



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Afghan Agricultural Research and Extension Development (AGRED)



January Monthly Report

Submitted: February 15, 2014

This report is made possible by support provided by the United States Agency for International Development (Contract No. AID-306-C-12-00006). The opinions expressed herein do not reflect the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Roots of Peace

Implementing Partner for:

Afghan Agricultural Research and Extension Development (AGRED)

Contract Award	AID-306-C-12-00006
Contract Recipient	Roots of Peace (ROP)
Period of Contract	July 14, 2012 – July 13, 2017
Amount of Contract	\$23,638,611
Contracting Officer's Representative	Ricky Majette
Contract Officer	Raphael Metzger
Chief of Party, AGRED	Scott Arche Scott.Arche@rootsofpeace.org
ROP CEO	Heidi Kuhn Heidi@rootsofpeace.org
ROP President	Gary Kuhn Gary@rootsofpeace.org

Cover photo: Wheat farmers and DAIL extension staff in Balkh province take a break from a practical training on land cultivation as part of an AGRED-sponsored wheat demonstration plot.

Table of Contents

Program Overview..... 1
 Transitioning from On-Budget to Expected / Intermediary Results reporting..... 2
 What this means for the January report 2
Highlight of January Achievements..... 3
Greater Impact through Collaboration and Strategic Linkages 4
 AGRED collaboration meetings..... 4
Technical Support Delivered 6
 Expected Result 1 / IR 1: Sub IR 1.1- Improved extension for improved agriculture 6
 Expected Result 2 / IR 2: Sub IR 2.1- Improved infrastructure at MAIL / DAILs 10
 Expected Result 3 / IR 2: Sub IR 2.2- Improved capacity at MAIL / DAILs 10
 Expected Result 4 / IR 2: Sub IR 2.3- Bottom-up, consultative process 12
 Cross-cutting: Gender 13
Adminsitrative Support 14
 Monitoring and Evaluation 14
 Communications 14
Annex 1- Complete list of AGRED mini-projects
Annex 2- Typical AGRED mini-project processes.....
Annex 3- Complete list of AGRED trainings

