- Opening
- Chemonics-ADP-South
- CIIFAD-GPFA
- WFP-FAO-UNDP-GAIN
- ARD-ADP-Northwest

2:40 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Break

3:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. Breakout Sessions

Creating Opportunities and Collaborations among Partners

- Breakout – Agribusiness
- Breakout – Natural Resource Management
- Breakout – Food Sufficiency and Security

Day 3 – Thursday, 22 January 2009

8:30 a.m. – 10:10 a.m. First Morning Session

- Opening
- USDA
- UNOPS/Afghan Conservation Corps
- AVA
- Purdue University – A4

10:10 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. Break

10:30 a.m. – 12:10 p.m. Second Morning Session

- MAIL opening
- ARD-LGCD
- Chemonics-DCA-VFUs
- World Vision - MYAP
- Wildlife Conservation Society

12:10 p.m. – 1:05 p.m. Lunch

1:05 p.m. – 2:20 p.m. Breakout Session Reports

Creating Opportunities and Collaborations among Partners

- Opening
- Breakout report – Agribusiness
- Breakout report – Natural Resource Management
- Breakout report – Food Sufficiency and Security

2:20 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Wrap-up and Closing

Breakout Groups

The breakout sessions hold the ultimate objective of creating opportunities among partners for collaboration. The sessions will build upon each other and participants are requested to attend the same group both afternoons. The breakout sessions will be conducted in English with sequential translation.

There are three Breakout Groups:

1. Agribusiness
2. Natural Resource Management
3. Food Sufficiency and Security

First Breakout Session Goals

1. Identify important needs and opportunities for the coming year
2. Identify good collaborations currently occurring among partners
3. Begin to identify new opportunities for collaboration.

Second Breakout Session Goals

1. Continue to identify opportunities or needs for collaboration
2. Agree on informal plans for collaboration in the coming year

Third Session

Facilitators will report to all participants the findings and decisions of their breakout group.

List of Acronyms

A4	Advancing Afghan Agriculture Alliance
ACC	Afghan Conservation Corps
ADA	Agroenterprise Development Alliance
ADP	Alternative Development Program
AED	Academy for Educational Development
AGDA	Agribusiness Global Development Alliance
ARD	Associates in Rural Development
ARIES	Agriculture, Rural Investment & Enterprise Strengthening
ASAP	Accelerating Sustainable Agriculture Program
AVA	Afghanistan Veterinary Association
AVIPA	Afghanistan Vouchers for Increased Production in Agriculture
AWATT	Afghanistan Water, Agriculture and Technology Transfer Project
CIIFAD	Cornell International Institute for Food and Agricultural Development
CNFA	Citizens Network for Foreign Affairs
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DAI	Development Alternatives Incorporated
DCA	Dutch Committee for Afghanistan
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning System Network
GAIN	Green Afghanistan Initiative
GDA	Global Development Alliance
GPFA	Global Partnership for Afghanistan
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IRD	International Relief & Development
LGCD	Local Governance and Community Development
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock
MYAP	Multi-Year Assistance Program
NAIS	National Agriculture Information System
P2K	Paktia, Paktika and Khost
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
VEGA	Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance
VFU	Veterinary Field Unit
WFP	World Food Programme