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Afghan Agricultural Research and Extension Development Program (AGRED)



Monthly Report

July – August, 2012

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Afghan Agricultural Research & Extension Program (AGRED)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROJECT INFORMATION

AGRED PURPOSE

In partnership with Afghan farmers, the USAID/AGRED Program supports the Afghan government to build enduring, effective research and extension systems. The result will include increased agricultural jobs and incomes.

AGRED PROGRAM COMPONENTS

1. **Communication** - More effective communication with and increased access to improved technologies, knowledge and education with emphasis on agriculture best practices by Afghan farmers
2. **Infrastructure** - Improved applied research and extension infrastructure in 7 target sub-national research stations and fifty target districts
3. **Training** - Training and capacity building of research and extension staff to deliver services to Afghan communities
4. **Research and Extension** - Applied research and provision of extension and advisory services

AGRED PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this program is to increase agricultural productivity and income through the application of science and technology. The Afghan Agricultural Research and Extension Development (AGRED) program will build the capacity of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's (GIROA) Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) and Directorates of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL) to sustainably procure, develop and deploy productivity-enhancing technologies and good farming practices. The program will strengthen the technical skills of research and extension professionals in state-of-the-art extension and advisory service delivery approaches and methods through on-the-job and formal trainings. AGRED will facilitate farmers' access to improved technologies and practices, integrate research and extension systems, and rebuild critical assets of selected Research Centers.

The capacity development work will focus on MAIL and DAILs in seven provinces - Balkh, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Kunduz, Nangarhar and Paktya, and 50 MAIL priority districts in these and 19 other provinces: Kapisa, Parwan, Wardak, Ghazni, Helmand, Zabul, Uruzgan, Laghman, Kunar, Takhar, Baghlan, Bamyan, Badakhshan, Jawzjan, Samangan, Saripol, Logar, Faryab and Badghis.

ACHEIVEMENTS FOR JULY AND AUGUST

- **Mobilization of Core Staff Members**

The recruitment process was slower than expected due to the delayed arrival of the COP and a restructuring of the DCOP position. Further delays were due to ROP's practice of hiring managers first, and allowing them to be involved in the hiring of their own teams. This sequential process delays the recruitment of lower level field staff.
- **AGRED – USAID Meetings**

The ROP AGRED team met with USAID and USDA in Kabul to discuss start-up activities and ensure a shared understanding of the program strategy. Several meetings were held at the US Embassy in Kabul to introduce the ROP AGRED team to their USAID counterparts. These meetings were held prior to AGRED's meetings with MAIL to insure that MAIL gets consistent information on key issues like the MOU for the AGRED contract, the future agreement between USAID and MAIL for on-budget funding, the strategy and general approach of the program, and cooperation among the three USG programs – Capacity Building and Change Management (CBCMP), Afghanistan Agriculture Extension Program (AAEP) and AGRED – that are collaborating to raise the capacity of MAIL to respond to Afghan farmers' needs.
- **AGRED USDA Meetings**

The AGRED ROP team met with USDA's CBCMP and AAEP programs to define the relationships and refine the plans to coordinate the three programs. Effective working relationships have been established between the three programs
- **AGRED MAIL Meetings**

The AGRED team met with MAIL Extension Director Hukum Khan Habibi to kick-off the program. AGRED also participated in the first meetings of the Technical Working Group established by MAIL to support its work with AGRED.
- **Initial Procurements**

Working closely with Mark Kelly, USAID COR for AGRED, the AGRED team secured five vehicles from a previous USAID project: Southern Region Agricultural Development (S-RAD), implemented by IRD. ROP took delivery of two of the vehicles in Helmand. The other two vehicles are in Kandahar, and will be delivered to Kabul in September. AGRED expanded its security staff, leased an additional office and guesthouse, and purchased office equipment. The new office is under renovation. AGRED plans to move to the new offices in September. The new guesthouse will also be available in September.
- **Program Plans**

The AGRED team submitted the Branding & Marking Plan, Mobilization Plan, and the Baseline Survey Plan to USAID.

KEY ACTIVITIES FOR SEPTEMBER

- **AGRED Meetings with MAIL**
AGRED will continue meeting with the Technical Working Group responsible for fulfilling MAIL's responsibilities as defined in its MOU with USAID and AGRED. The first Technical Working Group meetings will focus on educating the MAIL members on the AGRED program, related USG programs, and the process of developing MAIL's proposal to USAID for an Implementation Letter providing on-budget funding for research and extension.
- **Mobilization**
AGRED will continue mobilizing during September with the goal of having most of the Kabul-based positions filled by the end of the month. We also expect to have the new office and guesthouse operational in September.
- **Participatory Research and Extension Planning Process**
AGRED will brief the Technical Working Group on the participatory process required by USAID to access on-budget funding for research and extension activities. This process will begin with seven stakeholder workshops to be held in November.

