Afghanistan PEACE Project
Reducing Risk for the Kuchi People

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

Quarterly Report

July 1, 2009 through September 30, 2009

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In Collaboration With:
Texas A&M University System

A USAID-funded Project
Cooperative Agreement No. 306-A-00-06-00521-00

September 30, 2009
Introduction

This past quarter has been busy and productive despite the poor security leading up to and after the elections. The Risk Management pilot project kicked off in July and we experienced some very promising signs from the communities we worked with in Balkh, Jawzjan and Kunduz. Development of the Livestock Market Information System has been initiated. The conflict resolution program has also continued to make progress between the Kuchi and Hazara.

Summary - Activities conducted this quarter

- Completed rangeland surveys in Badakhshan (accompanied by MAIL staff) and Ghazni (by ADT).
  - A rangeland classification map for Afghanistan is in development. The map separates rangelands converted to rain-fed wheat from existing rangelands and will provide important information for future rehabilitation efforts.
  - Work continued on a digital database of Afghanistan plant species. A comprehensive list of all species recorded for Afghanistan in the 157 volume Flora Iranica has been completed.
- Conducted nutritional profiling scans in NIRS lab on over 90 samples from seven regions.
- Facilitated monthly Shuras in 13 provinces for Kuchi Provincial leadership and developed standardized reporting format to better articulate and prioritize problems, develop solutions and disseminate information to decision-makers and communities.
- Completed risk management pilots in three provinces.
  - Baseline risk assessment indicates that conflict, insecurity, drought, water shortage and human disease were the top risk factors identified by stakeholders.
  - Initiated risk management training program for 19 NGO, government and Kuchi representatives.
  - Formed first three Collective Action Groups and initiated savings program to facilitate investment in local micro-enterprise and increase economic diversification.
- Conducted 3rd Livestock Market Assessment with results similar to previous surveys.
  - Kuchi continue to supply the majority of livestock in the six major livestock markets surveyed.
  - Data suggest that 1,651,600 sheep and goats are brought to market annually.
  - During this survey period, average flock size was higher while mean sales prices were lower.
- Initiated data collection for Livestock Market Information System.
  - Baseline data for two markets indicates that 79.5% of respondents own cell phones. The phones are used primarily for business. 89.5% do not use the SMS function due to high illiteracy amongst the traders.
  - Traders systematically compare prices with other markets including Pakistan and base their prices on weight with shape, sex and age as adjustment factors.
- Continued Kuchi / Hazara Peace Building Efforts.
  - The Kuchi and Hazara Peace Ambassadors were fully operational and organized over 250 community meetings. The meetings allowed community members to participate in the conflict resolution and peace building training. Response was overwhelmingly positive.

Major Implementation Activities conducted this Quarter

A. Infusion of the Forage Monitoring System

In mid-July field surveys were conducted in Badakhshan’s Shewae Kolone. This was the last rangeland survey field trip of the season. Several sites were monitored to check actual forage production with the
production being predicted by the plant growth model. During all the work we were accompanied by MAIL staff from both the Kabul Office as well as from the Provinces.

The Agricultural Development Team (ADT) from Texas, working out of the Ghazni military base completed 3 surveys that will be used to model rangeland vegetation there. The 3 sites were located in Nawar, Jaghori and Malistan districts. These are areas where it impossible for our teams (MAIL staff) to work safely. The ADT has already introduced us to the new team that will be arriving at the end of the year. This new ADT has agreed to monitor those sites next year to help us validate the model.

While at Texas A&M during the latter half of July, the team was able to continue to fine tune the plant growth model. We have had 2 good rainfall years and 1 drought year. This will allow us to fine tune the model at the full range of plant growth. The survey and monitoring data from 2009 are being entered for use with the model. We expect that it will be included in the system by the end of October.

To further assist MAIL in management of rangelands, we have been developing a Rangeland classification map for the country. The map together with site information such as production and nutritional quality should provide a very useful tool for MAIL to prioritize management of important rangelands. Development of the classification map has been taking place in Texas. Of particular interest is the separation of rangelands that have been converted to rain-fed wheat from existing rangelands. This will provide a good estimate of the extent and location for future rehabilitation efforts.

The development of a comprehensive plant species list has been a work in progress during the last 3 years. We have recently completed a list that includes all the species recorded for Afghanistan in the Flora Iranica. This Flora is 157 volumes of data covering Northern Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, and Western Pakistan. Our technicians have been creating a digital database of the Afghanistan species found in the flora to help with developing a comprehensive species list. This list will be placed on our website along with the other plant species lists we have developed from our work.

