

IALC-USAID Sustainable Development of Drylands  
Trip Report – Visit to Pakistan and Afghanistan  
John W. Santas  
October 8-25, 2003

**Purpose of Trip:**

Training needs assessment and long range planning as we move into a four year extension of the IALC/USAID Cooperative Agreement.

**Summary of Findings:**

Our four person team addressed two basic tasks during most of the contacts made in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Those tasks were: 1) To provide information and detail on the training program that is described in the Afghanistan-Pakistan component of the Cooperative Agreement, and 2) To gather information for use in the training needs assessment and for forward planning, in light of the agreement extension. The need for a more complete explanation in both USAID Missions, to supplement written materials sent earlier, became more important than we had anticipated.

The successful completion of three short courses has generated considerable enthusiasm within Ministries and NGO's in Afghanistan, as well as at the Northwest Frontier Province Agricultural University (NWFP-AU) in Peshawar, Pakistan. The NWFP-AU is responsible for delivery of the training programs to Afghan agriculturalists.

While making these contacts, individuals with whom we met were pleased to know that our training services will be available for another four years and that we were involving them in the long range planning process. We believe that buy-in support from both USAID Missions will allow us to expand our training offerings and build on the experience gained during year one of the Cooperative Agreement.

This report will present information on contacts made, topics of discussion and the outcome of our meetings. The report being written by Dr. Myers will describe progress made on the Needs Assessment portion of our scope of work. Our timing of this TDY was perfect. That statement was emphatically made by representatives of AID/Kabul, AID/Islamabad and RAMP/Chemonics. With the benefit of hindsight, it seems fortuitous that our plans to make this trip in February 2003 did not materialize.

**Air Routing:**

Outbound: Champaign-Chicago (AA)-London-Heathrow (AA)-Dubai (BA)-Islamabad (Emirates)-Kabul (PIA)

Inbound: Kabul-Islamabad (PIA)-Dubai (Emirates)-London-Heathrow (Emirates)-Chicago (AA)-Champaign (AA)

**Summary of Activities:**

Wednesday, October 8, departed Illinois

Thursday, October 9, in transit

Day One, Friday, October 10, 2003.

Dr. Santas and Dr. Myers arrived Islamabad at 7:25 am, were met by Field Office Director, Dr. Abdul Qayyum Khan and by project assistant/driver, Afzal Sher. We were transferred to the Marriott Hotel. Because we had been in transit for two days and two nights without any stopovers, much of October 10 was used to rest and recuperate. Half of that day however, was spent with Dr. Qayyum in discussions that brought us up to date on events of the previous few months; especially the three short courses that had been conducted during August and September. A total of 43 Afghan agricultural technicians participated in these courses.

Day Two, Saturday, October 11

The updating process continued. This was our first opportunity for face-to-face discussion with Dr. Qayyum since he was hired in early 2003 to serve as Director of the IALC/UIUC Field Office in Peshawar, Pakistan. Prior to that, Oval and I had worked with Qayyum in his role as USAID Project Officer for our TIPAN Project at the NWFP-AU. I had not seen Qayyum since the TIPAN Project ended in July 1994. These were valuable discussions, covering a wide range of topics such as field office operations and present status of the NWFP-AU.

Day Three, Sunday, October 12

Qayyum and I went to the airport with Afzal Sher (driver) at 4:00 a.m. to receive Bob Freitas who was arriving on the PIA flight from London. Our four-person team was now complete. After Bob's recuperation from all night travel, we still had time for one-half day of work as a foursome. This gave Bob an opportunity to get acquainted with Qayyum and get himself up to speed on the field portion of the Afghanistan/Pakistan component of our Cooperative Agreement.

#### Day Four, Monday, October 13

We thought that arrangements were in place to meet with Margaret Harritt, our primary contact in USAID/Islamabad; and for discussions with FAS/USDA representatives on their Agricultural Linkages Project. October 13 turned out to be Columbus Day, so the U.S. Embassy and all U.S. Government offices were closed. As a “plan B” we used the day to strategize on the Needs Assessment portion of our Scope of Work and to develop questionnaires that would be used to collect data on training needs. Later we took time to visit the beautiful Faisal Mosque, then drove up the Margala Hills for a view of Islamabad, followed by a drive through the downtown of nearby Rawalpindi. The day ended with a barbeque at the roof top restaurant of the Holiday Inn hosted by Qayyum.