Workshop participants will include farmers, agribusinesses (agricultural input suppliers, farm services providers, traders, processors, transporters, wholesalers and retailers) and government institutions responsible for agricultural development (MAIL, DAILs, MOCI, ACCI and AISA). The objective of the workshops is to identify weaknesses in agricultural value chains that can be addressed by MAIL and DAIL research and extension programs. The Technical Working Group will summarize the research needs identified in the workshops in a national work plan.

This demand-driven approach to planning will provide the basis for a proposal to USAID for an Implementation Letter providing funds for MAIL and DAIL research and extension activities in 2013, and defining the process required to access additional on-budget funds until AGRED ends in 2017.

- **Program Plans**
The team will complete and submit the Continuity Plan, Demobilization Plan and draft PMP.

MAIL / DAIL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP

AGRED launched its capacity building program by briefing the MAIL's Technical Working Group (TWG) on AGRED goals, strategy and objectives. The TWG met twice in August,

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focusing primarily on: 1) briefing TWG members on the AGRED program, and 2) the activities and timeline required to access on-budget funding for research and extension in 2013.

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

- **Jointly Implemented Program**
This program includes many activities required to develop two major MAIL directorates. Since this program is envisioned as a joint effort with MAIL, each activity requires a consensus agreement with MAIL counterparts. This type of partnership arrangement is unusual for USAID program. The AGRED team will not directly implement program activities like other USAID projects. Instead, AGRED will work through the MAIL. AGRED's goal is to have MAIL implement research and extension at a speed that approximates USAID-funded projects.
- **Key Personnel**
The arrival of Key Personnel during Ramadan and the ensuing Eid holidays both helped and hindered AGED efforts. The team was able to accomplish many tasks without interruptions common to normal business days. Access to MAIL, on the other hand, was limited during these holiday periods.

SEPTEMBER PRIORITITES

- **Technical Working Group**
The AGRED team will continue meeting with the TWG to maintain the momentum of program rollout. Monthly objectives include establishing a chairman for the TWG and insuring that key groups within MAIL are represented in the meetings will be high priorities.

MAIL RESEARCH PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

MOBILIZATION

The program to build the capacity of MAIL and DAIL research program began with the initial meetings of the TWG Mr. Khalid Wadan was hired as National Research Coordinator, and will join AGRED in early September.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

Position announcements in AKBAR were ineffective in identifying and recruiting qualified candidates for Regional Research Coordinators. AGRED is contacting Afghan universities and other institutions to solicit recommendations for newly graduated agricultural scientists.

SEPTEMBER PRIORITIES

Hiring Research Field Team. AGRED expects to hire seven Regional Research Coordinators in late September or early October.

MAIL / DAIL EXTENSION DEVELOPMENT

MOBILIZATION

AGRED's National Extension Coordinator Nisar Ahmad, re-assigned from ROP's CHAMP project to AGRED, began recruiting his extension team. A short-list of candidates was developed in August, and interviews will begin in September.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

- The recruitment process was prolonged by the need to hire technical staff members who have strong management skills. The technical staffs of other ROP projects and donor programs have the technical and training skills needed to mentor their MAIL and DAIL counterparts, but even exceptionally good agricultural research and extension staff may lack the planning, budgeting and leadership skills needed to build the capacities of institutions like MAIL and DAILS.

SEPTEMBER PRIORITIES

- Hire seven Regional Extension Coordinators and begin recruiting 19 Provincial Extension Coordinators.
- Confirm target provinces and districts. For example, there are two Research Centers in provinces that have no districts assigned and some misplaced districts in the wrong provinces. The AGRED team will propose corrections for these errors.

GENDER ACTIVITIES

MAIL PLANS FOR WOMEN FARMERS

- Extension Director Habibi plans to expand the Home Economics program to have at least one woman Extension Officer in each district of Afghanistan. AGRED is positioned to help him design and implement this plan. AGRED has revised its year one staffing plans to have a Gender Specialist develop a program for women farmers.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

- MAIL gender programs will need to be revised and refocused before they are expanded, requiring close coordination between AGRED's Women's Program and MAIL's Home Economics Directorate.

