

AG 3794. Afghanistan: Research in Alternative Livelihoods Fund (RALF)

QUARTERLY NARRATIVE REPORT August 01– November 30, 2006

Narrative Summary

Project Title:	Research in Alternative Livelihoods Fund (RALF)
DFID Number:	AG 3794
Project Manager:	Najib Malik, RALF Programme Manager
Organisation:	International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA)
Start Date:	January 19, 2004
Implementation	Round-1 Projects: Started June-July 2004 Round-2 Projects: Started Feb-April 2005
Completion Date:	October 31, 2007
Total Budget:	£ 3,000,210

Project Goal

Super-goal: Sustainable reduction and elimination of illicit poppy cultivation in Afghanistan.

Goal: Sustainable livelihoods in place for rural Afghans in poppy growing areas.

Background

As stated in the Annual Report

Project Objectives

The purpose of RALF is to develop and promote innovative alternative livelihood options for rural Afghans currently economically dependent on opium poppy.

Expected outputs of the project are:

- A competitive mechanism for funding innovative applied research projects tailored to the programme purpose.
- Recommended technologies and support services, tested and available for implementation.
- Improved capacity for applied research and extension in government, Afghan universities and NGO partners.

The outcome of RALF will be licit alternatives to opium production that are practicable in the socio-economic environment of Afghanistan, and that are accessible to rural people. The beneficiaries will be the, predominantly poor, farming population and casual workers who currently depend on the illicit activity of growing poppy for their livelihood.

RALF operates through the mechanism of a competitive research fund (CRF) managed by ICARDA to mobilise innovative ideas for the development and promotion of alternative livelihoods opportunities in Afghanistan. Projects are proposed and implemented by 'mini-consortia' comprising a partnership that includes an international or non-Afghan research institution and an Afghan-based partner with experience in the area that fieldwork is to be carried out. This combination is intended to maximise synergy between international research practice and knowledge of the local Afghan context.

Projects are also intended to include a significant element of capacity building for Afghan Government, Afghan universities and NGO collaborators. Apart from generating practical results of research that can be applied by rural people, RALF will also test the CRF mechanism, which may provide lessons for Afghanistan's emerging broader agricultural research strategy. The international public goods (IPG's) generated as a result of the research projects may be applicable in other countries with similar socioeconomic circumstances.

Activities/Achievements for the Period August 1-November 30, 2006

Response to the OPR Action Items:

The OPR Session of the 4th RALF Programme Workshop, held at ICARDA-Kabul Office, Nov 19-21, should have been an interactive session, with the active participation of RALF Project Partners, DFID and the DFID consultant who conducted the OPR (Ms. Marry Underwood). The Programme management had requested DFID if Underwood or another consultant familiar with RALF could serve as a resource person at the workshop but there was no response from DFID. It was like responding to a reviewer's comments and critique, without having any means of communication with that person. There were many questions of interpretation that the Project Partners wanted to ask Underwood in a face-to-face dialogue or to seek her advice as to whether the measures taken were adequate or not.

-Amendments to Logframes:

The Programme-level Logframe has been revised, as per the OPR recommendations, amending outputs as needed, with particular attention to the identification of indicators and means of verification. The amendments were discussed at the 4th Programme Level RALF Workshop. The revised Logframe for the Programme is found in Annex 1. There were a few proposed amendments such as, **Indicator 2.2 (Livelihood systems and household decision making analysed)**, which were not accepted as stated. RALF Project Partners can not implement the second part of this Indicator. The Project Partners felt that this is a substantial new addition and they do not have the budget and the information to implement this. We do not have information on the household decision making process. It is a culturally sensitive question to ask. Household decision making means, for instance, whether women contribute to decisions. The members of the household do not necessarily meet. What part do women play in the OPE? Have the women played a role in the family environment of a poppy farmer? In Badakhshan, may be, but in Helmand or Nangarhar, no. Similarly, depending on the province or district, it would be difficult to

respond to **OVI 2.2 (Livelihood systems should be analysed and documented)**. It may be possible to substantiate that a household adopted vegetable production under polytunnel in Helamand or Nangarhar but can we say how women influenced the decision?

Regarding the logframes for Projects, most of the proposed amendments were incorporated, however, the partners felt that it is too late in the Projects' life to change what we actually do. If we revise the logframes, with Pain's null hypothesis in mind, it will force a discussion on what was actually affected by the Projects.

The quantitative vs qualitative emphasis on project reporting: Underwood advised a more qualitative reporting. It was mentioned by Project Partners that if we are preoccupied with numbers, that is because the log frames are quantitative. The donors in general do not have the time to read qualitative descriptions that is why they want logframes which is quantitative and easily assessed. In our future reporting, however, we should take an emerging/promising technology from our research work and describe it.

MOV 2: MAI and other development projects using materials and approaches from RALF: There are examples of RALF's results that are being scaled-up now by MAI, the RALF Implementing Partners themselves and the international community, as follows:

- Lamb fattening (RALF 01-09) as an economic opportunity being considered in designing new projects by WB
- MAI's keen interest in mushroom production (RALF 01-07) leading to a CNTF-funded Project
- Self-Help Groups (RALF 01-08) as the subject of new initiatives by AKDN
- Organic Export (RALF 01-07) being used in a joint Concept Note by RALF Partners
- Concept Note on Marketing of Saffron as an extension of RALF 02-02 by Washington State Univ and DACAAR
- AVRDC submitting a Concept Note to DAI-ALP-East

MOV 2: Quality monitoring of training and skills development: It was decided that RALF Partners should have an evaluation of the workshops and field days that they organize. Dari and English Evaluation Forms were filled by the participants of the National Saffron Workshop. Partners do have in-house skills development plans in place for their staff. For skills development of Afghan researchers in RALF and MAI in the area of PR, SLA and SGA, a Concept Note has been submitted for funding to IDRC.

RALF reports documenting lessons learned and implications: This has been addressed to some extent and will receive more attention if additional funding becomes available for **the implementation of** the Communication Strategy.

Documentation of additional outputs for the Programme and Projects. A few examples are: the spin-off benefit of oilseed crops for livestock, conservation technology, empowering women through establishment of agro-enterprise and self-help groups, linkages established between Afghan universities and implementing partners and through them with universities outside Afghanistan.

-Monitoring & Evaluation:

Strengthening of the M&E at the Project and Programme Level is in progress. Joint M&E missions have been conducted, during this reporting period, involving the Programme management, the Projects and MAI.

Discussion on the Changing Circumstances of Pain's Assumptions: The

context in which we work now in Afghanistan has changed since late 2003 when the RALF Programme was conceived or early 2004 when Pain compiled the Discussion Paper for RALF M&E. A few of the fundamental questions asked by Project Partners were as follows:

- Are we really working with farmers who are currently dependent on opium poppies?
- Can we even approach a poppy farmer or a poppy field in Helmand or Nangarhar?
- Are the technologies being developed under RALF will only be adopted by the poppy farmers?
- What role do women play in the OPE?

The Project Partners had responded to Pain in early 2005 and had addressed most of his comments/critique. The Partners felt, however, that we should not be re-examining Pain's recommendations at this time. His assumptions may not be realistic anymore as the circumstances of poppy cultivation have changed. ***Whereas it is true that many farmers are dependent out of desperation (acute shortage/lack of water, vicious cycle of credit dependency, etc.), there is another category of poppy growers (larger fields) who have become dependent on poppy profits in order to maintain the lifestyle that they have become used to (power, influence, money). No matter we do, we will not be able to influence this category of poppy growers who are hooked to opium out of choice and not necessity.*** A few key points from the Minutes of the 4th RALF Programme Workshop (Annex 2):

- Realistically, economic analysis would show that there is no way for legal efforts to be as profitable as poppy. The "red gold" (saffron) may tip the balance if we link up Afghan traders of saffron to the international markets. This is a challenge for DACAAR, Washington State University and CRS colleagues.
- We could improve production by 25% (2.5 million ha of wheat is grown), or we could have a second crop as a seasonal crop (ie, maize). With the double crop, and the perception of risk with poppy, it is hoped that farmers' choice will be the double crop. We could improve the production potential/unit/time (ie., improve the productivity of the wheat-based cropping systems)
- Project Partners are not optimistic that we could make a dent in the poppy production at the national level, partly because it is a moving target. We are already witnessing a correlation between Project activities and substantial reduction in poppy cultivation at the village/community level (Sangar and Salab in Laghman, Sorkhroad and Rodat in Nangarhar) or even at the district level (ie. Pashtun Zarghun). RALF can bring the new technologies but may not tip the balance at the provincial level. Even change at the district level is difficult to prove. It can not expect the farmers to switch. Moreover, we will not monitor the areas where poppy grows. Look at Helmand which was a desert 4-5 years ago, but now it has deep wells and huge high-walled compounds, although people are not afraid to grow poppies in open fields. Many poppy fields do not have walls especially in Garmsair area. In Helmand women are not involved at all (unlike Badakhshan where women are engaged in some activities with the by-products of poppy plants).
- We can make a difference in the livelihood of the rural communities by linking the farmer to the markets. Onions can be a very high-income crop, but still no buyer will come to the farmer's onion field, but the buyer will go to even inaccessible parts of Badakhshan to collect the opium extract.