#### Day Five, Tuesday, October 14

Departed at 7:00 am for travel to Peshawar by road. After check-in at the Pearl Continental Hotel, we made a stop at the Illinois Field Office on the AU campus and then went to an 11:00 a.m. meeting with NWFP-AU Vice Chancellor, Dr. S. Iqbal Shah. The first item on our agenda was an expression of appreciation for the excellent cooperation we had received from the AU in conducting the first three courses for Afghan participants. We also began to make plans for a visit to Afghanistan by the Vice-Chancellor, who will be accompanied by Dr. Qayyum and perhaps one or two selected AU administrators. Time was also spent discussing the extension of the Memorandum of Understanding which formally links UIUC and SIUC with the NWFP-AU. That agreement is being reviewed by the AU syndicate (senate) and will soon be ready for the Vice Chancellor’s signature. One of the primary reasons for our meeting with the Vice Chancellor was to give him the good news that our Cooperative Agreement had been extended for a four year period. Iqbal understands that we will need to use the AU as a resource base for the Afghan training programs over this extended period of time. He is ready to work with the IALC/Illinois group as a collaborating partner institution.

Our next stop was a de-briefing meeting with Dr. M. Jamal Khan and members of his department (Water Management) who had been involved in the short course on “Irrigation Infrastructure Development and Water Management Practices”. There was still time to complete the first part of our campus tour before lunch. Dr. Qayyum had made arrangements for our team to have lunch with the Vice Chancellor and a group of eight Professors, Deans and Department Heads who had been responsible for successful completion of the three short courses held during August and September.

After lunch we had de-briefing discussions with the lead instructor in the short course on “Enterprise Development and Management Skills”, followed by a continuation of the campus tour. This included the research and demonstration fields adjacent to campus. Plans had been made for a dinner meeting with the Vice Chancellor and Dr. Nawab Ali, Head of the Horticulture Department and lead instructor in the course on “Post Harvest Management and Marketing of Fruits, Vegetables, and Ornamentals”. Due to a communications mix-up, this dinner meeting did not take place. We were however, able to meet with Nawab Ali at the hotel prior to our departure the next morning. For Dr.

Myers and Dr. Santas, October 14 was truly like “old home week”. For Mr. Freitas, it was a very informative day.

#### Day Six, Wednesday, October 15

Started the day in a productive meeting with the AU Director General of Research and a group of scientists he had convened at the Tarnab Research Institute, which is east of Peshawar enroute to Islamabad. These discussions and a tour of facilities helped us identify ways that the AU research system can contribute to rebuilding the human resource base of Afghanistan’s agriculture sector. It became evident that research scientists in the AU system have a better understanding of agriculture in Afghanistan than we had realized. Given the agro-climatic similarities, this could be expected.

After a delay due to a vehicle breakdown, we were back in Islamabad at mid-afternoon to hold meetings that had previously been scheduled for October 13 with USAID and USDA representatives. These meetings took place at the Islamabad Marriott.

A brief meeting with Asif M. Farrukh, FAS/USDA Marketing Specialist, helped Dr. Myers and Dr. Santas explore sources of research support for AU faculty and scientists, as well as potential areas of support for university linkages.

Our team then met with Margaret Harritt, who is responsible for Governance and Economic Growth Programs in USAID/Islamabad. She was accompanied by Saad Paracha, Governance Specialist. Although Margaret had been kept informed by Dr. Qayyum and had been provided with background reading material, she still needed a more complete explanation of what had been accomplished during year one of the Cooperative Agreement and the plans that were embodied in our four-year extension proposal. As the discussion progressed, she began to move away from her earlier position that there were “no possibilities for buy-in support” and began to see the benefits that would accrue to Pakistan, the AU, and the Islamabad Mission. Sharing buy-in responsibilities with AID/Kabul seemed to make sense to Margaret, so she is awaiting the reaction from Kabul to the buy-in request we will present to that Mission. Meanwhile, she will arrange a meeting with Mission Director Mark Ward on our return from Kabul. Margaret also asked us to prepare a two-page brief on our training program to share with Director Ward at our October 23 meeting when we are back in Islamabad.

