

Quarterly Activity Report: January 1st to March 31st 2004
IALC Sustainable Development of Drylands in Asia and the Middle East Project
Yemen Component – Human Resource Development

Principal Contact: Octavio A. Ramirez, New Mexico State University

E-mail: oramirez@nmsu.edu, Phone (505) 646-3215

Progress Made this Quarter:

1. In January, the group of professors that traveled to Yemen in mid December 2003 (Dr. Octavio A. Ramirez, project coordinator; and Drs. Bill Gorman and Carlos Rosencrantz) worked to finalize their trip report. Following the guidelines from the scope of work for this first mission, the preliminary draft report contained an assessment of the quality and qualifications of the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Sana'a (FOA/UOS); a description of their current role and how they relate to the Ministry of Agriculture, the Regional Agricultural Development Authorities and the private sector; and an a proposal for how USAID/Yemen could, through IALC/NMSU, strengthen their capabilities to conduct and share applied research and provide outreach and extension services to Yemeni farmers.

The draft report provided USAID/Yemen specific recommendations to strengthen the FOA/UOS so that they could better support the development of the Agricultural Sector in this country and become a more productive partner with other governmental institutions related to agriculture. In early January, we received communications from USAID/Yemen indicating a desire that the IALC/NMSU project expanded its focus to strengthening and working through several other universities and colleges with agricultural research and outreach capabilities. They requested that we consider modifying our December mission report and recommendations to accommodate this desired change in strategy. The final report, revised to accommodate USAID/Yemen requested change in strategy, was delivered by e-mail to USAID/Yemen and the IALC office in Arizona on January 31 2004, as agreed in the scope of work for the December mission. A copy of that final report can be provided if needed.

2. On February 12, 2004, Ida Baca and Bill Gorman participated in a meeting with USAID Washington and the IALC Advisory Board. They prepared and presented a brief overview of the findings and recommendations that the NMSU team presented to USAID/Yemen in their final report mentioned above. While in Washington DC, Ida Baca and Bill Gorman also meet with Scott Christenson and Robert Freitas, IALC Director, to further discuss the December mission findings outlined in the report and future project activities.

3. To date, the NMSU team has not received a copy of the ARD team's report on their concurrent assessment of Yemen's agricultural sector research and extension status and needs, although numerous inquires for a copy of the report have been made. Given that the NMSU team has not seen this report, we cannot comment and/or attempt to coordinate between the recommendations made by the ARD team and those advanced by the NMSU team. The findings and recommendations contained in the NMSU team report have not yet been shared with the University of Sana'a, as we are still waiting to hear USAID/Yemen's response to our inquiry of whether this report can be made public.

4. Following the delivery of the final report, IALC/MNSU faculty (O. Ramirez, W. Gorman and I. Baca) continued in frequent e-mail and phone communication with USAID Washington (Scott Christensen) and USAID/Yemen (Garret Harries –assistant to the USAID/Yemen Mission Director– and Doug Heisler –Mission Director) attempting to follow up on the status of the report, which among other things outlines the proposed IALC/MNSU work plan. On April 8 2004 we received a forwarded e-mail from Garret Harries through Scott Christensen stating:

“We want a follow-up mission (from IALC/NMSU) to look at the Consortium of Ag Colleges (CAC) and how we can help the consortium, which is centered on the University of Dhamar (UOD). Wade and I will start drawing up a Scope of Work or Terms of Reference for this trip. In addition, we will ask NMSU to draft a detailed implementation plan; once approved we will move into implementation. The ToR will give you an idea of the timing we are looking at – I can give you a better idea next week. We also need to figure out how we incrementally fund IALC with our FY03 funds (about \$200,000) and how we get the matching funds.”

In a second e-mail Garret Harries indicated that “The UOS is one of the Ag Colleges in the Consortium but the University of Dhamar is chairing the Consortium and a good portion of the work will be done there.” This major change in the original strategy, of course, implies that significant additional fact-finding and planning efforts are needed for the IALC/NMSU team to assess the status and capabilities of the University of Dhamar and the Colleges in the Ag Consortium, and to determine how strengthen, support and work with them so that USAID/Yemen’s short and intermediate term agricultural sector objectives are accomplished.

Activities Planned for Next Quarter

1. Finalize the planning and carry out a second technical assistance mission to Yemen. The tentative dates for this mission are the last week in May and first week of June. The scope of work will be centered on assessing the status, capabilities and training and technical/scientific support needs of the University of Dhamar and the other major agricultural colleges in the consortium and developing a detailed implementation plan focused on the UOD and the CAC rather than solely on the UOS. In addition to working on the fact-finding and planning objectives as requested by USAID/Yemen, we have proposed to carry out the following activities:

- a. A training workshop on the development and use of crop budgets for agricultural research, extension, and the making of better farm management decisions. This could be conducted at the UOD with participation of select faculty members from the CAC. A second workshop could be organized at the same or at an alternative location depending on the number of faculty members wanting to attend and the geographical location of their universities.
- b. A curriculum development workshop using the Department of Agricultural Economics of the University of Sana’a (UOS) as a model. Deans, Department Heads and select faculty members from the UOS, UOD and CAC would be invited to a final day of presentations summarizing the major steps undertaken in the curriculum development process and discussing the conclusions and outcomes from this effort.

c. The testing of videoconferencing capabilities and potentially carrying out videoconferencing meetings between NMSU/Las Cruces and the UOD and/or the UOS. USAID/Yemen mission officials would be invited to these meetings.

2. Completion of a report on the second technical assistance mission.

3. Development of a more detailed work plan for the IALC/NMSU team for the remainder of this year and a more general plan for the work to be conducted in years 2, 3, and 4.

4. Review the ARD assessment of the agriculture sector in Yemen report and communicate with ARD and USAID regarding the findings of the two team reports and recommended future plans and activities, once a copy of the ARD report is shared with us.

Finally, we report that USAID/Yemen decision to focus on and work through the UOD and the CAC instead of the UOS implies that some of the specifics of the IALC/NMSU/Yemen Cooperative Agreement need to be amended, as this was developed assuming that the institutional strengthening of the UOS would be one of the main goals of IALC/NMSU work in Yemen.