- What we (RALF Partners) can do is to contribute to the body of knowledge and develop new technologies which would improve the livelihoods of rural communities (whoever adopts them-can not say with certainty that it will be necessarily the poppy farmers who will be the sole beneficiaries).
- Regarding concrete actions on M&E (ie., monitoring the poppy trends, impact of our Project on the livelihoods of poppy farmers), the Project Partners indicated that we value our security over this indicator. We get our stats from UNODC, but we do not monitor the trends or the impact on the poppy grower.
- The research results have not reached target farmers yet. Moreover new farmers are taking up the activity all the time.

Approaches to Livelihoods Analysis:

A session was conducted on SLA on Nov 21st, as part of the 4th Programme level workshop. The session was facilitated by Ms. Jo Grace of AKDN. More training is needed in SLA and SAGA for RALF Partners and MAI. A Concept Note has been submitted to IDRC for funding in order to have more training for RALF Partners and MAI researchers. Highlights of the SLA Session:

- The discussion centred around the need for a contextual “livelihoods” perspective in the RALF partner final reports. Several of the partners were concerned that because of the more scientific rather than field based nature of their projects, DFID might not be satisfied with their response to the livelihoods analysis request.
- Since some of the RALF Projects have “softer” development research components, they would be heavier on livelihoods analysis. Some projects are more agronomic in nature (01-04, 02-05). It is hoped that the 2 types of projects would easily balance one another out.
- Project partners were advised that: do what you can within the parameters of your own research. You can take the various levels of your project and look at them from a livelihoods perspective (capacity building has impact on human assets for instance). It will also be important to look at the potential impact of each project in the livelihoods context.

A few approaches:

- (a) Look at the direct impact on beneficiaries
 - (b) Look at the potential impact on livelihoods with scaling up of activities (future)
 - (c) Work with core staff on assessing the impact of the project over the next 5-10 years on different aspects of the framework (assets, vulnerability, policy)
- On the issue of disaggregating data by gender at the field level, Jo Grace reminded the group that under DFID’s SL framework the impact on different groups is just as important as the data. So looking at how different groups like men and women may benefit, or not benefit, how, and why?
 - It was noted that each of the interventions undertaken will require change agents. This is another aspect to consider in the livelihoods analysis. It would be particularly helpful to have an analysis of what types of individuals or households are likely to be persuaded out of the OPE (ie, has about 10 jeribs land or needs employment at a certain time), so that we can better tailor interventions and identify change agents.

Implementation Plan for 2007:

All remaining 10 Projects will not be able to continue until October 31, 2007. There will be various "end-dates" for the Projects. Nevertheless, a detailed plan was drawn up, during the 4th Programme Level Workshop, in consultation with the Projects, for the remaining period of the programme for consideration by the Steering Committee (including DFID) and ICARDA senior management. Two scenarios were presented as follows:

- (a) **Survival Strategy:** What the Programme could do to sustain itself until October 31, 2007. the planned activities would include M&E field trips to the provinces during spring and summer of 2007, 2 more thematic workshops, a Final Workshop and limited implementation of the Communication Strategy.
- (b) Budget needed to implement all the thematic events, a national/international symposium on medicinal plants, two Programme-level workshops, monthly M&E field trips and implementation of the communication strategy.

-Amendment of the Agreements: This is a two-stage process. During the first stage, the formal Agreements between DFID-UK and ICARDA-HQ will be amended. The Programme management has drafted a letter for the DG's consideration. In the second stage, the individual Project Agreements between the Lead Agency of each Project and ICARDA will be amended. The Programme management will ask for a revised work plan and budget plan for the remaining life of the Projects. The Projects can then respond.

-Amendment of the Guidelines for Reporting: The Guidelines for reporting was discussed at the 4th Programme Workshop. The contents of the Annual and the Final Reports are to include the following items in addition to what already appears in the Guidelines:

- Emphasis on the *process*
- Livelihoods Analysis
- Case Studies
- Documentation of research results and ideas emanating out of the RALF Projects
- Documentation of how you have built capacity at MAI and the Afghan university with which you had a linkage
- What have you done on market research analysis
- List all the communication, dissemination and training events that you have completed
- Number of communities that your Project has impacted
- Number of farmers (gender disaggregated, if possible) that have benefited already, or may benefit once the results of your Project is called up.

The Annual Project reports for the period Jan 31, 2006-January 31, 2007 are due by January 31. RALF management is to submit the consolidated Annual Report by mid-February.

The next Quarterly Narrative Report covering the period February 1-April 30, 2007 is to be submitted to DFID by mid-May.

Final Reports by the Projects are to be submitted to ICARDA prior to October 15, 2007. It is expected that half of the Projects will come to an end within the first quarter of 2007 because of budgetary reasons.

Reporting structures and guidelines for the Annual Report and the Final Report were reviewed as indicated in the Minutes of the Workshop.

-Thematic and Regional Workshops: The following workshops were held during this review period:

- The **National Saffron Workshop** was convened in Herat, Nov 14-17, 2006
- The **Self-Help Workshop** was held at MAI-Kabul in Nov 27, 2006

- The following workshops are planned:

- Oilseed Crops Workshop, Mazar-e-Sharif, Spring 2007
- Forage Crops Workshop, Baghlan, Spring 2007
- Medicinal Plants (in particular, Licourice), Paktia, Spring 2007

The RALF management's approach to Project-level capacity building, M&E, communication/dissemination events have now changed as the Programme is lending support to such activities to broaden the scope, the target audience and the impact of such activities.

Capacity Building: As Reported under Output 3

Communication Strategy:

The Document was discussed at the 4th Programme-Level Workshop, as reported under Output 4.

RALF Website: The RALF website is accessible to the public at large at <http://www.icarda.cgiar.org/RALFweb/RALF.htm>. In response to DFID's advice, the Password requirement for accessing the Proceedings of the Workshops has been removed and the public at large can now access the Power Point Presentations as well as Minutes of the RALF Steering Committee Meetings and Workshops. The Project Partners, however, are concerned that free access by the public may jeopardize their security and the security of the farmers/communities that are involved in participatory research. At the 4th RALF workshop, it was decided that from now on, the authors' permission be sought before placing their presentation on the website. Should the Minutes of Workshops and Steering Committee Meetings become public? People's names, disagreements, as well as controversial issues will all become public. DFID's advice is needed here.

It is proposed that Minutes of the Meetings should become restricted again and be accessible only to DFID, ICARDA, MAI, Ministry of Counter Narcotics, RALF Project Partners, and the Civil Society Alternative Livelihood Groups. The username and password will be provided to authorised users in order to access the protected fields of the website. Access maybe granted by PM to other interested groups, upon request.

It is important to note that the RALF website is being accessed internationally and new linkages are being developed.

RALF Electronic Database: The Electronic Database, with search capability, was established in July 2005 and contains the records of all Project Agreements, Progress Reports, Finance Reports as well historical records of Project Proposals. The E-Database is now accessible by RALF Partners, MAI, MCN and DFID. Temporary passwords as well as directions for use were given to above group. Access maybe granted by the PM to other Alternative Livelihood Programmes and donor agencies, upon request. The E-Database, like any other database, needs periodic updating.

RALF Electronic Forum: In order to facilitate communication among the RALF

Partners, between the RALF management and RALF Partners, between RALF and MAI, the E-Forum was launched in August 2006. The E-Database is now accessible by RALF Partners, MAI, MCN and DFID.

