

Quarterly Project Report

Rebuilding the Agricultural Information System for Institutions of Higher Education in Afghanistan

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Overall Project Goals:

The goal is to take a first step toward developing a modern agricultural information system in Afghanistan. This will be accomplished by creating a fully equipped and operational Agriculture Electronic Library housed in Kabul University's College of Agriculture.

Accomplishments:

Project team members met 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 and on the possibility of cooperating with Purdue University by creating an opening between the Agriculture Electronic Library (AEL) and Purdue's nearly adjacent computer room. Project member, Atifa Rawan, has been in touch with Dr. Kevin McNamara from Purdue to follow-up on this idea and will try to meet with him to discuss this option further when she is in Kabul from May 7-17, 2005.

In response to a letter dated March 5, 2005 from USAID Mission Director for Afghanistan, Patrick Fine, the library redevelopment project team, Barbara Hutchinson, Atifa Rawan, and Carla Casler, sent back a reply addressing the questions outlined by Mr. Fine. In the letter, it was suggested that Atifa meet with Director Fine and his agriculture officer, Mr. Dan Miller, when she is in Kabul. Such an arrangement is pending.

Carla Casler is working with John Santas, University of Illinois, to identify print materials for the AEL to support both the curriculum and short-term training programs. Dr. Santas has authorized the delivery of 25 sets of a 6 textbook series to be delivered to Kabul University's Faculty of Agriculture, including 5 sets for the AEL. Dr. Santas also confirmed that Mr. Madadi, Field Coordinator of AEL had been contacted about the textbooks by 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. Additional textbooks are being identified that specifically address agricultural conditions in Pakistan and Afghanistan with the help of Mr. Murad Ali Mohmand of the National Book Foundation in Pakistan. Plans are also being developed to digitize manuals used in the NWFP AU short courses

Atifa Rawan has continued to maintain close contact with Mr. Abdul Khalid Madadi, Field Coordinator of the Agriculture Electronic Library (AEL) at Kabul University, and with Dr. Wassimi, Executive Manager for ICARDA in Kabul, to ensure effective operation of AEL. Dr. Wassimi met with the project team to review progress and to discuss issues during his recent visit to Tucson. A \$5,000 operations advance was given to Dr. Wassimi to continue paying salaries and buying equipment and supplies and paying for any needed repairs.

Atifa was also been contacted by the new Chancellor of Kabul University, Dr. Ashraf Ghani, who has asked for her assistance in formulating a new strategic plan for the University and for library services in particular. She will be meeting with Dr. Ghani during her May trip to Kabul.

In part for her impressive work in helping to rebuild and enhance the library system in Afghanistan, Atifa Rawan was named the 2005 recipient of the American Library Association's Elizabeth Futas Catalyst for Change Award. This award recognizes and honors a librarian who invests time and talent to make positive changes in the profession of librarianship.