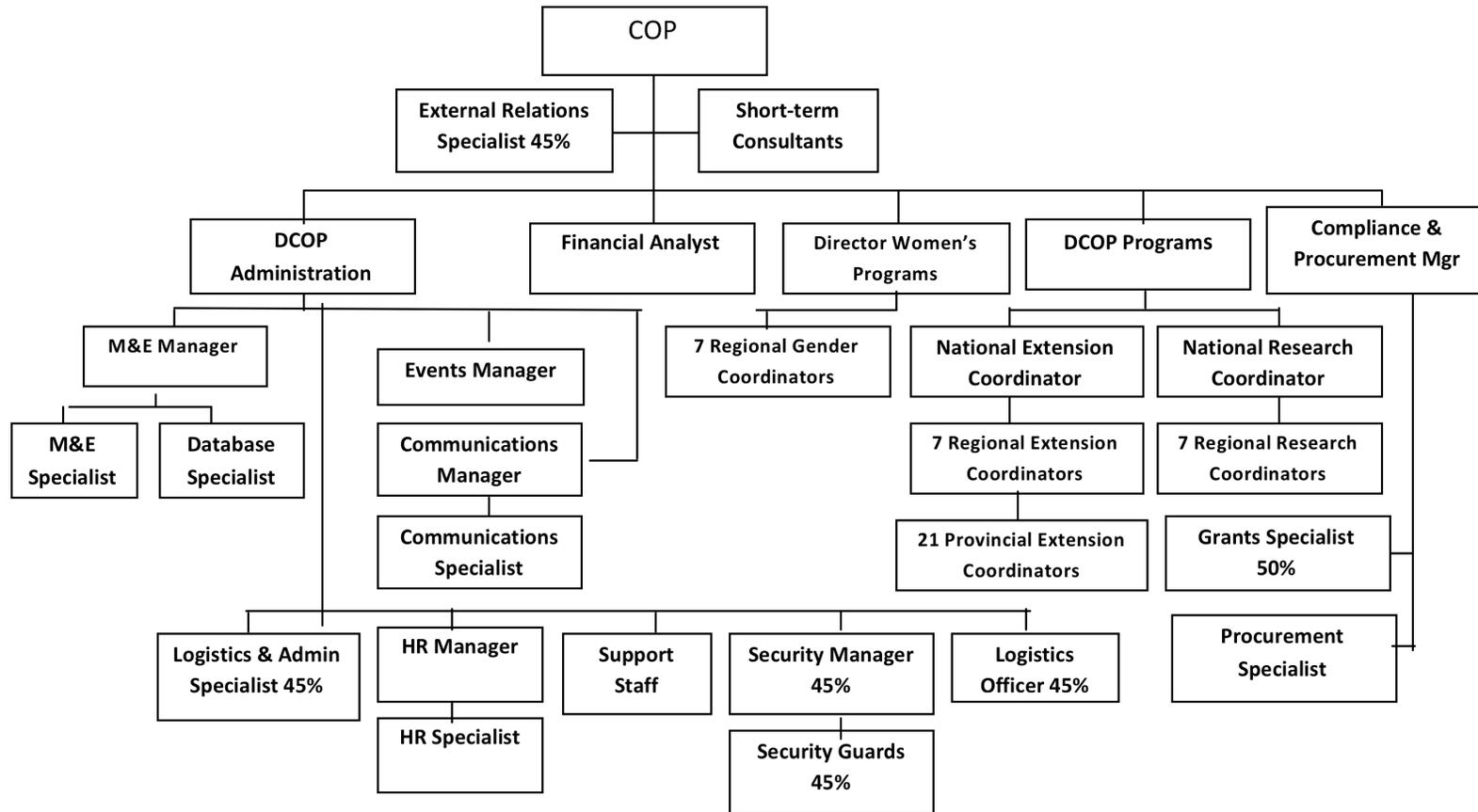
SEPTEMBER PRIORITIES

- Begin mobilizing the Director of Women's Program to work with MAIL in re-engineering the Home Economics Directorate.