RALF Steering Committee: The last meeting held during this reporting period was on September 3, 2006.

Informal Interactions, Linkages, Contacts: Since the RALF Programme is unique in the sense that it has a wide geographic coverage mandate (17 provinces) and is being implemented by 25 national and international organizations, there are many opportunities for establishment of new linkages, cross-diffusion of ideas and informal communication of the research results of RALF.

Output 1: The Competitive Research Funding Mechanism. The experience gained through the CRF mechanism will be passed on to MAI and MCN in a thematic workshop in early 2007.

Output 2: Recommended Technologies and Support Services, Tested and Available for Implementation.

-Research is progressing, and there are early indications, that the projects funded by RALF are yielding results that will translate into new technologies/practicable recommendations that can be used to improve incomes or food security, or provide employment and replace poppy cultivation, if adopted after a scale-up phase. A few tangible examples are:

- The Self-Help Groups as a sustainable source of micro-credit in Badakhshan.
- Production, processing and marketing of saffron
- New forage/fodder crops in Baghlan
- New oilseed crops in the northern provinces
- Introduction of the Chinese 2 wheel tractor has huge potential for impact
- Commercial production of mint and value addition
- Enabling of women in setting-up micro agro-enterprise.

Output 3: Improved Capacity for Applied Research and Extension in Government, Afghan Universities and NGO Partners

Project Partners disagreed with Underwood's assessment that Projects do not have clear strategies for capacity building. Projects had developed strategies even if they had not had them to begin with. A lot has been done even if it has not been described. In Project 02-07, the whole program is about capacity building. The Partners acknowledged that maybe it is not sufficiently reported. Maybe it gets buried in the summary. MAI was formally included as a partner in 6 projects, but their involvement in the first-half of the Programme life was by name only. Working relationships have, however, been built with several Projects during 2006.

1. Capacity Building at MAI:

- The MAI Deputy Ministers as well as heads of the Departments of Research, Extension, Planning, Alternative Livelihoods and Media & Publications are all active members of the RALF Steering Committee. There is ongoing dialogue between the PM and the MAI Members of the Steering Committee.
- The PM has involved the provincial research and extension staff in field visits to project sites.
- The MAI senior management in Kabul and the Directors of Research and

Extension in key provinces have been invited to RALF functions.

- ICARDA has contributed to the development of the Master Plan as well as the MAI Proposal on Rebuilding the Research Capacity.
- ICARDA/RALF and ICARDA, as the lead agency for the FHCRAA, are currently working with MAI and RALF Partners to develop Concept Notes for CNTF.
- MAI-Kabul: Through the CRF mechanism, the RALF Steering Committee and joint M&E missions to the provinces
- MAI-Provincial Depts. The Capacity building in projects was weak to begin with, but strengthened as they went on. In Project 01-11 in Baghlan Province, five MAI officials are directly involved in conducting field trials on forage/feed crops at the Poze-Eshan Research Station.
- MAI staff work with CRS at the District level in Heart and Ghor. That's capacity building.

2. Capacity Building Within RALF Projects:

Each project has conducted training activities for the development of its own staff as well as MAI officials, both in the capital, as well the provinces. Implementing partners have reviewed their own skills development needs in the area of SLA, SGA, Research Proposal Development. A Concept Note has been submitted to IDRC.

3. Capacity Building at Afghan Universities:

The capacity building component of RALF, as first envisioned, was very weak. Only 3 of the 11 RALF Projects have an Afghan university as a partner. The financial share of these three universities is extremely small. It was too late to boost the share of the universities as the Principal Investigators were reluctant to transfer some funds to the universities. Nevertheless, substantial progress has been made in developing linkages with Afghan universities. Eight RALF Projects now have a linkage with Afghan universities. The most significant linkages are:

- Faculty of Agriculture at Kabul University: With the RALF Programme as a whole.
- Faculty of Pharmacy at Kabul University: With Project 02-07 and 02-11
- Faculty of Agriculture at Nangarhar University: With Project 01-03, 01-04, 02-11. Project 01-04 has resurrected the University's Research Farm which is being used for research as well as training for the faculty and students. Efforts are underway to sign an Agreement of Cooperation between NU and WSU.
- Faculty of Agriculture at Balkh University: With Project 02-05
- Faculty of Agriculture at Herat University: With Project 02-02 and 01-16
- Faculty of Agriculture at Baghlan University: With Project 01-11.
- Faculty of Agriculture at Paktia University: With Project 02-07

New Capacity Building Opportunities under the Purdue-ICARDA Partnership.

Purdue is about to sign with USAID a GDA (Global Development Alliance) contract for \$ 7 million on an Advancing Afghan Agriculture Alliance Project

(AAAAP) to upgrade human capacity of the primary regional universities, under the following linkages with RALF Partners:

Balkh Univ and JDA in Mazar-e-Sharif

Kandahar Univ and Mercy Corps in Kandahar

Herat Univ and DACAAR + CRS in Herat

Nangarhar Univ and ICARDA (DAI and RALF Projects) in Jalalabad

Output 4: Other Activities (Not Envisioned When Project Agreement First Signed)

1. Develop New Linkages with Afghan Universities.

-At least 8 RALF Projects have established linkages with Afghan universities, as reported above.

2. Develop Linkages with Other Government Ministries.

-Linkages have been developed with Ministry of Counter-Narcotics and Ministry of Commerce.

3. Develop Linkages with ALP's

-Participation in the AL events organized by Ministry of Counter-Narcotics.

-Participation in Civil Society AL Working Group Meetings

-Participation in CSANDS WG on AL

4. Communication Strategy for RALF

-The Communication Strategy has been finalized (Annex). Even prior to the drafting of the Communication Strategy, the Programme and the Projects were communicating the research results to the various stakeholders. Since adequate funds were not allocated to the communication when RALF was first designed, funds have to be found for the implementation of the communication strategy.

-Draft Communication Strategy developed was discussed at the 4th RALF Steering Committee Meeting

-Comments received from Project Partners and MAI were incorporated into the revised Draft.

-In addition to the resources of ICARDA/RALF, MAI and Project Partners, contacts have been established with consultant(s) who could help in disseminating the research results for a fee.

Publications:

Malik, et.al: Poster entitled "Medicinal and Aromatic Plants as Alternative Sources of Livelihood in Rural Communities in Afghanistan", submitted to International Symposium on Aromatic and Medicinal plants, Jerba, Tunisia, Nov 2-4, 2006

Ehsanullah and Malik: Introduction and Evaluation of New Crop Legumes and Vegetables: International Conference on Indigenous Vegetables and Legumes, Dec. 12-15, 2006, Hyderabad, India

McNeil et. al: Enhancing livelihoods for resource poor households in the Hindu Kush using the Territorial Approach to Agroenterprise Development

DACAAR: Extension-type Poster published in Dari/English on Saffron

ICARDA 2005 Annual Report

- Potential of Oilseed Crops in the Northern Provinces of Afghanistan
- Medicinal and Aromatic Plants as Alternatives to Opium Poppy Cultivation
- Saffron Competed with Opium poppies in Afghanistan

Articles Submitted in Dari/Pushtu to MAI Biweekly "Karhana"

- Forage Crops
- Oilseed Crops
- Medicinal Plants

DFID Policy on Press Release: All Press Releases prepared by projects should be sent to RALF management which will in turn consult with DFID. The turnaround time for such communiqué however is very short, as short as 24hrs

5. CNTF

-RALF Management is developing new Concept Notes in collaboration with MAI and RALF Partners for CNTF funding, as an extension and expansion of the RALF Programme.

Submitted:

Saffron Marketing: MAI, WSU, DACAAR
Oilseed Cop Production & Marketing: MAI, JDA, CIMMYT
AKF has submitted one with MAI Badakhshan
Forage Crops: Mai and ICARDA

Under Development:

Vegetables: MAI, AVRDC, ICARDA
Communication of RALF Research Results: MAI and RALF-ICARDA
Ferula sp: MAI, Vienna University of Veterinary Medicine and Kabul Univ.

-At the 4th Programme Workshop, the Project Partners indicated that our current approach to seeking funding through CNTF is very fragmented. We should not compete with each other, we should join forces and have a common approach through the RALF management and the Steering Committee. The Project Partners are also very much concerned that the period of funding is too short (1-2 years) and that ICARDA as the Coordinator of FHCRAA should play an advocacy role and impress upon MCN and MAI that long-term proposals should also receive favourable attention by CNTF. It was also noted that the physical presence of an applicant organization is very important to the success of project.

