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

Quarterly Report

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Submitted By:
University of California at Davis

In Collaboration With:
Texas A&M University System

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Summary

Five major activities have been initiated or continued this quarter. The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) have been fully engaged with our project and we are now within a few weeks of signing the Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with the departments of Animal Health and Natural Resources. We are preparing for our first field season and training of MAIL counterparts will start the last week of March. Equipment acquisition has also been a major endeavor this quarter. Contact has been established with the Director of Kuchi Affairs and collaborations involving conflict resolution and herder alliance development.

Steps towards collaboration with other USAID funded projects have begun, and includes the A4-Advancing Afghan Agriculture Alliance Project, the Wildlife Conservation Society and AgroMet. The Texas Agricultural Extension Services office in the US, in collaboration with the TAES Afghanistan office, has begun to acquire the first of the GIS data layers from many sources, for the purpose of planning field investigations and in future forage forecasts.

Major Implementation Activities Initiated

B. Infusion of the Forage Monitoring System

During the last quarter, focus had been on creating awareness of the Livestock Early Warning System Project within the NGO community, MAIL, and the Independent Department of Kuchi Affairs. Field work required to implement the LEWS project will begin in April. This effort will involve surveying plant communities in specific provinces. Equipment to conduct these surveys has been acquired and prepared during this past three months. Staff from the Department of Land Resources have been identified and included in developing the location and field survey schedule. Formal training will take place in mid-April for Kabul-based Department staff, and on-site during surveys with provincial staff.

Approval has been sought for a counterpart from the Department of Land Resources to go with us to Mongolia to attend a LEWS seminar in May 2007. This visit to Mongolia will provide valuable insight into the current work that is being conducted with the use of LEWS in forecasting forage.

A draft MOU has been developed in collaboration with the Department of Land Resources and will be officially signed when the Deputy Minister returns to Kabul after the Afghan New Year (i.e., March 21).

C. Infusion of the NIRS Nutritional Management System.

We have made progress in our discussions with the Department of Veterinary Science and Animal Health in the MAIL regarding a site to locate the Near Infra Red Spectrometry (NIRS) laboratory. Recently, they Director assigned us an office and one animal lab facility in which to locate the lab and conduct the feeding trials. Additionally, 2 counterparts have been assigned to work collaboratively on the NIRS project.

We have handed over a detailed work plan for nutritional profiling to the Veterinary and Animal Health Department. A draft MOU has been developed in collaboration and should be signed at the same time by the Minister as the MOU with the Department of Land Resources.
The feeding trials will be postponed until this fall due to the delay in getting a facility assigned for this purpose, and due to the fact that major renovations will be required before the trials can be started. The feeding trials are not critical at this juncture, however, and will be easily accomplished this coming fall and winter. The delay will also allow a European Union-funded project to make suitable renovations prior to our occupation.

The process has been started to get approval for a counterpart from the Department of Veterinary Science and Animal Health to go to Mongolia to attend a Near Infrared Spectroscopy seminar in May 2007. This visit to Mongolia will provide valuable insight into the current work that is being conducted with the use of this technology.

**D. Forage Monitoring and Nutritional Information Delivery and Outreach.**

Work is continuing to develop the information delivery component of the project. The State-side team is producing maps and acquiring the necessary data to produce the information framework. We are just beginning to work on the information delivery here in Afghanistan. Contact has been made with two radio networks, Equal Access and Internews. Discussions have centered on delivery of information to Kuchi herders. One network uses world space radios and a satellite delivery system while the other uses broadcasts recorded onto CD’s and delivered to broadcast stations throughout Afghanistan. We are particularly interested in finding a way to get our information onto AM radio. We feel that Kuchi are most likely to own radios that can pick up AM stations.

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

Contact has been made with the General Director of Kuchi, Agha Doud Shah Niazi. This is an independent department under the president to specifically address all Kuchi needs. This department was separated from the Ministry of Frontiers and Tribal Affairs just 9 months ago. In meetings with the General Director, he assured us that they would fully cooperate with the PEACE project. He has promised to facilitate communication and dialogue with any and all Kuchi herders we wish to meet. He is very interested in conflict resolution regarding access to grazing lands. We are planning a collaborative effort with the Tribal Liaison Office and Mercy Corps in April and May, to discuss resolution strategies with Kuchi leaders. We have identified a land conflict specialist to help us develop and test some resolution methods in priority areas.

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

Capacity building is just beginning at this stage of the project. The MOU that is ready to be signed identifies the involvement of five government employees for capacity building. With the initiation of our field work next month, we will be working directly and regularly with both central and provincial government employees. This will facilitate an understanding of how the technology works from the ground up. University students will also be employed in the collection of field data this year. Candidates will be assessed during a one-day training at Kabul University.
Other Achievements

1. We have hired both an Administrative and Technical Assistant to work full time on the PEACE Project. This has provided a needed boost in our efforts, particularly with the field season starting shortly.

2. AgroMet, a meteorological focused agency funded by the USGS, is now working collaboratively with the PEACE Project. The contributions of this organization to the project will be the regular supply of climate data from 169 stations in Afghanistan. The PEACE Project in turn will facilitate their data collection efforts, by installing additional climate monitoring stations in sites identified previously by AgroMet. AgroMet is also facilitating our efforts to acquire historical climate data from the Ministry of Transportation.

3. Data has been acquired from the UNDP-Mine Action Center for the purpose of planning field surveys. Furthermore, the UNDP-MAC has agreed to update this information for us regularly, to facilitate our efforts to remain safe while in the field.

4. A large water-point database has been acquired from DAACAR, for the purpose of monitoring and evaluating herder movements. The availability of forage and the dissemination of this information, and a herders response to this information, can not be fully assessed without having baseline information about water availability. The data from DACAAR will facilitate this effort.

5. We have entered into an informal partnership with the UNDP-Afghanistan Information Systems (AIMS) office to improve the capacity of the GIS lab at the Ministry of Agriculture, and to facilitate each others efforts. In February, AIMS supplied the project with a variety of GIS data for the purpose of mapping, reporting, planning and research. In return, the PEACE Project has agreed to share finer-scaled land classification and DEM data upon its acquisition.

Modifications to the Work Plan

There have been a couple of modifications to the work plan.

1. Feeding trials have been rescheduled for this fall. I have mentioned the reasons for this modification in the above narrative. The delay, however, does not involve equipment purchases. These are proceeding according to plan, and will allow us to start up the feeding trials quite quickly in the fall.

2. Originally our plan was to hire two full-time professional nationals in the capacity of livestock specialist and ecologist. We were unable to fill these positions, however, due to fact that capacity is quite low in Afghanistan. With this in mind, we have decided to increase the amount of time allocated to our consultancies. We are also hoping to increase the position of the vegetation ecologist to a full-time position. Moreover, capacity enhancement will now play a larger role in the expected outputs for our consultants and the project in general.