B. Infusion of the NIRS Nutritional Management System

In addition to the forage monitoring in Badakhshan this quarter, the MAIL also sent one of their Veterinarians with us to collect fecal samples. He has been selected by the MAIL to work in the Nutritional Profiling lab in Kabul. Samples collected during this year’s field season in the Provinces were scanned in August at the MAIL NIRS Lab. Over 90 samples were collected for sheep and goats in 7 regions. These samples were scanned to determine the nutritional quality for sheep or goats in 7 important rangeland areas in Afghanistan. These include rangelands in Faryab, Saripul, Balkh, Samangon, Baghlan, Kunduz, Bamyan and Badakhshan.

The scanned information will now be used in equations that will estimate the crude protein and digestible organic matter for diets selected by sheep and goats in each of the areas.

C. Outreach and Linking the Technology with Herder Alliances

Facilitating Kuchi Shuras

Thirty-one Kuchi Provincial Directors are managed by the Director of Provinces at the Independent Department of Kuchi. Provincial Directors are supposed to hold a monthly shura to address a wide-variety of issues related to the Kuchi people. The PEACE project continues to facilitate monthly Provincial Kuchi Shuras in 13 Provinces. The Provinces selected for this assistance were selected in collaboration with the Independent Department of Kuchi. The Director of Provinces is responsible for addressing all the requests, complaints, conflicts, and issues coming from the Provinces. One of his biggest challenges is receiving the information from the Provincial Shuras in a timely manner and in a coherent way. We have helped to
develop reporting formats that can be used by all Provincial Directors. Copies of shura reports are passed directly to us. Gradually reports are improving. One of the main objectives of facilitating shuras is to reestablish strong decision-making organs. In this way the Kuchi leaders can continue to improve the way they prioritize their needs, articulate their problems, solve their problems and most of all effectively disseminate information to their people. This dissemination of information is a key component for linking the technologies we are institutionalizing in the MAIL, with the herders that can benefit from them.

The aim of the Provincial Shuras is to increase dialogue between Afghans and their government. If Kuchi representatives can effectively pass messages from rural residents to decision-makers, then supporting them to attend meetings is well worth it. Several Provincial Kuchi Directors have told us that if they can prove to their people that they will help them, they will be happy to support them to come to the monthly shuras. The PEACE project is facilitating the process.

D. Building Capacity within the MAIL, IDK, NGOs and the University

Expanded Capacity for Kuchi Leaders

The PEACE project initiated a pilot effort to increase economic diversification for Kuchi in 3 provinces; Kunduz, Jawzjan and Balkh. The objective of the pilot was to enhance economic diversification by building the human, social and financial capital of Kuchi, improving marketing, and promoting value addition to their livestock and livestock products. The demand-driven interventions are intended to help empower Kuchi herders to better create and conserve wealth, embrace business opportunities and diversify their investment portfolio. It is anticipated that these interventions will enable them to cope more effectively with drought and chronic problems related to an increasingly restricted access to natural resources, and with resource-based conflicts. The interventions should also help to integrate Kuchi into Afghan society and provide them with an alternative to insurgent-associated activities.

Kunduz was one of the pilot project sites. The major economic activities of the Kuchi in Kunduz are livestock production and opportunistic farming. Sales of milk and livestock which are subject to seasonal variability in terms of volume and prices constitute major sources of cash income for the herders. They have a poorly diversified economy because most of their income is dependent on successfully raising livestock. Similar to the Kuchi in other parts of Afghanistan, in Kunduz they too are subject to drought, war, loss of grazing resources and insecurity. The illiteracy level among the Kuchi in Kunduz is greater than 90%. In a limited Participatory Rapid Assessment (PRA) conducted as part of a training exercise from July 5-12, drought, water shortage, insecurity, conflict, human disease, illiteracy, animal feed, and poor farming equipment were claimed as major problems. When prioritized, occurrence of conflict, insecurity, drought, water shortage, and human disease were the most important risk factors and subsequently require immediate attention by development programs. The same type of assessment was made for the other 2 provinces as well.

On the 5th of July a training program was started involving 9 Kuchi representatives from Balkh, Jawzjan and Kunduz provinces and 12 government and nongovernment institutional representatives from the following organizations:

People in Need (PIN) (Balkh Province)
Save the Children (SCF) – UK (Balkh Province)
SCF – US (Balkh Province)
Agha Khan Foundation (Balkh Province)
Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Production (Kabul, Jawzjan and Balkh Provinces)
  Department of Rangeland
  Department of Animal Production
The 7-day training program aimed to explain the concept of risk management and how it can be used to mitigate for the problems associated with livestock production. It provided participants with an understanding of methods used and examples of its implementation in Ethiopia and Kenya.

**Collective Action Group and Rural finance**

Following the training the PEACE team had several meetings with the Kuchi leaders from Kunduz, Jawzjan and Balkh to initiate the formation of collective action groups (CAG’s). The specific intervention options in the pilot project include formation of collective action groups founded on rural savings and credit to facilitate local investment in micro-enterprise. Rural financial programs such as savings and credit institutions can smooth income streams and consumption seasonally and between years. Credit can help herders replace livestock after drought. It can allow productive herding enterprises to expand, diversify household income and reduce vulnerability to shocks. We found that herders in Kunduz have benefited little from financial programs. Formal financial institutions such as commercial banks and microfinance institutions have little or no presence in the Kuchi areas.