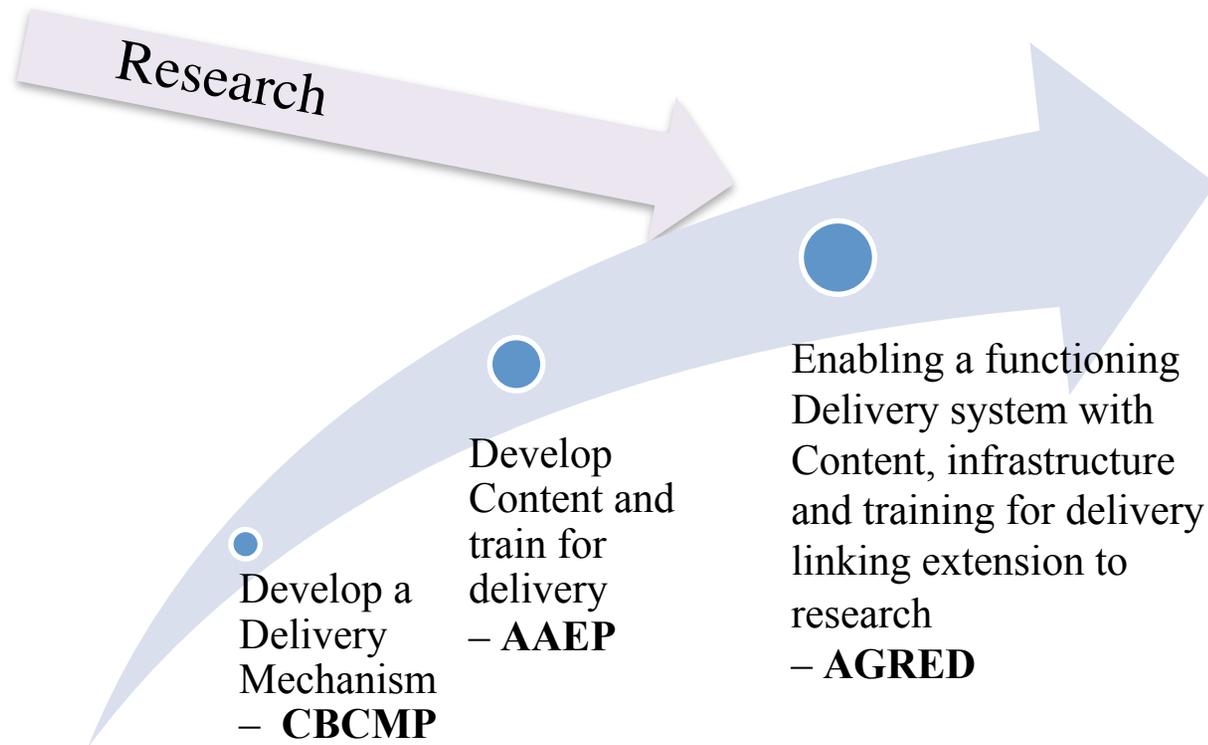
CALENDAR OF ANTICIPATED EVENTS - SEPTEMBER

Proposed Date	AGRED Results Framework Activity	Events / Activities	Purpose	Person Responsible	Venue	Partners & Level of Gov't Participation	Applicable for Branding & Marking
Sep 8	N/A	COP Bash arrives in Kabul	AGRED start-up	ROP / HO	Kabul	N/A	N/A
Sep 10	N/A	Planning meeting	Introduction meeting with Civil Affairs Team	COR Kelly	USAID	N/A	N/A
Sep 11	N/A	1 st Technical Working Group	MAIL proposal for Implementation Letter	National Extension Coordinator Nisar	MAIL	MAIL Extension and Research managers	N/A
Sep 15-18	N/A	Field Visit to Herat Research Center	Herat: DAIL Research, CBCMP, AAEP, Herat University meetings	COR Kelly COP Bash	Herat DAIL	Herat DAIL	N/A
Sep 23	N/A	2 nd Technical Working Group	Pan for stakeholder needs analysis workshops	National Extension Coordinator Nisar	MAIL	MAIL Extension and Research managers	N/A
Sep 25	N/A	Telcon with Paktya ADTs: AGRED introduction	Introduction to AGRED	COR Kelly	USAID	N/A	N/A
Sep 25	N/A	Introduction meeting with MAIL Research & Extension	MOU follow-up, AGRED offices	COP Bash	MAIL	Director Extension & Research Habibi	N/A
Sep 27	N/A	PMP meeting with Alex Huerta, COR Mark Kelly	Review draft PMP	COR Kelly	USAID	N/A	N/A

APPENDIX A: AGREED ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



APPENDIX B - USG MAIL CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS



ACRONYMS

AAEP	USDA Afghan Agricultural Extension Program
ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
ADT	US Military Agriculture Development Team
AGRED	USAID Afghan Agriculture Research & Extension Development Program
CBCMP	USDA Capacity Building and Change Management Program
CHAMP	USAID Commercial Horticulture & Agricultural Marketing Program
COP	Chief of Party
CDC	Community Development Council
DAIL	Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock
EC	European Community
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
LOE	Level of Effort
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
PMP	Performance Management Plan
RADP	USAID Regional Agriculture Development Program
ROP	Roots of Peace
TAMU	Texas A&M University
UCD	University of California, Davis
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USG	United States Government
WSU	Washington State University