6 Other Concept Notes

- Market Chain: CN Submitted to Gates Foundation by Novib, ICARDA, JDA
- Capacity Building in Participatory Research, SLA, SAGA: Concept Note Submitted to IDRC by RALF-ICARDA

Activities Planned by Programme Management (Dec 1, 2006-February 28, 2006)

1. Forum on CRF

-A full-day thematic event is planned for December, 2006. The senior managers of all 17 departments of MAI as well as MCN/CNTF officials will be invited to this event. There will be presentations by RALF, MAI and CNTF. Other invitees will include Ministry of Finance and RALF Partners.

2. **Dissemination of the Outcomes of the National Workshop on Saffron**
 - Post the Proceedings of the Workshop on the Website
 - Prepare CD's of the Proceedings of the Saffron Workshop
 - Prepare feature article on saffron for publication in ICARDA publication "Caravan"
 - Prepare Dari and Pushtu translation of DACAAR Report on "Saffron Production and Farmer Perceptions in Pushtun Zarghun".
3. **Dissemination of the Outcomes of the SHG Workshop**
4. **Convene the first meeting of the National Saffron Coordination Committee Meeting at MAI-Kabul**
5. **Implementation of the Communication Strategy**
 - Draft an implementation plan and budget for the Communication Strategy.
 - The implementation will require funds, because such a comprehensive plan for dissemination of the research results of the RALF projects had not been envisioned before.
 - The Project Partners to list all the activities and outputs that have had so far under communication.
 - Launch of the RALF website in Dari/Pushtu, in close collaboration with the Media and Publications Dept of MAI, if funding becomes available.
6. **Convene the 6th RALF Steering Committee Meeting**
7. **Develop Concept Notes for CNTF Funding:**
 - Efforts are underway to develop joint Concept Notes in collaboration with MAI and RALF Partners, in order to scale out and scale up the successful themes emerging out of the RALF Projects or on other novel themes that will contribute to development of sustainable alternative livelihoods.
 - Funding opportunities other than CNTF will be explored in partnership with MAI and the RALF Partners in order to extend and expand the Programme.
8. **Preparations for IDRC-Funded Training for RALF and MAI Researchers**

Summary of Project Outputs/Activities During August 1- November 30, 2006

RALF 01-03:

Village Decision Driven Research Project- Laghman Province

Outputs/Activities:

1. The following animal husbandry activities have already begun by WSU and DACAAR:
 - Purchasing cows
 - o Twenty cows (5 for Salab, 5 for Sangar and 10 for Mango) have been purchased and distributed to the needy people through Associations.
 - Annual forage/legume production

- 50 Kg of Barseem and 50 Kg of oat seed were purchased from FAO and 25 Kg were distributed to 20 farmers who received cows and were planted this past November. The remaining will be planted by DACAAR staff for demonstration and seed multiplication. There are plans to purchase improved varieties for spring planting and follow similar arrangements of distributing as well as demonstrations for range improvement through reseedling or introducing drought resistant fodder and seed multiplication.
- Cheese making
 - Cheese making equipment has been identified and will be distributed to the women's groups with intensive training.
- Arranging artificial insemination training with Madera.
 - Madera has informed DACAAR that they will not be implementing AI in the the Alingar district of Laghman. We are seeking other opportunities to carry out this service
- Forming associations and developing women's resource centers
 - An Animal Husbandry technician and WRC coordinator were hired in July to facilitate the proposed activities and form associations and WRCs. The men's animal husbandry association was developed but unfortunately DACAAR was not able to establish WRC as proposed due to conflict of opinion on the project selection and WRC site selection. DACAAR agreed to the shop idea proposed by women but did not agree on the carpet weaving activity as DACAAR did not consider it as a viable activity. Moreover, after prolonged negotiations with women, DACAAR was not able to form WRC. In such a situation DACAAR decided to work with five women groups (Majlis Zanha) in Sangar and when these women groups will mature, they will form a WRC. The women groups formed in Sangar are interested in soap and sweet making, poultry and goats rearing. We are currently negotiating a cheese making enterprise as well as looking at the soap making with information from previous RALF workshops and poultry rearing.
- .Woodlots
 - After discussions with the people in Alingar we have found they are very interested in poplar plantations. Cuttings of *Populus nigra* are available locally and are resistant to stem borer which is a problem with other poplar species. By buying poplar cuttings locally it will benefit the local people. Similarly, people in Alingar are also interested in establishing orchards if DACAAR can help them in providing the good planting stock and technical support
- Capacity Building
 - Efforts are underway to sign an Agreement of Cooperation between WSU and Nangarhar University. WSU was able to negotiate a contract with USDA to bring two scientists to WSU this November to participate in the Norman Borlaug Fellowship. The two scientist were from Nangarhar University one studying horticulture and the other in livestock.

A Concept Note will be developed in collaboration with ICARDA, WSU, DACAAR, MAI and Nagarhar Univ. and will be submitted to MAF for CNTF funding. This activity will be undertaken as an extension and expansion of the RALF Programme utilizing

the research needs identified by the people of Alingar District of Laghman Province through the participatory approach

Capacity building activities carried out for the Provincial MAI officials in Mehterlam, capital of Laghman Province

Activities Planned for Dec 1, 2006-Feb 28, 2007

- Development of a linkage between WSU and Nangarhar University
- Distribution of more cows to associations in target communities
- Artificial insemination services in target communities
- Two more Women's Resource Centres will be established

RALF01-04:

Introduction, Evaluation and Promotion of Appropriate Crop Legumes and Vegetables for Eastern Afghanistan (Nangarhar, Laghman, Kunar, Nuristan)

Outputs/Activities:

1. The collaborating farmers, who cultivated five mungbean varieties brought from AVRDC-HQ in Taiwan, harvested their crop. These varieties were tested for their competitive performance on Nangarhar University's Research Farm as well. The AVRDC mungbean varieties were compared with the local varieties. Most of them gave up to 1.5 metric tons of mungbean in each hectare which is almost double the local varieties.
2. Onion, garlic and green pea seeds and chemical fertilizers were distributed to all 25 collaborating farmers in 10 districts in Nangarhar Province. Green pea crop will be harvested between mid December, 2006 and end of February, 2007. Onions will be transplanted in late January and will be harvested in April-May, 2007. Garlic crop will be harvested in March-April of 2007.
3. Five out of all the seven green houses established in 2005 were repaired and rehabilitated and planted with tomato and cucumber for off-season winter crop and will be used in January-February, 2007 for tomato, eggplant and pepper transplant nurseries for the summer season crop of 2007.
4. RALF-0104 Project Manager, Ehsanullah Ehsan and his Technical Assistant, Mohammad J. Niazi, participated in the low cost drip irrigation training program on October 01-12, 2006 in Nashik, Maharashtra State of India. As a result of this program, 21 collaborating and 57 neighboring vegetable growing farmers were trained in low cost drip irrigation technology. Water requirements of crop plants, irrigation water resources, design of low cost drip irrigation systems and finally installation of low cost drip irrigation systems were the content of the training. The training effectiveness was monitored through a group interview of trainees that showed satisfaction of trainees with the workshop and interest of farmers in utilizing this technology.
5. RALF-0104 Project Manager, Ehsanullah Ehsan, participated in the Internal Review Workshop at the H.Q of AVRDC-The World Vegetable Center in Taiwan and did a Power Point Presentation on the activities and progress of the project in 2006.

6. To strengthen program M&E, the impact of the project on the capacity building of Faculty of Agriculture at Nangarhar University was monitored and evaluated by a survey and interview. Preliminary analysis shows that in addition to faculty, students' capacities were built through participation in this project and demand for this type of practical research experience is high.

Activities Planned for Dec 1-2006-Jan 31, 2007

Production of manuals for onions, tomato, eggplant and mungbean is in progress.