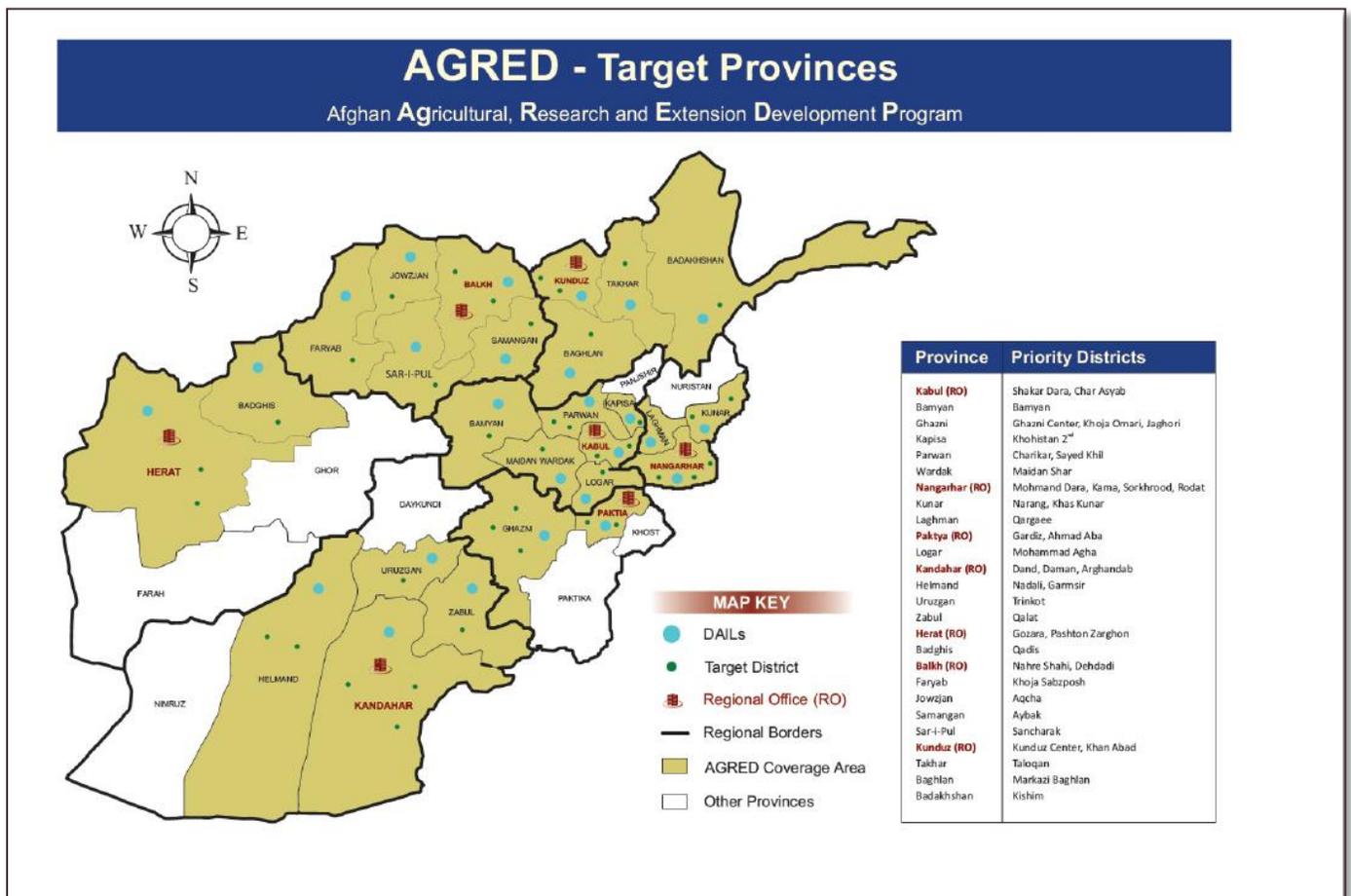
Program Overview

Roots of Peace is the lead implementing partner for USAID’s Afghan Agricultural Research and Extension Development (AGRED) program. AGRED is a five-year program in partnership with the Afghan Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) and provincial-level Directorates of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAILs). Currently in its second year, AGRED will build enduring and effective research and extension systems to attain the overarching objective of increasing agricultural productivity and income through the application of science and technology.

Working towards its objective, AGRED’s is directed by two Intermediary Results (IRs) which 1) deliver services directly to Afghan farmers through improved research and extensions efforts and 2) build institutional and human capacities within MAIL and DAILs to help improve their ability to respond to farmers’ and herders’ needs. Within these broad guidelines, AGRED seeks to improve farmer awareness and access to improve technologies, knowledge, and education; improve research and extension infrastructure within MAIL and DAILs; improve training capacity within MAIL and DAILs to deliver to farmers; and institutionalize a bottom-up, consultative approach to identifying and addressing farmers’ needs.

AGRED’s services are delivered through its Research, Extension, Training, and Gender technical departments. The technical teams are supported by Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), Communications, Human Resources, Information Technology (IT), and Senior Management departments.

Figure 1- AGRED target provinces and districts



Transitioning from On-Budget to Expected / Intermediary Results reporting

In previous monthly reports AGRED's activities were reported against nine Strategic Goals and 27 Sub-Benchmarks. These Goals and Sub-Benchmarks were the anticipated structure for measuring and reporting on On-Budget Implementation. In December, USAID determined that the On-Budget portion of the program would be no longer necessary, thus eliminating the need for Strategic Goals and Sub-Benchmarks as a reporting structure (and the need to differentiate On- and Off-Budget support). AGRED has responded in December and in January with a revised 2014 Work Plan which accounts for these changes.

What this means for the January report

Beginning with the December Monthly and October – December Quarterly reports, AGRED also adjusted its reporting structure from the Strategic Goals and Sub-Benchmarks to the IR and Sub IR Results outlined in the signed AGRED / USAID contract. The IR and Sub IRs are directly linked with the four Expected Results.

It's important to note that these ERs / IRs have been guiding AGRED's organizational structure as well as the design and implementation of AGRED activities throughout the program. This transition is strictly a reporting change—instead of being presented through the lens of nine Strategic Goals and 27 Sub-Benchmarks, monthly progress will be reported explicitly against IRs / ERs.

Additionally, the report will continue to highlight important meetings, events, and negotiations towards stronger collaborations and strategic linkages, which in turn improve AGRED's ability to achieve each result. Relevant program support activities will also be reported to highlight contributions towards

Highlight of January Achievements

Getting to know AGRED- Research Station Profiles

AGRED supports partially seven Research Centers—one each in the seven targeted provinces—to conduct ongoing research initiatives. Utilizing these already existing stations, AGRED is able to implement various research-based mini-projects through these stations, which have been proposed in the 2014 Work Plan. Provided is a small profile of each station.

Herat- Urdokhhan

Cultivable land: 150 hectares

Irrigation: primarily well-fed, using flood, furrow, and sprinkler methods

Equipment: tractor, thresher, harvester, plow, seed cleaner

Trials underway:* wheat, barley, cotton, fruit Germplasm, commercial fruit varieties

Nangarhar- Shesham Bagh

Cultivable land: 14 hectares

Irrigation: primarily well-fed, using flood and furrow methods

Equipment: tractor, thresher, harvester, plow, seed cleaner

Trials underway:* fodder, cereal, vegetable, oilseed, and horticulture seeds

Kabul- Badam Baugh

Cultivable land: 60 hectares

Irrigation: well-fed

Equipment: tractor, thresher, harvester, plow, seed cleaner, disk, garden tractor, pruning sheers

Trials underway:* wheat, corn, cotton, saffron, clover, alfalfa, Mung bean, citrus, grapes, various nuts, dairy breeding

Kunduz- Kunduz Research Station

Cultivable land: 43 hectares

Irrigation: canal, using flood and furrow methods

Equipment: tractor, thresher, harvester, seeders, hand tillers, garden tractor

Trials underway:* wheat, corn, and limited saffron

Balkh- Dehdadi

Cultivable land: 15 hectares

Irrigation: canal and well-fed

Equipment: tractor, thresher, harvester, plow, seed cleaner, disk, garden tractor, wheelbarrow

Trials underway:* fodder, cereal, vegetable, oilseed, and horticulture seeds as well as fungicides, herbicide, and pesticide trials

Paktva- Chashma Maran

Cultivable land: 6.5 hectares

Irrigation: well-fed and sprinkler system

Equipment: greenhouse, tractor, thresher, harvester, plow, seed cleaner, disk, garden tractor

Trials underway:* wheat and limited saffron and grape trials

Kandahar- Kohkaran

Cultivable land: 15 hectares

Irrigation: canal and tube well-fed, using flood and furrow methods

Equipment: tractors, other basic equipment

Trials underway:* wheat, saffron, soybean, almonds, and grapes

* These include non-AGRED sponsored trials. More detailed information on specific AGRED research projects in each station will be available once the Work Plan is approved.

