Pastoral Engagement, Adaptation and Capacity Enhancement (PEACE) Project
AFGHANISTAN

Quarterly Report

July 1, 2007 through September 30, 2007

Submitted By:
University of California at Davis

In Collaboration With:
Texas A&M University System

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September 30, 2007
Summary
Activities have been conducted this quarter.

- Annual project review meetings in Texas
- Plant species identification and digitizing of field data
- Field trip to Badakhshan and Bamyan
- Preparations for feeding trials
- Capacity Building

Major Implementation Activities Initiated this Quarter

During the first two weeks in July, the annual project review meetings were held in College Station, Texas. This included meetings and presentations with people from UC Davis, Texas A&M, Ecosystem Science and Management Department, the Borlag Institute, and the Blacklands Research Center. Year one review and year two work plans were discussed.

There is a general feeling of optimism regarding the project that stems from the cooperation we are receiving from the Government partners. The field season went very well in that we are able to visit 7 Provinces before July despite the security obstacles. The LEWS program is on track and the political foundation for the NIRS program has been built.

B. Infusion of the Forage Monitoring System

Last quarter included 2 activities related to the Livestock Early Warning system. First, we were able to conduct a field trip to Badakhshan to collect some vegetation information. We were specifically interested in surveying a place called Shewae Kolone. This rangeland is located in Baharak District of Badakhshan. It is used by locals as well as Kuchi Herders from Kunduz. It provides excellent summer grazing. We arrived late in the growing season but were able to conduct 2 complete surveys and 3 reconnaissance surveys.

The digitizing of field data sheets has also been a main priority this quarter. We have identified and validated species names for 225 plants and have been developing the data set that will be used in the Phygrow model for forage prediction. This information can also be used to develop plant species classifications for some of Afghanistan’s Rangelands. We have been in discussions with ASAP to find ways that we can contribute information to their AgNet program.

In addition, we have at long last acquired the original historic climate data from the Ministry of Transportation. With the help of Mia Abdul Saboor, our CTO at USAID, we were able to meet with the Deputy Minister of Transportation again. This time the results were very positive and the data was released to us the same day. We are currently correcting the digital data with the original data sheets. This may take up to a month to complete but accuracy is important. Once corrected, the data will be sent to Texas to undergo modeling techniques that will fill in the missing data. The end product will allow us to compare current climate conditions with historic norms.

C. Infusion of the NIRS Nutritional Management System

We were able to meet with Dr. Aziz Osmani while in Texas A&M University. He was being hosted by Bob Smith, USDA, in the United States and they had planned a visit to TAMU. We organized a tour of the
The NIRS laboratory is in the process of being built for the Department of Animal Health and Husbandry in their Darulaman Complex. This laboratory is housed within one building on the compound and we hope to expand to 2 buildings. The laboratory consists of 3 rooms. A large room is devoted to the feeding trials. Holding pens and feeding boxes are located in this room. Feeding trials will be used to develop nutritional equations for the Near Infrared readings. A second room will be used for processing fecal samples collected during the feeding trials or from Afghanistan’s rangelands. The processing room will have a drying oven, grinder, scale, desiccator, and collection supplies. The third room will house the near infrared scanner and computer that is used to take the sample-scan and produce an absorbance graph.

During the last few months this building has been plumbed, wired, painted and all but the NIRS scanner and computer have been placed here. We expect the feeding trials to start by the end of October and the first scans to occur by the end of November.

**D. Linking the Technology with Herder Alliances**

Meetings have been held with the Director of Kuchi Affairs in Kabul regarding the identification and use of Herder Alliances to disseminate forage information. We have planned to bring Kuchi leaders to Kabul from the Eastern and Southern Provinces for security reasons.

Detailed questioning with Niazi’s staff has proved to be very useful in understanding the ways that different Kuchi groups survive and operate. We now know that wealthy Kuchi (i.e., own sheep and goats) will contract less advantaged Kuchi to raise sheep and goats for them. These contracts are set for a specific amount of money and can sometimes be 1 to 2 years in length. The contractor must pay the livestock owner that money at the end of the contract period. While the sheep and goats are in the custody of the herder they can use the dairy products and keep or sell the male sheep that are born during the contract period. The owner retains possession of all female animals born during the contract period.

Understanding the ways that different Kuchi operate will determine how we provide information to livestock producers. Mr Niazi and the Department of Kuchi Affairs are playing a key role in helping us do this. In return, we are also helping Mr. Niazi to train his provincial staff in negotiation and resolution skills.

**E. Building Capacity within the MAIL, NGOs and the University**

This quarter was not scheduled for large amounts of training. However, we were able to provide some training to Ministry of Agriculture staff related to the Livestock Early Warning system. During one field trip to Badakhshan further training was gained by 2 MAIL staff in vegetation surveys related to the Livestock Early Warning System. A presentation and training was also provided to 4 NGO staff regarding the use of information produced by our project. Trainings will be concentrated over the next three quarters for this year.
Other Achievements this Quarter

1. We moved into our new office Mercy Corps in July. We are now completely set up on 2nd street in the same neighborhood as before. The new offices are more spacious in terms of “outside open space” and the compound includes enough room to park about 15 vehicles.

2. We have met with the people from the USAID A4 project to discuss the potential for collaboration for training University students. One difficulty that collaboration with the A4 project could eliminate is discrimination in the selection process. We discussed that they would be willing to identify appropriate students through an internship program and we would then select these students for practical training. The students will be able to gather experience in several different PEACE Project activities.