RALF01-07:

Restorative Agriculture and Rural Economy (RARE) Research Project, Helmand and Kandahar

Outputs/Activites:

- 1 Organic Export Feasibility Study. A community which is accessible has been selected for the pilot export. It is fairly close to the city, and the people belong to a tribe related to President Karzai's, so they do not accept the Taliban. Three community meetings have been held there, one of which was attended by the UK raisin trader.
- 2 Phase 2 Report: HDRA has completed a Phase 2 Report (attached). At least 30 copies have been distributed.
- 3 Capacity building at Kandahar University. The Research Farm at Kandahar University was used as a site for one of drip irrigation trials this year.
- 4 Mushrooms, an innovative crop. Three crops have been successfully produced at Kandahar and Helmand and market acceptance has been achieved. The production is now sold for 120 Afa/kg. Cooperation has been established with the CNTF-funded project implemented by MAI and Global Hope Network.

Activities Planned for Dec 1-2006-Feb 28, 2007

- 1 Initiate a new crop of mushrooms in Kandahar and Helmand, and test demand for inoculated bags for household production. Continue to explore markets for mushrooms.
- 2 Continue with pilot export of raisins from Kandahar as part of Organic Export Feasibility Study.
- 3 Produce publications in Pashtu on:
 - i) Cultivation techniques for organic raisin production,
 - ii) Mushroom production,
 - iii) Low-cost polythene greenhouse construction,
 - iv) Household tomato paste production, and
 - v) Drip irrigation

RALF01-08:

Innovative Financial Mechanisms for Improving the Livelihoods of Rural Afghans Currently Economically Dependent on Opium Poppy, Badakhshan.

Outputs/Activities:

1. **Formation of Self Help Groups:** The project is operational in 25 villages of Ishkhashim and Jurm districts. A total of 94 groups were formed with a total membership of 1675 families. There were not many serious hurdles encountered in this exercise due to the support of the village Shuras. Many elders and the villagers believe in cooperation and self help among them. Emphasis was given to make poor people joining SHGs. Household visits were made by staff to form women SHGs, such that one third of all groups are now women's groups. Women also took part actively and evinced the same level of interest as men. Many more people want to form new self-help groups based on the success of the present groups.
2. **Introduction of Savings and Credit to the Groups:** All the members saved regularly and credit was provided from their savings to the needy members from the group. Average savings stands around Af 135 in Ishkhashim and Af 290 in Jhurum per member per month. A total of Af 0.97 Million was mobilised as member savings during the period. At October 31st the total savings capital stands at 1.81 million Afs. It is remarkable that there have been no defaults whatsoever on any of the 501 loans so far disbursed from savings capital.
3. **Training of Staff on Accounts keeping and maintaining group accounts.** A dedicated piece of software (the "Self-Help Enabler") has been purchased with project funds from the Dhan Foundation for \$US5000. Training was given to the Field Coordinator in India in use of this software. It was subsequently installed at the project District headquarters in Jurm and Ishkashim, and staff trained in its use. Its purpose is to keep track of all financial transactions in all the self-help groups
4. **Linkage loan disbursals:** The groups that have been successfully run beyond 3 months were provided with a linkage loan. A revolving capital fund of USD 100,000 is made available for the activity. An average of USD 1000 is now being provided to each group, based on the criteria of group savings, regularity, credit rotation among members etc., Up to 30th November 35 of the 94 groups had received their linkage loans
5. **Important Features of the SHG**
 - **Acceptance/local ownership for Self Help Groups:** There is a great deal of acceptance among the selected villages towards the group based savings and credit activities. Members feel that the money is with them and does not move out of the village. Rather they get more incentives in the form of linkage loans when they save and lend more among themselves.
 - **Willingness to save and disburse credit:** All the members save at least one days' labour wage per month. Average savings stands around Af 135 in Ishkhashim and Af 290 in Jhurum per member per month. This is a substantial amount considering the early stage of the project. The scope for mobilising local savings is substantial when the members

see the future in the form of linkage loans offered to them. During the reporting period, the members have given the loans from their savings to different activities such as petty trading, livestock and consumption activities.

- Tolerance by the conservatives: There were no resistance from the religious minded people for the group operations.

Women Groups: There were more women groups formed in Jhurm compared to Ishkhashim. Jhurm is a conservative area with very less involvement of women in any development activity. However, the two women staffs have formed 35 women groups with the same ease as forming men groups. This is an important aspect and notable achievement of the project. In the long run, it may also help AKF Rural Development activities to involve women more

- and more into development works. The regular meetings of the SHGs can be a platform to launch various activities to reach women.
- Flexible terms: Members feel free to decide about the rate of monthly savings (which is likely to vary between summer and winter seasons), service charges and other operational aspects of the groups.
- It is becoming very clear that there are significant social benefits from the self-help group approach. These include social cohesion, capacity building, joint working and the empowerment of women.

6. Project Impact and Dissemination: Three important events happened during the reporting period. Firstly a high-level monitoring visit was held in August/September 2006. The RALF Programme Manager, the NRI project team leader, the head of extension at the MAI, two Provincial agricultural directors and a senior scientist from ICARDA participated in the intensive monitoring of groups, visiting and discussing with a total of 8 groups (6 men and 2 women). This monitoring visit featured as a series of presentations to the September RALF Steering Committee meeting held in the MAI (RAMP building) in Kabul. A “Learning and Dissemination workshop” was held in Kabul on 27th November. It was well attended by the Deputy Ministers of Agriculture and Counter Narcotics, Dr Fazluddin (MAI) several NGOs and Microfinance organisations and other interested parties. The event identified challenges to the delivery of micro-finance to rural areas of Afghanistan and the place of Self-Help Groups in meeting those challenges. The different approaches of different SHG projects were noted, and it was decided to form a SHG Task Force to take on the expansion of the promising pilot SHG activities in a coherent way..

Activities Planned for December 1-2006-Feb 28, 2007

The project is due to finish on Dec 31st 2006, so emphasis will now be given to writing the Final Technical Report

RALF 01-09:

Marketing of Livestock and Livestock Products: Market Demand, Potential Returns to Producers and Constraints to Market Access

-The Project has been completed.

Outputs/Activities:

1. The project focused on the production and marketing of sheep, goats and cattle and to a lesser extent buffalo. It has identified “lamb fattening” as a viable alternative livelihood.
2. The Project has identified “constraints” to the most profitable alternative livelihood (lamb fattening), as “lack of feed” and “lack of credit”.
3. The Project has identified the potential for the marketing and processing of wool, skins and hides

-Impact: The outputs of the project have already been picked up. For example, Mercy Corps have used the finding that micro-credit schemes will be needed if livestock numbers are to recover to design a rural microfinance program for southern Afghanistan. This proposal is currently being reviewed by donors. Other proposals have also focused on the role of livestock in rural livelihoods to suggest program activities ranging from animal health interventions to artificial insemination. Through incorporating the project’s findings into current programming and future initiatives, Mercy Corps is able to apply the research in order to better target its humanitarian programs

RALF 01-11:

Improved Rural Incomes from Better Forage Production and Sales of Milk Products, Baghlan Province

Outputs/Activities:

1. Partnerships for out- and up-scaling of fodder innovations were established.

A very successful Forage Field Day was held in August at MAI Research Station at Poze-Eshan to out- and up-scale the fodder innovations introduced by the project. MAI officials from Kabul, Baghlan and the neighboring provinces, faculty and students of Balkh University and Baghlan University, NGO representatives as well as farmers from the surrounding villages participated in this event.

2. Improved fodder crops and management options were demonstrated.

Summer fodder crops - cowpea and sorghum varietal trials were harvested in August and data analyzed. Winter fodder crops – six trials involving: 14 alfalfa, 9 clover, 4 grasspea, 3 common vetch, 3 narbon vetch and 2 oat varieties were established in November at the Poza-i-Shan Research Station to compare varieties of fodder crops using local varieties used by farmers as controls. Trials to demonstrate new fodder crops and compare the effect of agronomic management options of fodder yield and inorganic fertilizer were established on-farm.

3. Feeding systems to improve milk production and quality were demonstrated.

The project supplied 40 fodder choppers to four communities participating in the project. An on-farm demonstration trial using either – whole maize crop (farmers' practice) or maize chopped into 2-4 cm using fodder choppers (improve technology) fed to milking cows supplemented with 2 kg/head/day was completed. Results showed that chopping maize fodder increased milk production.