For all highlights, more detailed explanations can be found in subsequent sections of the report.

'Big picture' factors. There are two factors which need brief mentioning for this month's plan. The first is that January is one of Afghanistan's coldest months of the year and farming activities slow down considerably during this month. While obvious in concept, it has practically, and without surprise, limited AGRED implementation activities.

The second factor is the elimination of the On-Budget component, which has led AGRED to readjust its 2014 outlook (taking form as a revised 2014 Work Plan). Despite the revisions, implementation has continued based on existing plans through continued collaboration negotiations, mini-projects, and institutional strengthening within MAIL; efforts to achieve core programmatic results have not wavered. Meanwhile, AGRED has been actively engaged with USAID on the new plan and has incorporated its feedback in order to continue strengthening its service delivery to MAIL, DAILs, and farmers.

Collaboration meetings. The AGRED senior management team focused a majority of its efforts on educating and obtaining input from USAID, MAIL, and DAILs on the draft annual Work Plan, conducting five such meetings in January. These meetings were a critical step in ensuring that AGRED maintained the spirit and letter of collaboration, ownership, and longer-term sustainability amongst its partners. Additional progress was made in January on formalizing relationships with strategic collaborators.

Services Delivered. Despite it being the winter season, AGRED technical teams and DAIL staff continued implementation of activities, primarily through site visits, informal farmer trainings, and direct DAIL technical support. In total 148 farmers and 52 DAIL staff were engaged through a combined 17 field monitoring trips and other informal trainings. AGRED and DAILs facilitated / coordinated thirteen project concepts and mini-proposals for further consideration, two farmer distributions, and a field day.

Program Support: The AGRED M&E department continued to develop internal systems and respond to USAID feedback (particularly related to environmental compliance), while the Communications department focused its efforts on producing a December Monthly report, October- December Quarterly report, and success story.

Greater Impact through Collaboration and Strategic Linkages

Collaborating with agricultural-based actors to help improve services and facilitate greater field-level impact is an area AGRED is committed to building upon as the program progresses.

AGRED collaboration meetings

AGRED focused its efforts on following up with two collaboration opportunities, moving one step closer with CIMMYT and JICA in signing formal MOUs. AGRED also devoted its efforts to attaining input from MAIL regarding the newly revised AGRED Work Plan through presentations, meetings, and workshops. This input was a crucial step in ensuring MAIL / DAILs' ownership of the plan; it has been incorporated into revised Work Plan drafts. While AGRED held additional coordination meetings with MAIL / DAILs, Table 1 highlights the most significant.

Table 1- AGRED collaboration and coordination meetings, January 2014

Collaborator	Person(s) involved	Date / Type of interaction	Purpose	Main Outcome / Decisions made
International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT)	AGRED DCOP, Acting AGRED Research Coordinator, CIMMYT Director	January 05 / Meeting	Relationship building, collaboration identification, and exploration of research priorities.	The AGRED team and CIMMYT exchanged information about their respective programs and discussed potential areas of collaboration. The head of CIMMYT, Dr. Sharma, expressed his readiness in supporting AGRED in technical areas. He also provided a list of the newly released wheat varieties needing promotion in different farm areas. AGRED also shared its list of proposed research priorities for 2014. AGRED will next work on formalizing a MOU with CIMMYT.
Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Rice Improvement Projects-Afghanistan	AGRED DCOP, Acting AGRED Research Coordinator, JICA Management	January 27 / Meeting	To explore collaboration opportunities.	AGRED and JICA Rice Improvement Project further explored areas of collaboration. The two parties decided that follow up meetings should be held to more formalize their partnership and in promoting various varieties and practices in different areas of Afghanistan. Over the next month, AGRED will work with JICA to formalize its relationship through a MOU.
USAID OAG Team	AGRED COP, DCOP, AGRED Technical team leaders, USAID COR, M&E, and Technical team	January 20 / Meeting	To present the latest version of the AGRED Work Plan and to address question by the USAID teams.	AGRED delivered a second draft Work Plan presentation to the USAID team. The AGRED technical teams were present to address any questions. AGRED noted feedback from USAID and has incorporated it into the subsequent version of the Work Plan.
MAIL / DAILs				
<i>Kabul DAIL Director</i>	AGRED DCOP	January 04 / Meeting	Discussion about the DAIL- Kabul Work Plan Appraisal workshop.	AGRED's DCOP and the DAIL Director discussed the DAIL- Kabul Work Plan Appraisal workshop (to be held the next day) to ensure the necessary coordination. Final logistics and decisions were agreed upon by the two parties.
<i>Research Director and his team</i>	AGRED DCOP and Acting AGRED Research Coordinator	January 19 / Workshop	Final confirmation of AGRED Research team's planned activities for 2014.	AGRED shared its list of activities received from the regions to the relevant MAIL departments. Both sides discussed the activities and finalized / approved the list as a team. The results were incorporated into the AGRED Work Plan.
<i>Extension Director</i>	AGRED DCOP	January 19 / Meeting	To discuss presentation of	The AGRED DCOP and the MAIL Extension Director discussed the AGRED Work Plan and

Collaborator	Person(s) involved	Date / Type of interaction	Purpose	Main Outcome / Decisions made
			AGRED Work Plan to MAIL senior Extension department staff.	scheduled for the next day a presentation of the plan to the Extension department's senior staff.
<i>Extension Director and his team</i>	AGRED COP, DCOP, senior Extension department staff	January 20 / Presentation	To present the AGRED Work Plan to MAIL senior Extension department staff.	AGRED presented its Work Plan with senior-level Extension department staff to educate and obtain information on the plan's provisions. Both sides discussed the activities and finalized / approved the list as a team.
<i>Deputy Minister, Agricultural Affairs</i>	AGRED DCOP, AGRED M&E Director, and Program Support Specialists	January 27 / Meeting	To present the AGRED Work Plan and address any questions.	AGRED presented its draft Work Plan to the Deputy Minister as well as Research Directorate and Extension Directorate staff. AGRED addressed questions based on the presentation and provided clarification were needed. Input was received and incorporated into subsequent revisions of the plan.