Three CAG’s each with a membership size of 7 were formed in July. They have initiated their savings program. All activities were suspended during most of the month of August and September due to security concerns associated with the elections. When we resume the program the CAG’s will continue their training. A functional literacy program will be initiated to enable group members to read, write and perform accounting on their finances. Training programs will be geared to enable them to manage savings and loans and other financial services. A rural financial institution will adopt a savings-led approach with grants or seed money injected at a later stage; and after the capacity of the groups are adequately developed. The full capacity building exercise will include training in group dynamics, leadership, conflict, rural finance, financial products, and small scale business development. With the help of micro-finance savings-led credit programs and support for business development, CAG’s will be able to participate in marketing and value addition programs. The information gathered during the pilots would be used to develop an effective risk management program during Phase 2 of the PEACE project.

**E. Conduct Economic Assessment of Livestock Markets and LINKS**

**Livestock Market Assessment**

The 3rd livestock assessment was completed this quarter and results were very similar to the 2nd survey results. A summary of the 3rd quarter results is listed below.

- As has been the case in previous surveys, Pashtun represented the bulk of the actors in the market place. Additionally, nomadic and sedentary Kuchi were reported to be responsible for supplying the bulk of livestock to the 6 major markets surveyed during this period.

- Preliminary estimates suggest that 268,800 sheep, 75,400 goats, and 43,600 heads of cattle are brought for trade to Afghanistan’s 6 major livestock markets during the period April - June (spring). When extrapolated to an annual figure, the data suggest that 1,651,600 sheep and goats are brought for trade to Afghanistan’s 6 major livestock markets annually.

- The average flock size was higher during this survey period while mean sale prices were lower.

- Sellers during this survey period had higher expectations of selling their animals when compared to the previous survey period.
• The market place was dominated by traders during this survey, similar to the previous two survey periods. Sales of livestock across the board, however, were mostly to butchers in this survey period.

• Similar to Survey Period 2, purchasers reported that they had little intention of reselling the stock they had just purchased during this survey period, in comparison to the first survey period. This result was not surprising given that butchers followed by individuals were the primary purchasers in the markets during this survey period.

The 4th and final assessment has been initiated and should be completed by November 30th, 2009. With the completion of the final report we will have a good understanding of the seasonal variations in livestock market activity throughout the year.

Livestock Market Information System

The livestock market information system (LMIS) is a market price database that can be accessed by users through an SMS texting protocol. It is being institutionalized within the Statistics Dept. of MAIL. This system has been established by Texas A&M University in five East African countries as well as Mongolia and Mali and is used by nomadic herders and traders. We initiated the development of the price market server system during the last quarter. Preliminary information is required to ensure that it is properly developed. Data was collected from two markets, Kabul and Jalalabad, where traders were surveyed to better understand how they go about selecting, buying and selling animals. The objective was to determine how Afghans currently acquire price information and how they negotiate livestock prices.

All Focus Group participants, in both Kabul and Jalalabad, showed a great interest in the LMIS opportunity: “We can rely on our informal network to get some price indications, but we need official data to back up our negotiation” (Focus Group participant, Jalalabad).

In both Kabul and Jalalabad, our surveys have shown that:
• During the negotiation process, traders mostly base their estimate on weight – shape, sex, and age being adjustment factors
• A large majority of traders are illiterate (both Pashto and Dari), which is the main reason why they almost never use SMS
• 79.5% of the respondents own a cell phone
• 78.5% use it sometimes or at least once a day for personal or professional calls
• 89.5% of the respondents said that they never or almost never used the SMS function of their cell phones
• Most cell phone owners use it for business related matters
• Traders systematically tend to compare prices on their market
• They are already used to comparing livestock prices of other markets (especially traders from Kabul Company)
• In Kabul, 23% of the interviewed traders (especially cattle – Maish – owners) compare the prices between their market and Pakistan
• In line with the observations of the Livestock Market Assessment Reports, it seems that Afghan livestock marketplaces are mostly regional

F. Other Achievements

Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Program between Kuchi and Hazara with GL-CRSP funding

The PEACE Project has been delivering conflict resolution skills to Kuchi leaders since early 2007. The Advisor on Tribal Affairs to President Karzai, Wahidullah Sabawoon, was interested in having us address specific conflicts using those same techniques but in workshops where both Kuchi and Hazara were present.
One region the Government specified for joint workshops was Wardak and Ghazni Provinces. Fighting between Kuchi and Hazara villagers over land access rights had resulted in many fatalities over the previous few years.