4. Constraints to adding-value to milk and milk products documented.

Four women associations with total membership of 119 were established in four villages – Sarak Atiq Khan (34), Shinwari (30), Ghorbandian (31) and Sarake Mamoorin (24). The project provided 120 manually-operated butter churners to the associations. Studies were conducted to compare the traditional butter-churner (control) and improved butter-churner. The women preferred the butter-churner introduced by the project because it reduced the time for butter preparation from about 90 minutes to 25 minutes; and increased the amount of butter produced by 40%.

5. Project Impact and Capacity Building:

Forty households participated in an on-farm feeding trial to compare the effect of feeding whole-maize and chopped-maize on milk production. The men were trained in the use of the fodder chopper introduced by the project whilst their wives were trained in recording daily milk yields.

6. Activities Planned for Dec 1-2006-Feb 28, 2007.

Out-scaling of the improved fodder crops, feeding systems and milk processing will continue. Two additional female project assistants will be recruited. Membership of the women association will be increased from 119 to 300. At least 50 women will be trained in improved milk processing. Improved winter feeding will be demonstrated with 60 households. Data will be collected on on-farm and on-station winter fodder crop trials. Skills of project assistants and students will be enhanced through group and individual training. Case-studies on technologies disseminated by the project will be started. Results of the project on-farm and on-station trials will be presented at an international workshop.

RALF 01-16:

Western Afghanistan Agro-enterprise Action Research Project, Ghor and Herat.

Outputs/Activities:

1. The PEAR (Participation - Efficiency – Adaptation (Substitution) – Redesign) Livelihood survey is near completion in Pashtun Zargon. Data entry has begun. Under the PEAR approach, the entire planning, implementation and monitoring of activities is done in a participatory way. Initially for gaining confidence of farmers, activities are being undertaken to increase the efficiency of existing practices / systems followed by the farmer. Subsequently the farming system will be redesigned based on whole farm analysis.
2. Territorial Approach to Agro-enterprise Development. The second step of the Territorial Approach, Market Opportunity Identification, was completed. These initial MOI activities have led to identification of potential alternatives that have now been tested.

3. After a very poor wheat harvest in Shahrak district, only 2 farmers were willing to try greenhouses on their land over other more reliable options. Those 2 greenhouses have been constructed and training on their use is ongoing. New greenhouses were also constructed in Pashtun Zarghunn.
4. 100 households in the 10 villages were given plastic crates to gauge the improvement in post-harvest results on tomato, tree fruit, potato and other crops. The use of plastic crates reduced the spoilage in tomato and tree fruit between 30-50% and therefore were able to increase income from those crops. Several other benefits were observed by participants as well. These will be detailed in the final report.
5. Covered drying trays were piloted in Shahrak as well. In households that used them according to training, the price increase over traditional drying was 25-40%, with one 50% increase.
6. Villagers in all project locations indicated that people would invest themselves in these inputs. CRS will work with shopkeepers in local bazaars to provide these inputs on a larger scale.
7. Also in Pashtun Zargon, fall and winter crops have been planted. Results not available yet. More information will be included on the final report.
8. Product cards for Shahrak are being translated. The evaluation will be finished in January for the final report.
9. Capacity Building-training provided to the CRS team as well as MAI officials so they can identify the most profitable alternatives to test in the field.

RALF 02-02:

Research in Sustainable Production and Successful Marketing of Saffron, Herat Province

Outputs/Activities:

1. **Training of DACAAR staff in Netherlands:** Two national staff from DACAAR were nominated for one month training by GSE in Netherlands in production and processing of saffron according to international standards. The staff for training were selected on the basis of their long term service tenure with DACAAR, fluency in English and future commitment for working with RALF 02-02 and DACAAR for promotion of saffron in Afghanistan.

Unfortunately one of the staff Mr. Shafi disappeared in Netherlands without completing the training while Mr. Hashim Aslami successfully completed the training for one month.

2. **Purchase of both local and imported corms and its distribution among farmers:**

DACAAR imported 16,000 Kg of improved certified corm from Netherlands and distributed it among the farmers in Pastun Zargun. Moreover 5000 Kg of local corms was bought from Ghorian and distributed among the farmers in Pastun Zargun. The effort of replacing low quality local corm with the certified

improved corms is based on recommendations of the consultants hired by DACAAR during first year of the project.

3. Training of farmers and other stakeholders

Following trainings were conducted by DACAAR for farmers, NGOS and government official during reporting period.

Subject of training	Duration of training	No of people trained		No of villages covered	Participants
		Male	Female		
Saffron cultivation	10 days in August	136	0	28	Saffron growers association members
Organic saffron cultivation, harvesting and processing according to ISO standards	3 days in September	18	4	N/A	DACAAR, CRS, MAI, Faculty of Agri. and AKF
Saffron harvesting	23 days in October	202	140	42	Saffron growers association members
Field days	Four field days in November	55	59	N/A	Faculty of Agriculture students, saffron association members and women

4. Saffron workshop and field day:

Saffron workshop held from 14-16 November attended by more than 100 participants from different organizations and farmers. All the participants visited the saffron fields in Pastun Zargun on 16 November, 2006.

5. Training in saffron harvesting and processing by international consultant

An international consultant Dr. Filabi was hired for training the farmers in saffron harvesting, sorting, drying and packaging. Dr. Filabi trained saffron growing farmers, DACAAR staff, MAI and Faculty of Agriculture staff for three days both in field and class room. Moreover, the participants were also trained in how to use drying equipment brought from Iran.

Activities Planned for Dec 31-2006-Feb 28, 2007:

- Establish saffron corm certification and quality control procedures with MAAHF: DACAAR and WSU will continue discussions with MAAHF on establishing corm certification and quality control procedures. the 11 minute saffron video which DACAAR produced during the last quarter. Moreover in the next quarter we are also planning to produce a training video on saffron (covering all aspects from planting till harvesting). I will appreciate if you please add this to the quarter report.

RALF 02-05:

Increased Productivity and Profitability of Wheat-Based Cropping System, Balkh, Jawzjan, Baghlan, Kunduz, Badakhshan

Outputs/Activities:

1. Harvest of variety trials and establishment of new ones. Data analysis is on-going. Seed production of cv6 OP maize completed (plan to test with farmers in 2007).
2. Sent 4WT 0-till seed drill to MAI Kunduz for testing with dryland farmers. MAI extension in Kunduz is facilitating this.
3. Ordered small scale oil presses for possible micro-enterprise development in edible oilseed processing and marketing.
4. On-going work to revitalize BUFA through a JDA-Cornell University partnership under a USAID program.
5. Continuing discussions with DFID funded FAO-ALP Balkh project about collaboration.
6. JDA made the first rental of the Chinese 2 wheel tractor and rotovator cum seed drill to a farmer in Sholgara, Balkh. JDA had planted this farmer's land with a local maize variety, using different tillage methods, and he was so impressed he was willing to pay to use the tractor. A rough cost comparison shows that the Chinese 2 wheel tractor is the cheapest land preparation and planting method compared to Russian Belarus 4 wheel tractors or bullocks.
7. A separate business is being started, "Asia Assistance," to import and sell Chinese 2 wheel tractors. A 40' container of tractors and attachments should arrive in January 2007. Balkh Savings & Credit Union of Mazar, a RALF02-05 partner, has tentatively agreed to buy most of the tractors and lease them to their farmer-members. Other INGOs have expressed interest in buying tractors as well.
8. Submission of proposals to CNTF by MAI Balkh/JDA/CIMMYT and MAI Badakhshan/AKF.

Activities Planned for Dec 31-2006-Feb 28, 2007

1. Import of Chinese 2 wheel tractor under a new business. JDA will provide technical support for assembly and operation. Balkh Savings & Credit Union has tentatively agreed to buy most of the tractors and lease to their farmer-members. Other INGOs are also interested in purchasing.
2. Formalization of partnership among BUFA, JDA and Cornell University to revitalize BUFA under a USAID program.
3. Submission of CNTF proposal with MAI Balkh as lead agency and JDA and CIMMYT as partners (done).
4. Submission of CNTF proposal with MAI Badakhshan as lead agency and AKF as partner (done.)
5. Possibility of some concrete collaboration with FAO ALP project in Balkh.