Technical Support Delivered

This section reports on AGRED's technical support delivered directly to MAIL, DAILs, and farmers and is organized by the results structure outlined in the contract. Technical support is delivered through AGRED's Research, Extension, Training, and Gender departments, as well as the Institutional Strengthening Specialist (ISS).

Summary of January technical activities

IR 1 (farmer engagement)

10 monitoring / farm visits

9 informal trainings for farmers / **148** trained

2 distributions

1 field day and plot preparation

IR 2 (MAIL/DAIL capacity building)

7 informal trainings or field visits for DAIL staff / **52** trained

13 mini-proposals in development, assisting DAILs

Expected Result 1 / IR 1: Sub IR 1.1- Improved extension for Afghan farmers

This section reports on activities that deliver extension services directly to farmers, primarily through DAILs with oversight of AGRED. The mini-project model has been the primary mechanism in which AGRED and DAILs have delivered services directly to farmers (a complete list of AGRED mini-projects can be found in Annex 1). In the October –December Quarterly Report, AGRED presented a visual concept which breaks down the typical mini-project process, both in the pre-implementation and implementation stages. This visual has been included in Annex 2 and will assist the reader in understanding better how individual and collective activities work towards reaching AGRED results.

What makes a PICS bag so effective?

The Purdue Improved Crop Storage (PICS) bag is a triple layer hermetic storage bag which has an outer woven polypropylene (or nylon) bag and two inner bags—80 microns thick each—of high density polyethylene (HDPE) bags. Hermetic storage with PICS bags works by restricting oxygen to insects. The insects go dormant and stop reproducing because of the lack of oxygen. Adult insects and most larva die within a few weeks of sealing the bags, resulting in better protection and greater longevity during the storage season.

What's the value of a crocus drying machine?

The crocus drying machine is an important tool in maximizing saffron market value. The machines provided by DAIL and sponsored by AGRED use gas or electricity to improve drying times and reduce discoloration of the saffron stigmas. Traditional solar-based drying methods often will alter the color of the saffron and require greater drying times, thus reducing value in the market.

Note: This section reports on activities and immediate outputs in January from different stages of mini-project implementation, but it's important to understand that AGRED's services will include a wider package of initiatives. These initiatives have been outlined in the revised Work Plan and are under review for approval.

Distribution

In Herat (Pashton Zarghon district), five Mung bean farmers received at no cost a single PICS bag from DAIL-Herat extension workers. The bags help maximize seed life until the following season. The bags were provided by AAEP as part of the existing Mung bean mini-project; AGRED staff was present to oversee and document the distribution. This is a critical component of the project as farmers can continue to use and sell the improved seeds during the following farming season.



DAIL staff distribute to Mung bean farmers PICS bags which extend the life of seeds over the winter season (Herat province)

DAIL, with oversight of AGRED, led the handover of a crocus drying machine to lead saffron farmers. In addition, DAIL staff instructed the farmers on how to use the machine and its benefits. The machine will be maintained amongst the farmers with periodic oversight by DAIL- Kabul. This was a need identified by the

farmers, voiced through DAIL-Kabul and serves as a modest example of how DAIL is practically responding to farmers' needs in collaboration with AGRED.

Field day & plot preparation

On January 24, the AGRED team conducted a field day for DAIL staff and lead farmers on installing grape trellis systems as well as educating participants on trellis systems in use in Afghanistan. AGRED and research farm staff led the training as there was a lack of capacity within DAIL on this particular topic; DAIL staff will continue to take on more of a lead role in as the project progresses and capacity is built. Twenty-four people participated in the field day (four from the DAIL- Kabul extension department, thirteen from the Badam Baugh research farm, and seven lead farmers).



A farmer assesses growth on his wheat demonstration plot with technical guidance by DAIL and oversight by AGRED (Nad-e-Ali district, Helmand province)

The field day addressed three main areas: AGRED staff provided an overview of the program, the mini-project, and delivered a presentation on the differences (advantages and disadvantages) of 11 commercial grape varieties to the participants; Mr. Saboor, the Badam Baugh Research Farm Manager, explained the different types of trellis systems used in Afghanistan, their advantages, and addressed questions from the participants; and Mr. Sardar, the farm's Horticultural Research Officer, showed practically how to install and manage the I, Y, and T trellis systems and answered participant questions.

Monitoring / farm visits

While farm visits are largely the responsibility of respective DAILs, AGRED provincial-level staff also make periodic monitoring trips to oversee and report on demonstration plot progress. The

term monitoring should not be confused with larger, separate AGRED M&E efforts; this section highlights activities focused on ongoing extension and research monitoring to ensure project implementation is operating on schedule and as effectively as possible. Additionally, DAILs and AGRED staff provide on-site technical training / support during these visits directly to farmers.