#### Day Seven, Thursday, October 16

We prepared for our midday departure on PIA to Kabul, arriving there at mid afternoon. Dr. Qayyum had worked with Dr. Wassimi, the ICARDA representative in Kabul, to make arrangements for our transportation during the week in Afghanistan. Karri Goeldner had been our primary contact in AID/Kabul, so we went directly to her office. She is located in the UN/IOM compound. We were not able to meet with Terry Hardt, the Agriculture Officer in AID/Kabul, because she was out on R&R. Karri is the Market Development Advisor. She had been called to the Embassy but was expecting us.

We used the waiting time for informative discussions with Karri's USAID colleagues, Barbara Rodey, Gender Advisor and Peggy Poling, Education Advisor. We started our discussions with them by explaining (as we would in many meetings to follow) that we were in Kabul for two basic reasons: 1) to provide information on the training program that was being funded through the IALC Cooperative Agreement with USAID, and 2) to gather information for a Needs Assessment, which would be used to help us deliver the most appropriate training programs during the next four years. During these discussions and many which followed, we heard the recurring statement that "The entire educational system in Afghanistan, at all levels, had been shut down for 25 years". As a result the need for training and education of any and all types is absolutely overwhelming.

When Karri arrived we launched into a discussion that was similar to the one we had with Margaret Harritt in Islamabad, i.e., clarifying and providing detail on the narrative and budgets that were presented in our Cooperative Agreement renewal proposal. We agreed to continue our discussions over dinner on Saturday evening, because it was time for us to check in at the Assa II Guest House and get settled for the week.

#### Day Eight, Friday, October 17

Although all offices are closed on Friday, Dr. Nasrat Wassimi graciously agreed to meet with us. He is currently Executive Program Manager for ICARDA in Afghanistan. He had been Manager of the Future Harvest Consortium. He is a dedicated scientist and seasoned administrator, who is playing a lead role in the re-building of Afghanistan's agriculture. He was born and raised in Afghanistan, so has a unique vantage point.

Our meeting with Dr. Wassimi covered at least four hours, continuing through lunch. This gave us a chance to interact with other ICARDA staff, Tony Van Gastel, Elizabeth Bailey and Bob Blake, who were working on a proposal for submission to the RAMP Project. Dr. Wassimi is a truly remarkable individual and added much to our understanding of Afghanistan. After the ICARDA meetings, we returned to the guest house for a team meeting.

#### Day Nine, Saturday, October 18

Our first meeting was with the Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture at Kabul University, Mohammad Yasin Mohsini. He told us about the deplorable state of his Faculty, with some Departments still closed and many Professors having only B.Sc. level qualifications. The Dean was pleased to introduce Professor Alini, who earned his M.S. degree at AUB (American University-Beirut) in Soil Science in the 1960's and had just returned from refugee status to join the Faculty. Dean Mohsini offered to arrange a meeting with the President of Kabul University, whose academic appointment is in his Faculty.

Following this, we met briefly with Sharif Abbasi, our contact in the RAMP Project, who had arranged a meeting with the First Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, Eng. M. Sharif. Eng. Sharif told us about the dire staffing situation in his Ministry and the

need for training. We began to talk about an exchange of researchers and “twinning” with NWFP agricultural research stations, so he introduced us to the Director of Research in his Ministry, Mr. Qadir. We set an appointment to meet with Mr. Qadir on Monday for visits to nearby research stations.

We went back to the guest house to work on the two-page briefing document that was requested by Margaret Harritt, (attached) so we could give a copy of the brief to Karri Goeldner at our dinner meeting that evening. During dinner, we had time to explain that the NWFP-AU can serve as the resource base for a comprehensive assortment of training programs, not just short courses; and that those programs can be delivered in either Afghanistan or Pakistan. Karri began to agree that, with a modest amount of buy-in support, the approach described in our Cooperative Agreement proposal could have a significant impact on replenishing the depleted human resource base of the agricultural sector in Afghanistan.