Project 02-07:

Multi Stakeholder Program on Natural Ingredients for Food, Pharmaceuticals and Cosmetics (9 Provinces)

Outputs/Activities:

- 1. Stakeholder meetings were completed, roles/responsibilities were identified among the multiple IP's of this Project:**
 - Throughout 2006, management meetings have become a more regular and self-sustaining activity (i.e. requiring less or no input from the Principal Investigator Oxfam Novib/ProFound).
 - The workplans of the individual IPs have become a more common tool for the planning and monitoring of the Resource Assessment and Management work. The Master Trainers have trained collectors, who, in collaboration with local authorities and community leaders, will gradually become more responsible for the implementation of resource management and utilisation in the selected areas.
 - CHA is currently covering most areas (in 4 Provinces) and has trained more Master Trainers and collectors and communities, while TLO has consolidated the work in Paktia Province (other provinces to follow when the liquorice pilot collection centre proves successful), and AKF has stepped up its involvement through an intensive refresher training in June 2006 (to work in Badakshan and Baghlan with extension to Bamyan).
 - The earlier established Internet Forum was re-activated after the IPs got some additional training in the using of the Forum. In particular for the market approaches, the Forum is expected to prove its usefulness in the sharing of information and experiences.

- 2. Faculty of Pharmacy at Kabul University playing a central role as implementing partner. The Faculty and (male/female) students (also in the Provinces) are involved in:**
 - Botanical studies
 - Mapping/distribution of the species
 - Method of harvesting/collection
 - Sustainability of the resource-base
 - Potential volume of the outtake
 - Development of methodology for collection, processing and quality control
 - Physico-chemical analysis: ProFound facilitated the acquisition and logistics of getting chemicals from a company in Germany to Kabul for chemical analyses and identification of potential.
 - Development of product standards.

- 3. Initiated Resource Assessment and Management Procedures (for selected areas):**
 - There are now 10 written and translated Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):
 - 3 manuals (herbarium sampling, resource assessment, access rights)
 - Collectors' manual
 - 6 plant monographs for collectors

- 2006 has focused on:
 - Field implementation of R&D strategies by Master Trainers through a Train the Trainers approach in selected communities in the selected collection areas; trained collectors expected to be able to work as extension workers for other collectors to be trained in the methodology. Monitoring tools for this extension will be elaborated.
 - Training of female Master Trainers to train female collectors and work on gender-related aspects of the collection, processing and trade.
 - Further documentation of the processes and progress envisaged with respect to:
 - ecological information (Species Data Sheet on basis of 10 SOPs)
 - product information (Technical Data Sheet: chemical and physical properties).
 - market information.
 - technology information.
 - Prof Babury and ProFound to follow up with the Faculty of Arts for the designing and illustration of the field versions of collectors manual and plant monographs.
 - Ralf programme manager Mr Malik represented the project during a medicinal plants conference in Tunis, for which purpose a poster was jointly developed.

4. Initiated Value Chain Analyses and Development:

- Together with the Faculty of Pharmacy and with institutes and buyers in Europe, ProFound is analysing first results and market and value addition potentials, at this stage in particular for liquorice, Hing, cumin and artemisia; based on plant monographs (documentation of specific species and their local characteristics, documentation of qualities), documentation of resources and sustainable resource exploitation, and collecting of samples.
- One of the very concrete value addition potentials that has been identified is the organic certification of liquorice, which is currently being further elaborated with the Swiss Institute for Market Ecology (IMO). It is estimated that prices for organic liquorice can double or triple the price of raw liquorice material.

5. Analyses of the trade structure is in progress:

- Together with the 3 involved NGOs, ProFound is analysing the local, regional and other international trade structures; collectors, traders and markets (local, inter/national); qualities, price fluctuations; processing opportunities; links with (EU) buyers.
- In November 2006, ProFound went with the market researchers of the NGOs (CHA could not make it for not having got visa for India in time; the obtaining of visa for Afghans is rather problematic) to the India Organic Trade Fair in Bangalore, where rich exchange and interaction took place with buyers and sellers of organic products (including many of the ones that are selected for this project) from the region (very useful information about e.g. Hing) as well as from other regions in the world (2 of the European buyers that had already expressed interest in the Afghan products were also present), and with similar organisations from ProFound's network in India. The researches worked with pre-formatted questionnaires on prices, qualities and quantities, trade structures, market trends, etc.

6. Further elaboration of product and market strategies:

- Based on the first results of the product analyses of and market and value addition potentials, the project is further designing product and marketing strategies (selecting potential markets, market segments, potential clients for raw materials and processed products; needs of, and requirements for product development and value addition; contacts with potential buyers; building up a market information system with the project's market analysis group).
- One example of this is the current initiative for establishing a pilot Liquorice Collection Centre in the TLO project area of Paktia. Oxfam Novib has funded the construction of such a pilot Centre, and a Revolving Fund for its initial operations, with the aim to facilitate the proper collection, storage, cleaning/washing and cutting of liquorice, according to organic certification principles that will be certified by Swiss IMO. The objective is to export a first container of organically certified liquorice to an interested buyer in Europe in the first half of 2007.
- A similar initiative is being developed with AKF, looking into the potential of liquorice extraction units for more distant project locations (i.e. reducing volume and increasing value).
- Collaboration has been initiated with other RALF projects for looking into further support for the establishing of organic certification infrastructure in Afghanistan, for which a joint proposal has been submitted to the Gates Foundation by ICARDA, Oxfam Novib, ProFound.and JDA.

Activities Planned for Dec 31-2006-Feb 28, 2007

Considering the winter period, in which not much field activities can be conducted for the Natural Ingredients, focus will be on:

- Review (M&E) and report writing.
- Developing proposals for follow-up after this project period (July 2007).
- Further market and value chain analysis and development, such as following up with the pilot liquorice collection centre.
- Preparing for the next growing season, in order to be fully prepared to extend training, resource management and collecting of the ingredients.

Project 02-11:

Cultivation of Mint as a Viable Alternative Livelihood in Nangarhar, Kunduz, Helmand

Outputs/Activities:

1. *Off - season production of mint*

During 2005, project provided 3 greenhouses (one each in target provinces) that are effectively being used by the farmers for off-season mint production. Besides, project has also supported mint-producers by providing plastic sheets to cover their mint plots during night to avoid damaging cold temperatures. Both these steps are expected to help farmers either in off-season production of mint or through extending the life of their mint-plants.

This will provide an edge over other farmers to sell their products at higher prices as others will not have fresh mint to sell

2. *Dry-mint business by Mint-Producers' Associations*

Project has established one each Mint-Producers Associations (MPA) in three target districts. Project has helped and trained the members of these associations in procurement, cleaning, drying, packing and marketing of dried mint leaves. Project has designed and printed tri-lingual product labels that are being used by the association. This has associations in marketing of their product as a 'brand'. Women of the farmers' families are also involved in this new income generating opportunity.

3. *Mint-water production and marketing by Mint-Producers' Associations (MPA)*

All three MPAs are effectively using the 'mint-water' extraction plants provided by the project. Collectively, they have produced and marketed more than 2000 bottles. Average profit margins range from 30 to 100 % depending on the market where farmers are selling their product. National Coordinator of the project travelled to Peshawar (Pakistan) to explore the possibility of export and have established some contacts with shop keepers.

4. *Oil Extraction*

Right kind and pilot size of simple oil-extraction equipment that can work without electricity was designed in collaboration with an Iranian company. The company produced a proto type that has been tested successfully. Steps are being taken to import four of these.

5. *Support to Agri-business*

Project has introduced a new industry of making herbal extract in target provinces. Mint-experience can be duplicated with other medicinal plant providing more agro-business opportunities in rural communities. Some entrepreneurs are deeply interested to start mint-water production business and are in touch with the project team.

7. *Capacity Building of MAI Provincial Centres*

Through organization of field days and trainings, project has trained farmers, herbal medicine practitioners, extension agents, and women in preparation of mint-water at domestic and commercial level.

8. *Capacity Building at Afghan Universities:*

Linkages have been established with the Faculty of Pharmacy of Kabul University, and with the Agriculture faculty of the Nangarhar University. Final year students of Kabul University were trained in mint-water production and two of them submitted their assignments on mint and its uses. Discussions have been held with the Dean to install a mint-water production plant inside the University that will be used by students (final year or graduated) for production and marketing of mint-water. Project is aiming to encourage entrepreneurship among students rather going for low paid employment which is scarce too.

9. *Linkages with regional institutions/ Industries*

Project has closely worked with a company "Takhtiran" to design and produce pilot size oil-extraction plants. Negotiations are also in advanced

stage to make some arrangements for the supply (export) of mint-oil that would be produced by MPA in near future.