Table 3- Summary of monitoring visits and on-site technical support to farmers, January 2014

	Mini project / date of visit	Participants*	Location	Purpose	Outcome
1	Wheat demonstration plot (extension) / January 1	DAIL staff, AGRED, lead farmers	Faryab province	To monitor 6 newly established, designed, and cultivated demonstration plots. The visits were also used to provide technical support and troubleshoot any existing or potential problems.	Farmers were instructed on next steps necessary in irrigation, application of fertilizer, and controlling weeds. There were no major problems arising out of this visit.
2	Wheat demonstration plot (extension) / January 1 & 4	AGRED, DAIL staff, lead farmers	Kapisa province	To visit 6 demonstration plots to assess any disease or insect damage to the plots; to monitor the general health of the crop.	The visits confirmed that there were no immediate concerns regarding insects or diseases other than the need for ongoing monitoring as planned. All plots were found to be in good health,

	Mini project / date of visit	Participants*	Location	Purpose	Outcome
					given the time of the year. The visit showed that 80% of the seeds were germinating.
3	Introduction of improved sesame varieties and improved production methods / January 4	AGRED, DAIL staff, selected farmers	Faryab province	To select six demo plots for the initiation of the project. The selection process is guided by a set of predetermined criteria such as: security, nearness of the demo plot to the road, availability of water, and that each demo plot should be owned by one farmer.	AGRED and DAIL selected the six farmers / plots which initiates the project; land preparation and cultivation activities will follow, allowing direct technical assistance to farmers.
4	Kunduz Research station / January 5-7	DAIL research staff	Kunduz province	AGRED helped facilitate a 2014 annual plan for DAIL-Kunduz and provided overall strategic planning support.	The DAIL- Kunduz Research Department will conduct an agronomic experiment on wheat seed rate and best time of wheat cultivation with a national rust screening nursery. Additional areas of focus for 2014 include: root rot of muskmelon, off-season greenhouse vegetable growing, and the construction of an irrigation channel.
6	Commercial Grape Orchard / January 7 & 18	Badam Bagh Research Center Manager, AGRED, farmers	Kabul province	To monitor research progress on grape varieties and assess the trellis system.	The team collected the required data as part of its ongoing research efforts. Additionally, the farm manager provided direction on optimal heights for the trellis posts (70 cm below ground / 2.6 m above ground) to facilitate more effective harvesting.
7	Wheat demonstration plot (extension) / January 8	AGRED, DAIL staff, lead farmers	Balkh province	To visit the plots to assess any disease or insect damage to the plots; to monitor the general health of the crop.	The visit found that there were no direct threats to the health of the crops. On-site support was provided by AGRED on monitoring in this area.
8	Wheat extension demo plot / January 11	AGRED, DAIL staff, lead farmers	Herat province	Technical and practical advice on irrigation, fertilizer application, and weeding.	Farmers gained experience with new techniques and committed to applying them in their demonstration plots
9	Wheat extension demo plot / January 12	AGRED, DAIL staff, lead farmers	Herat province	Technical and practical advice on irrigation, fertilizer application, and weeding.	Farmers gained experience with new techniques and committed to applying them in their demonstration plots.
10	Wheat demonstration plot (extension) / January 19	AGRED, DAIL staff, lead farmers	Balkh province	To provide technical guidance on cultivating the plot in preparation for the planting season.	Farmers were instructed on next steps necessary in irrigation, application of fertilizer, and controlling weeds. There were no major problems arising out of this visit.

* Both farmers and DAIL staff were part of these visits. While this section reports on contributions primarily to IR 1 (farmers), modest contributions are also being made to IR 2 through technical support which also includes DAILs staff.

Trainings

The AGRED Training department did not hold a formal training in January; however, it has developed a three-day formal training on livestock management, which will be implemented in the coming months.

The Research department did coordinate with the AGRED Research and Extension departments to develop a number of informal trainings for farmers arising out of demonstration plot needs. There were two informal trainings in January: the preparation of lime sulfur as a deterrent for disease prevention (10 participants) and classroom style trainings for wheat farmers in eight villages within Herat province (total of 148 farmers) that focused on the major steps and techniques regarding the wheat demonstration plot mini-project (i.e., land selection, preparation, irrigation, etc.). Table 4 highlights these trainings in more detail.



DAIL-led, AGRED supervised class room-style trainings complement practical experiential field learning for farmers in Nagahan village (Herat province)

Formal vs. Informal trainings

AGRED uses both informal and formal trainings as part of its service delivery mix. Informal trainings are those which require no official budget and are designed by the regional and provincial staff, with support from the National Training Coordinator. These are generally shorter, include fewer participants, and have a narrower scope.