Day 10, Sunday, October 19

One of the primary objectives of our TDY was to better understand RAMP (Rebuilding Agricultural Markets in Afghanistan Program), which is a \$150 million project being implemented by Chemonics International. We also wanted RAMP staff to understand our training program, because AID/Kabul has suggested that the RAMP Training Coordinator serve as the liaison or counterpart to Dr. Qayyum in planning and delivering the training programs that will be sponsored through our Cooperative Agreement.

These objectives were accomplished through a long and productive exchange with: Larry Morgan, RAMP Chief of Party; Ray Baum, Deputy Chief of Party and Sharif Abbasi, Training Coordinator. John Woods, former INTERPAKS Director at Illinois and now with Chemonics, joined our meeting because he was on TDY in Afghanistan. Prior to our meeting with RAMP staff, we took Bob Freitas to the airport for his travel to Jordan to continue work on that component of the IALC Cooperative Agreement.

Day 11, Monday, October 20

Another prominent item in our scope of work was to meet with selected NGO's to continue the needs assessment process as well as the process of spreading information on our training program. Our first NGO visit was with Mercy Corps. Our meeting was with Keith Polo, the Agricultural Livelihoods Advisor. Keith and I knew each other from his graduate student days at Illinois in the late 90's. Mercy Corps had placed two participants in the Enterprise Development course and four in the Post-Harvest Handling and Marketing course. All participants had submitted written reports/evaluations to Mercy Corps and Keith orally shared that information with us. Their reports were positive, constructive and helpful. Mercy Corps would like to place 25-30 participants in courses like these over the next two years – if the courses are offered. Mercy Corps is also willing to contribute to course costs (as were all other NGO's) by covering the travel expenses of their nominees and participants.

Our next meeting was with German Agro Action (GAA). This organization had placed two participants in the Post Harvest course and two in the Enterprise Development course. Three of the returned participants attended our meeting and gave positive, constructive reviews of the courses. Having become familiar with the AU Research System while in Pakistan, these participants expressed a desire for continuing cooperation with the Cereal Crops Research Institute at Pirsabak and with the Mingora Station on Mushroom Production. Their requests provide support for the concept of “twinning” research stations, which is found in our Cooperative Agreement Proposal.

Our next stop, as per the Dean of Agriculture’s suggestion, was a courtesy call on the President of Kabul University, Dr. M. Akbar Popal. This turned into a productive hour-long visit. He is a Nebraska Ph.D. in cereal crop diseases, so had a lively exchange with Dr. Myers about the plant science world. Among the wide range of topics we covered was: A) His strong interest in the upcoming visit of VC Iqbal Shah and his readiness to make a return visit to the NWFP-AU. B) His strong interest in a Trilateral Memorandum of Agreement with NWFP-AU and UIUC/SIUC. President Popal had lived in Peshawar during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

After the stimulating visit with President Popal, we met Mr. Qadir and drove to the outskirts of Kabul to visit two horticulture research stations. These stations were completely destroyed during the series of wars, but had recently been renovated by the Future Harvest Consortium and were back in operation.

That evening we had dinner with Keith Polo so we could learn more about Mercy Corps and look for areas of potential cooperation with the Illinois universities

Day 12, Tuesday, October 21

The next NGO meeting was with IRC (International Rescue Committee). The IRC had placed three participants in the Enterprise Development Course and four in the Post-Harvest course. Two returned short course participants were among the eleven IRC staff who were involved in our meeting. During this meeting, we heard requests for training in areas such as: Administrative and Office Management Skills, Logistics and Operations Management, Organizing Agricultural Cooperatives, Fruit Preservation Techniques, Training of Trainers and Extension Methodology Training. All these topics can be covered by the NWFP-AU and the specialized units found within that university.