Our conflict resolution program was implemented through a local peace-building NGO called Sanayee Development Organization (SDO). SDO was capable of delivering the skills and messages to fellow Afghans in a way that ensured they matched the context and culture of the people. With the assistance of Wahidullah Sabawoon’s office we initiated a series of workshops that were attended by both Kuchi and Hazara leaders. Selected leaders represented the communities that were involved in the land disputes. The workshops were an attempt to produce useful dialogue between the leaders as a first step towards resolving problems on the ground.

The process was started by asking Kuchi and Hazara representatives to attend separate 8-day workshops. During these workshops various topics were covered ranging from; identification of the stages and transformation of conflicts, the role of communication in conflicts, and resolving conflicts through negotiation. After each group had a chance to understand how conflicts could be solved peacefully, representatives from both sides were then asked to attend an 8- day workshop together.

The joint workshop was an effort to develop some trust between the participants. Both Kuchi and Hazara leaders discussed issues and spent time communicating especially during group sessions. One of the interesting interactions we witnessed was that of a Kuchi and Hazara talking about how their grandfathers were very close friends. They were saddened by the fact that they were not friends like their grandfathers. Although this time together could not erase all the mistrust and conflicts of the past it was a very good first step in what will be a long process to resolve conflicts between them. To capitalize on this first step we asked that they self-select 5 representatives from each of their groups to continue discussions of peace building and conflict resolution among their respective communities. Five Kuchi and Five Hazara representatives were selected to act as “peace ambassadors” (PA’s) and spent the next 4 months meeting with communities across Wardak and Ghazni Provinces.

A work plan was created with the PA’s to visit communities and hold meetings with community leaders. The PA’s explained to the communities what they had learned and experienced in the workshops and how that could be used to resolve problems. They also wanted to learn about the conflicts that these communities were experiencing and find out if they had any solutions for them. Kuchi PA’s went to Kuchi communities and Hazara PA’s went to Hazara communities. Over the course of 4 months, the 10 PA’s had organized and participated in over 250 community meetings. Many of these meeting took place in mosques or community offices.

The contact with these communities was overwhelmingly positive. People from both sides were very happy to hear that someone was attempting to address the land conflict issues that existed between them. While there was some negative reaction to compromising with the other group, most people simply wanted the issues resolved.

The days that the Kuchi and Hazara spent together were useful because we discovered several points of agreement. First, both sides blamed the government for creating their problem. The Kuchi and Hazara representatives would like Wahidullah Sabawoon’s office to become more active in seeking solutions to the problems between them. Both sides also agree that it will take some time to work through all the issues. Thirty years of war has disrupted so many issues related to land access and these will not be solved quickly. There is a feeling among Kuchi and Hazara that the political leaders are not allowing them to settle these issues at the community level. They feel that political leaders on both sides are perpetuating the conflicts to further their own agendas. They also agreed that fighting has not helped to solve anything so far and should therefore be discouraged.
Neither side could agree on how to actually solve the problems, however. The selection of the PA’s was a welcomed conclusion to the 2009 joint workshop because the most respected leaders from each side agreed to take the discussions that had been initiated during the workshops to their communities.

Kuchi PA’s reported that during their community meetings most people wanted to live together peacefully with the Hazara. They were very interested in using words instead of guns to solve problems. The elders in the communities insisted that peace was possible because Kuchi and Hazara had lived together peacefully in the past. The younger people, however, have been listening to the political leaders tell them that they should fight for the land. The PA’s suggested that now that the initial contact had been made with these communities, more practical work should begin now.

Hazara PA’s reported that many people expressed that foreigners are here to help our country stabilize and we should not waste the opportunity for peace. Therefore, solving the problems between the Kuchi and Hazara should be pursued now. Hazara communities were worried that if they did not solve the problems between the groups, someone else might do it for them and both groups would lose access to the land. The Hazara said that they had learned a lot about conflict resolution from the workshops and that as PA’s they had accomplished more in 4 months than the government had accomplished in the last 3 years.

The Kuchi and Hazara PA’s both suggested that it would be useful to begin resolving the land conflict issues one by one. They suggested that they begin by resolving the easier issues and continue onto the more contentious conflicts. To accomplish this it would be useful to have a neutral office where people could have Kuchi and Hazara leaders mediate land conflict issues. The MAIL is directly involved in attempting to manage public rangelands and may be very interested in hosting such an independent office. In any case, what is clear is that peace building and conflict resolution messages are being received well in the rural communities. This not only gives reason for hope but points directly to where support will be found for peace building efforts.

Obviously, more work is needed. There are many other regions in Afghanistan that desperately need active peace ambassadors promoting conflict resolution between Kuchi and Villages communities. These efforts have reached hundreds of community leaders. Further efforts could ensure that difficult conflicts are resolved in a way that results in sustained peace.