A formal training generally requires a budget as well as approval from the AGRED COP before it is conducted. These trainings are prepared in advance and generally are multi-day events that are wider in scope than informal trainings. (A list of all AGRED formal trainings to date can be found in Annex 3)

Table 4- Informal trainings held for farmers, January 2014

	Topic / date of training	Participants	Location	Training objective
1	Preparation and use of lime sulfur for disease prevention / January 27	10 participants* farmers (5), agricultural students (3) and DAIL staff (2)	Zabul province	<p>AGRED provided an informal training to DAIL extension staff, agriculture institute students, and farmers about preparing and using lime sulfur to protect from diseases (particularly fungus and bacteria). For example, participants were taught the most effective ratio of water and lime sulfur combination as well as proper spraying methods. This was a particularly relevant training for participating farmers as they had experienced heavy winter losses last year due to diseases.</p> <p><i>Why Lime Sulfur?</i> The winter months are the best time for preparing and using of lime sulfur. It is the cheapest and most effective winter spray which prevents disease, especially from powdery mildew and downy mildew in grapes during the dormancy phase.</p>

	Topic / date of training	Participants	Location	Training objective
	Wheat demonstration plot		Herat province	
2	January 5	18 male farmers	Talac village	AGRED and DAIL staff delivered an informal, class-room style training session to wheat farmers within the eight listed villages on the importance of improved wheat seed, seed selection, land selection, land preparation, irrigation, application of fertilizer, seed rates, cultivation dates, and time of applying the fertilizer.
3	January 6	20 male farmers	Nagahan village	
4	January 7	19 male farmers	Robatsuliman village	
5	January 8	17 female farmers	Jilan village	
6	January 12	18 female farmers	Geem village	
7	January 15	21 male farmers	Kortkhaja village	
8	January 18	18 male farmers	Miraabad village	
9	January 19	12 male farmers	Nim marda-e-safidan village	
TOTAL		148 (112 male / 36 female)		

* Both farmers and DAIL staff were participants of the training. While this section reports on contributions primarily to IR 1 (farmers), modest contributions are also being made to IR 2 through trainings which also include DAILs staff.

Expected Result 2 / IR 2: Sub IR 2.1- Improved infrastructure at MAIL / DAILs

Carrying out activities towards this Result has been placed on hold until the budget and contract modification and AGRED Work Plan are approved.

Expected Result 3 / IR 2: Sub IR 2.2- Improved capacity at MAIL / DAILs

This section reports on interventions which specifically target MAIL and DAIL staff. AGRED delivered assistance in three main areas: informal trainings / field visits on technical aspects of farming and project management (DAILs), mini-project development (DAILs), and MAIL institutional strengthening. Table 5 highlights assistance activities taking place during project implementation, while Table 6 provides pre-implementation assistance to DAILs (see Annex 2). Institutional strengthening assistance for MAIL is outside of the mini-project framework.

Table 5- Informal trainings and field visits primarily targeting DAIL staff, January 2014

	Topic / date of training	Participants	Location	Training objective
1	Winter Workshop on Food Processing and Food Safety / January 19 - 21	DAIL- Home Economy and Extension staff representing Balkh, Samangan, Jowzjan, and Sar-e Pol provinces (22 females)	Balkh province	<p>This was a joint training between AAEP (sponsor) and AGRED's Gender department (lead facilitator) which covered areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canning at home and drying food; food preservation methods and food preservation nutrition; basic microbiology of food, including herbs; basic micro-economics of packaging and storing; post-harvest storage; recipes including tomato apple chutney and vegetable soup <p>As a result of the training, DAIL female staff were equipped to directly deliver the learned knowledge and skills to broader DAIL extension agents and lead female farmers through subsequent engagements.</p>
2	Wheat demonstration plot (extension) /	DAIL staff (2)	Faryab province	The extension staff were trained practically on the importance of properly clearing straw as well as timing and techniques. This is a critical step in the process to maximize

	Topic / date of training	Participants	Location	Training objective
	January 7			growth.
3	Wheat demonstration plot (extension) / January 26	32 participants- DAIL staff (15), Women Affairs representatives (5), agriculture students (6), and lead farmers (6)	Oruzgan province	AGRED trained participants on the benefits and techniques of Herat 99 wheat variety to improve yields. Example of topics covered included: plot designation / land selection, disease control, as well as mitigating leaf, stem, and stripe rust. Also, the Agricultural Advisor for DAIL- Oruzgan delivered a presentation on weed control.
4	Computer support / January 22	DAIL staff (7)	Takhar province	AGRED provided basic computer training on MS Word to DAIL staff which will facilitate more efficient and effective management and reporting of active mini-projects within DAIL- Takhar.
5	Computer support / January 5	DAIL staff (3)	Logar province	AGRED provided basic computer training on MS Word to DAIL staff which would facilitate more efficient and effective management and reporting of active mini-projects within the DAIL- Takhar.
6	Pruning training / January 21	DAIL staff (3), lead farmers	Baghlan province	AGRED trained DAIL extension and demonstration plot farmers staff on stone and pome fruits pruning techniques, which are critical for maximizing yields. These fruits include: apples, peaches, almonds, and apricots.
	TOTAL	52 DAIL staff (37 female / 15 male)		

AGRED staff provided additional support to DAILs towards formalizing project concepts into mini-project proposals. The scope of these proposals should be considered preliminary and subject to change as the proposal progresses through the review and approval stages.

Table 6- Mini-project proposals / pre-implementation assistance to DAILs, January 2014

Region / type of proposal	Type of support	Status
Herat / 4 proposals were developed based on the 2014 DAIL draft Work Plan: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pruning training techniques and methods (fruits) 2. Project management training (Women-based) 3. Kitchen garden (Women-based) 4. Improved onion yield extension proposal 	For each of these proposals, AGRED staff worked with the DAIL to develop a project concept and frame it in the form of a viable mini-proposal for review, based on the established protocol.	Each proposal has been developed within DAIL and submitted to AGRED (National Extension Coordinator) for a technical review. The next step, once reviewed by the AGRED technical teams, is endorsement by MAIL, and subsequently, final approval by the AGRED COP.
Kabul / 6 proposals were in the process of being finalized based on respective DAIL 2014 agendas: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lime sulfur application and preparation training (Kabul) 2. Bordeaux mixture application and preparation training (Kabul) 3. Fruit pruning training (Kabul) 4. Honey bee keeping (Parwan) 5. Lime sulphur application and preparation training (Kapisa) 	For each of these proposals, AGRED staff worked with the DAIL to develop a project concept and frame it in the form of a viable mini-proposal for review, based on the established protocol.	The lime sulfur (both), Bordeaux mixture, and fruit pruning mini-proposals have been submitted to AGRED technical teams for review. The honey bee and winter oil application proposals are in draft form and will be finalized and submitted to AGRED technical teams in the upcoming months.