Following the IRC meeting, we made a return visit to the Chemonics RAMP Project. Our objective was to meet with Training and Conference Coordinator Sharif Abbasi and his supervisor Ray Baum, to work out specifics and details on Sharif’s role as the in-country representative for the IALC/UIUC Training Project. Sharif was well acquainted with our plans because he had reviewed our Cooperative Agreement Proposal after it reached AID/Kabul. He had written comments on our proposal and had presented his views at a meeting with Terry Hardt, Karri Goeldner, Larry Morgan and Ray Baum. Sharif shared his very constructive comments with us. Sharif is enthusiastic about taking on this role as Liaison for the IALC/UIUC Project because he is an NWFP-AU graduate

and feels a sense of loyalty to that university. Furthermore, he respects Dr. Qayyum, has formed a strong bond with him, and sees him as a valuable mentor. Mr. Baum supports our plans and will try to adjust Sharif's work load accordingly. We returned to the guest house to prepare for our meeting with Karri the next day.

Day 13, Wednesday, October 22

Having met first with Karri Goeldner on arrival, we scheduled an exit meeting with her on our last full day in Kabul. We briefed her on contacts made and the outcomes of our various meetings. We had developed a long range plan of course offerings (attached) which was presented and discussed. Her reaction was positive and was summed up by her statement that "the timing of our visit was perfect." Ray Baum had made the same statement yesterday. Karri seems inclined to recommend that the entire buy-in we were requesting should come from funds in the Kabul Mission, for at least year one of our four year agreement. The amount requested for year one is \$360,000.

We did some shopping and went back to the guest house to prepare for our meeting with Mark Ward and Margaret Harritt in Islamabad. Based on our impression that all buy-in needs for year one and perhaps beyond will be covered by the Kabul Mission (through the RAMP Project), we proceeded to prepare a separate financial support request for presentation to AID/Islamabad.

Day 14, Thursday, October 23

Most of the day was used for travel back to Islamabad. Before departure, we completed our request (attached) to present to Mark Ward, AID/Islamabad Director, for support to strengthen the AU and its capacity to deliver training programs for Afghans. We reached the Marriott in Islamabad in time for a 6:00 p.m. meeting with Mark and Margaret Harritt. In addition to our request for AU strengthening monies, we presented the two-page brief on our training project that Margaret had suggested at our earlier meeting. Mark liked some of the items on our request for strengthening support, but feels that some should be covered by AID/Kabul. His principal suggestion was that this "wish list" be shared with the AU Vice Chancellor, because the Vice Chancellor has his own "wish list". Dr. Qayyum agreed to do that on October 24, after which we will look for common areas and overlap between the list our team prepared and the VC's list. Preliminary signals indicate the AID/Islamabad is ready to assist with items on both "wish lists". \*\*

Mark had just returned from meetings in Washington and made it clear that there is a strong interest within USAID and the Department of State in project activity that will foster neighborly, cordial and positive relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Our project can definitely contribute to that foreign policy objective.

The Islamabad mission is also interested in high visibility projects that receive publicity, especially through Pakistani press and media. The three courses completed in August and September were well covered by local media, so serve this interest quite well. We (through Qayyum) will provide AID/Islamabad with examples of this media coverage.

It was especially gratifying to hear Director Ward stress two points that have been our constant refrain: 1) This training project makes an infinite amount of good sense, given that AID invested heavily in the AU. Earning a dividend on that investment makes sense! 2) The NWFP-AU deserves to be recognized as a regional center of excellence and a dominant power in agricultural education and research in Southwest Asia. They may need a push, encouragement and some assistance; but we can help them assume that leadership role in the region.

It seems clear that Mark Ward wants to assist the NWFP-AU. He will be leaving Islamabad for a new post in December 2003. I am left with the impression that Mark and Margaret will give serious attention to this project and to our requests. They will likely interact with AID/Kabul and the AU Vice Chancellor, to get decisions made on their contribution to this effort before the end of this year.

Days 15 and 16, October 24 and 25

Were used for return travel with an overnight stop in London.

\*\* Subsequent to the October 24<sup>th</sup> discussions, Dr. Harritt and Dr. Qayyum traveled to Peshawar on November 1<sup>st</sup> to meet with the AU Vice Chancellor and his key administrators. A result of that meeting is the attached 14-point list, which has been transmitted to us by Dr. Qayyum. This is a merger of the Vice Chancellor's request list and the list of suggestions prepared by our team. Dr. Harritt was involved in the preparation of this merged list. She has now referred this request to Islamabad Mission Director Mark Ward for his review.