Activities Planned for December 1-2006- February 28, 2007

- Data collection from demonstration plots and analysis and organization of field days.
- Organization of 3 new MPAs (one in each target province) and train them in mint production, dry mint and mint-water business
- Import of new and improved oil-extraction equipment, installation and training to MPA members.
- Addressing the gender issue by organizing a women association for mint-water production and marketing.

List of Annexes:

Annex 1: Amended Log Frames for the Programme

Annex 2: Minutes of 5th RALF Steering Committee Meeting

Annex 3: Joint M & E Mission Report to Badakhshan (Project 01-08)

Annex 4: Publications in the ICARDA 2005 Annual Report

Annex 5: Organic Export Feasibility-Southern Afghanistan, Phase II

Annex 6: Project 02- 02 Capacity Building Activities

Annex 1: Revised Logframes for the RALF Programme

Activity 1.2 Select and Recruit PRP members.	PRP in place in time to review first batch of proposals (2 months after project start).	Activity Completed	
Activity 1.3 Issue calls for proposals Activity 1.4 Review and select projects	First batch of projects approved 6 months after project start (second batch 15 months after project start).	Activity Completed:.	Activity completed
Activity 1.5 Monitor and evaluate projects	All projects monitored by ICARDA before project month 30.	<p>-The Programme Manager conducted field monitoring of the following Projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Nangarhar: 01-04, 02-11 (2 Trips) -Baghlan: 01-11, 02-05, 02-07 (2 Trips) -Kunduz: 02-11, 02-05 (2 Trips) -Balkh: 02-05, (2 Trips) -Laghman: 01-03 (2 Trips) -Helmand and Kandahar (02-11 and 01-07):Mission planned was cancelled due to security situation. 	<p>-The MAI Members of the Steering Committee and the Provincial Centres will be invited to field monitoring of the Projects so MAI feels ownership of the Programme. This involvement will also help in the capacity building of MAI</p> <p>-Field monitoring is planned for the following Provinces over the next 6-months, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Badakhshan : 01-08 and 02-05 -Ghor 01-16 -Herat: 01-16 Helmand and Kandahar: 01-07, 02-11 -Paktia 02-07 -Baghlan 01-11

<p>Output 2. Recommended technologies and support services, tested and available for implementation <u>in range of contexts.</u></p>	<p>2.1. 75% of projects funded by the CRF yield positive results, translating into practicable recommendations that can be used to improve incomes or food security, or provide employment.</p> <p>2.2 Livelihood systems and household decision making processes analysed and documented</p> <p>2.3. Support services needed to support improved technologies clearly identified.</p> <p>2.4. Appropriate communication strategies and dissemination materials produced.</p>	<p>-Third Project Workshop -Thematic events held at MAI-Kabul: Forum on Microfinance.</p> <p>The analysis of the “household decision making process” as an OVI was NOT accepted by the Project Partners at the 4th Programme-Level Workshop</p>	<p>-RALF E-Database: To be developed further. -Launch of the RALF E-Forum -Continue to work with the Projects and disseminate as results become available -Prepare pamphlet in Dari/Pushtu on the CRF experience. -Disseminate the results of Project 01-09 just completed - Develop the Communication Strategy and start implementation in.</p>
<p>Activity 2.1: Form international-Afghan ‘partnerships’ and prepare proposals.</p>	<p>Good quality proposals prepared, potentially fundable under CRF and CNTF.</p>	<p>Activity Completed: The RALF management has been working with RALF partner and MAI to develop new Concept Notes under the CNTF. - 4 Concept Notes one ready now.</p>	<p>Activity completed.</p>

Activity 2.2: Implement projects (separate project logframes to be prepared)	Indicators developed in project logframes and workplans)	Activities completed:	-Will work with Project Partner so that Log frames are amended as recommended by OPR.
Output 3: Improved capacity for applied research and extension in government and NGO partners.	<p>3.1 MAI PRP and Steering Committee Members fully conversant with operating a CRF mechanism for agricultural research, by e.o.p</p> <p>3.2 Participating Afghan GO/NGO partners have improved research and development skills including participatory approaches, by e.o.p.</p> <p>3.3 ATA adopts lessons from RALF in new research strategy.</p>	<p>-The RALF Steering Committee has taken over most of the roles/ responsibilities of the PRP.</p> <p>-TA MAI. DM Mohammad Sharif, DM Mostafa Jawad, DG of Extension Dr. Fazl, DG of Research Dr. Osmanzai, DG of Planning Mr. Akbarzad and Director of ALP Mr. Shairzad are members of the RALF Steering Committee. They have had active participation in the RALF events.</p> <p>-Limited email facilities of MAAHF plus English language limitations necessitate that the Programme Manager maintain direct contact with the senior management at MAAHF. The Programme Manager calls upon, the two Deputies as well as the DG's of Research, Extension, Planning, Communication and ALP during each visit to Kabul and personally updates them on the progress of RALF. The PM also maintains email and direct contact with expatriate advisors (Dr. Ashraf Naimi, Mr. Asef Rashid, Dr. Surya Singh)</p>	<p>-Means for improving the capacity within MAAHF need to be considered in remainder of project.</p> <p>-PM will have regular contact/dialogue with all MAI Steering Committee Members</p> <p>-MAI Members of the steering Committee will be invited to participate in field monitoring activities in the future</p> <p>-Project partners will be encouraged to develop linkages with MAI Provincial Centres where MAI is not already an official partner in the Project Agreement.</p> <p>-PM will work closely with Project Partners so linkages established with Afghan universities are further strengthened</p> <p>- Regional Capacity building workshop will be held in Eastern, Northern and North western provinces of Afghanistan where MAI provincial officials and Afghan universities would attend.</p>

<p>Activity 3.1: Engage MAAHF PRP member and mentor as required.</p>	<p>MAI member actively participating in reviews, PRP meetings and workshops.</p>	<p>Linkages have been developed with MAI Minister, the DM's, the DG's of Research, Extension, Planning and ALP, and the expatriate advisors.</p> <p>MAI members of the Steering Committee will be invited to join the PM in field monitoring of RALF projects in the provinces.</p>	<p>MAI Steering Committee members will be engaged in Quarterly Meetings, workshops/symposia, etc.</p>
<p>Activity 3.2: On-the-job training to be factored into project logframes and workplans.</p>	<p>Identifiable capacity building elements in projects</p>	<p>-On-the-job training is factored into project logframes and workplans.</p> <p>-Linkages have been developed with MAI Provincial research and extension officials as well Afghan universities</p>	<p>-MAI Provincial officials will be invited by PM to participate in field monitoring activities.</p> <p>-Project Partners have been inviting MAI to training events.</p>

Annex 6: Project 02-02 Capacity Building Activities

No	District	Subject	No of Participants		No of Villages	Organization	Date	Trainer	Duration
			Male	Female					
1	Poshton Zarghon	Saffron cultivation	136	0	28	Saffron grower association members	Aug	M.Jan	1 day 10 courses
2		Saffron harvesting	202	140	42	Do	Oct	M.Jan Hakima Farzan	1 day 23 courses
3		Organic saffron cultivation, harvesting and processing according to ISO standards	18	4	-----	DACAAR 13 , CRS 2, MAI 3 , Faculty of Agriculture 2 AKF 2	Sep	M.Hashim Aslami	3 days one course
4		Saffron drying and sorting techniques	59	5	19	DACAAR 17, MAI 5 , Saffron grower Association 40 members Faculty of Agriculture 2	Nov.	Dr.Filabi	1 day 3 courses
5		Field day	55	59	-	Herat University Agriculture students	Nov.	-	4 field days

Corm Bank Establishment

No	Name of Association (corm Bank)	Type of corm		No of Farmer	Date	Area/J
		Holland/Kg	Local / Kg			
1	Fushkan Saffron Ass.	9880	1440	63	Sep	15.94
2	Gulmir saffron Ass	4860	2446	46	Sep	10.29
3	MarAbad saffron Ass	1200	-----	10	Sep	2

New Saffron Growers Association Establishment

No	Association Name	No of village	No of Members	Establishment Date	Location
1	Fushkan saffron growers Association.	16	84	August	PZS Fushkan
2	MarAbad saffron growers Association.	9	15	August	PZN Marabad