6. Winter oil application training (Logar)		
Nangarhar / 3 vegetable mini-proposals were finalized at the respective DAIL level and sent for review: 1. Nangarhar 2. Kunar 3. Laghman	For each of these proposals, AGRED staff worked with the DAIL to develop a project concept and frame it in the form of a viable mini-proposal for review, based on the established protocol.	Each proposal has been developed within DAIL and submitted to AGRED (National Extension Coordinator) for a technical review. The next step, once reviewed by the AGRED technical teams, is endorsement by MAIL, and subsequently, final approval by the AGRED COP.
Balkh / 1 wheat extension comparative demonstration plot proposal	AGRED staff worked with the DAIL to develop a project concept and frame it in the form of a viable mini-proposal for review, based on the established protocol.	The proposal is in draft form and will be finalized and submitted to AGRED technical teams in the upcoming months.
Takhar province / general problem identification, concept development, and proposal writing assistance	AGRED delivered a training focused on how to identify problems, write concepts notes / summary of project, proposal writing, and budgeting.	Based on this training, DAIL staff will continue developing and formalizing mini-project proposals for review.

AGRED provided institutional strengthening support to MAIL in two assessment areas:

Assessment of MAIL / DAIL Core Staff [Contract Ref. C.6.2. HR #1]

The assessment of the current capacity of MAIL and DAILs' research and extension department's core staff capacities was initiated by the AGRED IS team. The agreed-upon assessment and management system to be utilized will be the Training Assessment Matrix (TAM). The IS briefings on TAM were presented to the Extension and Research Director, General Agriculture (DG), Mr. Akbar Waziri, and all of his Extension and Research Section Heads. The briefing was very well received; the IS team attained buy-in on using the tool.

Note
The AGRED Communications department is exploring how to most intuitively integrate contract references into reporting to facilitate easier tracking. Subsequent reports will make an effort to include more organized and systematic presentations of this information.

The IS team also held briefings in January to the Director of Human Resources and his Capacity Building department, whereupon AGRED received approval to proceed with TAM. The nominated point of contact for TAM and MAIL is the Director of Capacity Building, Dr. Amin Naseri. TAM training of MAIL/DAIL Human Resources and nominated Research and Extension staff will commence on February 21. The TAM training will be conducted over four half days (two total days). An assessment on extension and research core skills will begin on February 18 at the MAIL headquarters and the Badam Baugh Research Farm.

Research and Extension Infrastructure Assessment [Contract Ref. C.Th6.2 INF #1]

The IS team brought forward the contract element of the assessment of strengths and weaknesses of existing MAIL and DAILs' applied research and extension assets from May/June 2014 to February/March, at the request of USAID. The IS team is currently conducting a desk review of previous infrastructure assessments, the most recent being the 2010 Asia Foundation Report. The IS team is conducting a review of the MAIL Asset Management system *MPulse*, in collaboration with CBCMP, to collate verification data for field and data analysis as part of the final report. AGRED is planning to present the findings in early-mid March.

Expected Result 4 / IR 2: Sub IR 2.3- Bottom-up, consultative process

AGRED and DAIL activities in January focused on continued implementation of plans directly to MAIL, DAILs, and farmers. Plans to address this Sub IR are laid out comprehensively in the revised AGRED Work Plan.

Cross-cutting: Gender

The AGRED Gender department coordinated and facilitated a workshop for 22 DAIL Home Economy staff in Balkh province (representing DAILs from Balkh, Samangan, Jowzjan, and Sar-e Pol). The workshop focused on food processing and food safety for DAIL staff, with a particular focus on winter-time management. This activity is fully reported in Table 5.

The AGRED Gender department and DAIL Director (and his staff) formally established a Women in Agriculture Working Group (WAWG) in Takhar province in January as part of larger efforts to create these groups in each of the AGRED / MAIL target regions. The WAWGs are established as a formal platform within the DAILs to address women-specific farming needs in the broad areas of outreach, capacity building/ training, and direct support. In the near-term, training needs include concept development, proposal writing, and reporting; these will be delivered by AGRED to build systems and capacity within

DAIL/WAWG for future mini-projects and other implementation activities.

The DAIL- Takhar Director tasked his staff with preparing a letter to all DAIL departments, partner agencies, and the Department of Women Affairs (DoWA) to introduce the WAWG and educate them on the objectives. This letter will be shared with AGRED once finalized. The DAIL- Takhar Director also committed his staff to working closely with the AGRED Regional Gender Coordinator as needed to ensure the group progresses as planned.

The Gender department also turned its efforts internally and worked on updating its strategy. While programmatic activities weren't fundamentally altered, the revised Gender strategy does ensure that its 2014 outlook is aligned with the newly proposed AGRED Work Plan.



DAIL Home Economy staff takes part in a practical, informal training on food preservation and safety that can be subsequently delivered to farmers and other DAIL staff (Balkh province)

Administrative Support

AGRED is committed to also reporting on notable progress from its support departments.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Review of indicators / PIRS according to instructions from USAID

The M&E department updated indicators according to USAID instructions. The result is twelve performance indicators; one impact level indicator, two new gender indicators, and the remainder are taken from the AGRED / USAID contract, USAID Mission PMP, and the previous AGRED PMP. The next step is to set targets for each indicator in coordination with each AGRED team; M&E will lead this process and will share with USAID once a draft is complete.

Demonstration plots: verifying the results

The M&E department received data and completion reports for 1) Mung bean, 2) rice, and 3) corn mini-projects demonstration plots. AGRED M&E department reviewed the recorded data and verified yield results with field staff. The M&E department will be working with the Communications department on how to best package and disseminate these findings. In order to maximize accuracy of the yield data in the future, the M&E department will select, at random, plots during harvest time to calculate yield per unit area.

Gross margin template for crop comparison

The M&E department developed a gross margin template in which field staff can capture demonstration plot data comparing improved technology and varieties with traditional production methods and seed varieties. The data will provide insight into comparative figures of target farmers with non-beneficiaries farmers using traditional production methods in the same area.

Environmental review documents

The M&E department developed four samples of Environmental Review Forms (ERF) and Environmental Review Reports (ERRs) for AGRED's mini projects. These samples were shared with the program team as the new templates and will be used for upcoming mini-project reporting requirements.

Afghan Info database submission

The M&E department updated the USAID Afghan Info database with PMP indicators results, aid effectiveness metrics (obtained from the AGRED Human Resources department), and district spending information (obtained from the Finance department). The M&E department collected the required data from trainings, mini- projects, and field days through M&E tracking sheets.

AGRED Work Plan contribution

The M&E department received comments from USAID on the revised AGRED Work Plan and made the appropriate adjustments as instructed. The team's submission will be included as part of a second AGRED Work Plan submission.

Communications

AGRED is committed to producing compelling success stories of how its interventions have improved the lives of individuals and communities. AGRED submitted a success story (*Improved seeds + increased yields = higher income: A winning equation for Afghan farmers*) to USAID in January as part of quarterly reporting requirements. AGRED is available to discuss any feedback. Additionally, the Communications department coordinated and authored the Q1 FY2014 Quarterly Report.



Snapshot of submitted AGRED Success Story, awaiting approval / feedback

Annex 1- Complete list of AGRED mini-projects

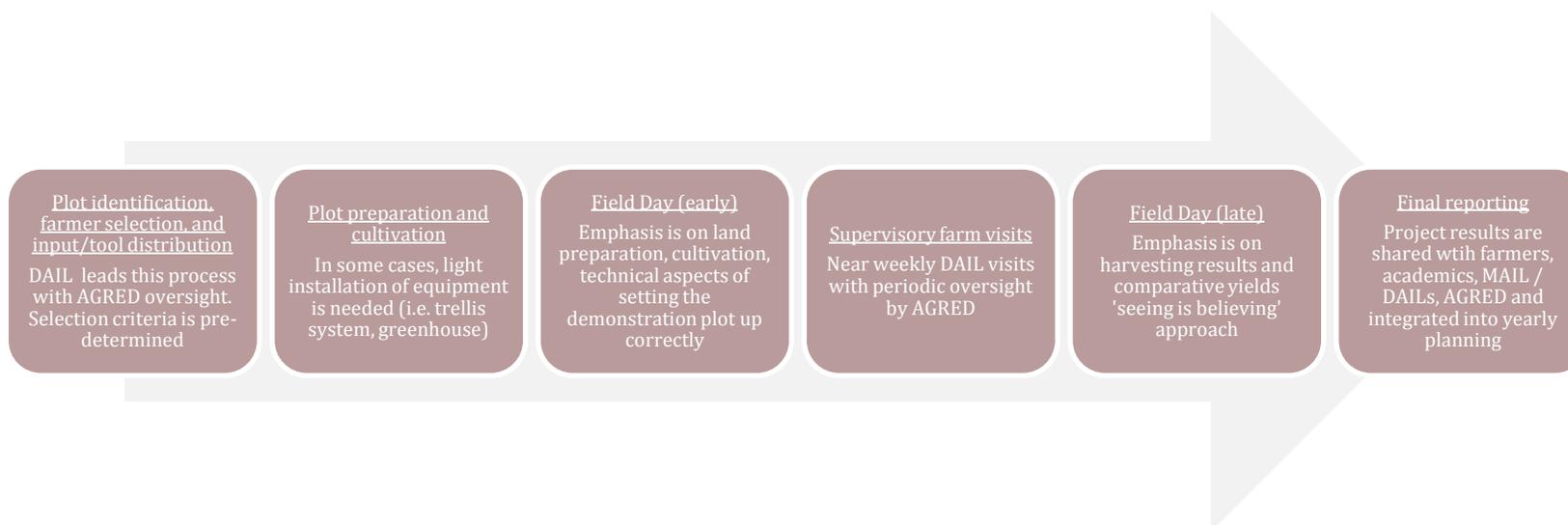
This document is available as an Excel file and has been attached with the report submission

Annex 2- Typical AGRED mini-project processes

Model of typical AGRED mini-project approach (pre-implementation)



Model of typical AGRED mini-project approach (implementation)



Annex 3- Complete list of AGRED trainings

This document is available as an Excel file and has been attached with the report submission.