



**Minutes  
of the  
First RALF Programme Workshop  
19-20 April 2005  
Intercontinental Hotel  
Kabul – Afghanistan**

**Workshop Participants:**

- The Principal Investigator (PI's) and/or Collaborator(s) of each one of the 11 Projects participated in the Workshop. A complete list of the PI's and Collaborators of the Projects and their email addresses appears at the end of the Minutes.
- DFID (UK) participants included David Radcliffe, Erick Zeballos, Essa Shamal and Damon Bristow.
- Participants from the Donor agencies included Masayoshi Shibata (JICA) and Raj Kamal (FAO/AALP).
- Adam Pain (AREU) participated as Member of the "Project Review Panel"
- Anthony Fitzherbert represented MRRD.

**Opening Remarks:**

- The participants were welcomed by Najib Malik and Nasrat Wassimi on behalf of ICARDA Director General, Prof. Dr A El-Beltagy, and D Radcliffe on behalf of DFID.

**Overview of UK's Counter-Narcotics Strategy and Alternative Livelihoods in Afghanistan:**

D Radcliffe and E Zeballos

- David outlined the pillars of UK's counter-narcotics strategy in Afghanistan. "Alternative Livelihoods" is only one of the pillars among others such as information campaign, institutional capacity building, eradication, demand reduction, criminal justice and regional cooperation.

Please see the RALF Website ([www.lcarda.org/Ralfweb/RALF.htm](http://www.lcarda.org/Ralfweb/RALF.htm)) for a complete text of David's presentation.

**Alternative Livelihoods within the Opium Poppy Economy:**

A Pain

- The paper presented the general objectives of the research on alternative livelihoods and identified some of the key questions that needed to be addressed including:

- What criteria might the research outputs be judged by?
- What lessons might be learnt about where the outputs were effective, how and for whom.

Answering these questions depended on a good understanding of rural livelihoods, the role of the Opium Poppy Economy within that and the development of plausible hypotheses of the conditions under which households might exit the OPE. This would require a critical use of the livelihood framework and address in particular issues of risk and uncertainty.

The latter part of the paper looked at the challenges that alternative would have to address in substituting for the employment and multiplier effects of opium on the rural economy

The key conclusion from the paper was that there was a need to build evidence based arguments for the conditions under which new products / services / processing would encourage exit strategies from the OPE and what the direct and indirect benefits and costs would be and to whom within the context of a diverse agro-ecological environment with variable access to water and markets.

## **RALF Programme Overview: N Malik**

An overview of RALF as a Competitive Research Fund, the mechanism for Project selection/funding, Project Proposals received and the list and scope of Projects selected for funding were outlined. A copy of Najib's presentation can be downloaded from the RALF Website.

### **Project Presentations:**

The Power Point Presentations given by the PI or Collaborators of each one of the 11 Projects can be viewed and downloaded from the RALF Website

### **Monitoring within Projects and Cross-Project Monitoring:**

Discussion Lead by: D Radcliffe, N Malik, A Pain

Rapporteur: D Radcliffe

1. Adam presented a paper on Monitoring and Evaluation in the RALF Programme. Among the issues highlighted were:
  - Building understanding of how projects will lever change in the context of the opium economy, taking account of geographical specificity, and which particular groups of stakeholders will be affected.
  - Monitoring and evaluation is a lesson sharing process, building knowledge of what does and what does not work, and informing future interventions.
  - Development of qualitative indicators of process, in addition to the quantitative indicators that measure accountability.
  - Building evidence-based arguments to disprove a null hypothesis (i.e. to disprove that projects have had no impact).
  - Recognition of risks associated with the dynamics of the opium economy (e.g. what happens if there is a large reduction, as is currently the case in Nangarhar?).
  - Need to understand markets in the context of potential project impact.
  - Need to monitor progress at goal, purpose and output level.
2. Project-specific recommendations on monitoring and evaluation were being drawn up and will be transmitted to project implementers. As part of their agreed input to the programme, Panel members Adam Pain and Adrienne Martin would be able to offer some support (via e-mail) to projects in implementing these recommendations.
3. Suggestions arising from the subsequent discussion were:
  - Baselines need to be established against which progress can be measured. In projects where baseline surveys have not been included, projects should access any secondary data against which change can be measured. Alternatively surveys of household perceptions could be used to assess change.
  - There is a need to bring projects together at regular intervals to update progress on programme impact. The programme management will build up evidence from individual projects, identify critical points in programme delivery, and report on progress around these points.
  - Many of the questions raised by Adam can be answered with reference to existing logframe indicators. Projects should not embark on significant extra work or re-direct resources.
  - Donors depend on regular information on progress of projects and programmes to report on the performance of their overall aid portfolios. There are issues of presentation of data at different levels and for different audiences.
4. It was agreed that the M&E system(s) adopted must be realistic in the context of resources available to the project. The proposal to bring projects together at regular intervals was generally supported, although cost implications are recognised.

## **Understanding Markets: Market Surveys, Assessments and Analysis**

Discussion Lead by: G. Bahram, E. Zeballos

Rapporteur: A. Pain

Erick raised the following questions over markets:

- What is our general understanding of markets?
- How are potential project outputs related to market understanding and how is/ has that market understanding been created through market surveys, market assessments and market analysis? These are three different dimensions of markets and require different tools for study;
- How are projects interacting with market structures and market dynamics which are outside the control of the project; do we know the limitations of what projects can do in relation to market opportunities and what can be managed by projects? What are the projects' understandings of the different scales of market? – there is a need to distinguish between local, rural, urban, regional and international scales; Projects also need to be realistic in dealing with economies of subsistence and the potential of these to engage with wider market relations;

After these initial comments, three detailed comments on market studies were made.

RALF 01-06 (CRS)

They are working with the CIAT model

Approach is based on a quick market assessment defining: – territorial characterisation, broad scope of what is produced, what enterprises are there, where and what is the potential. From there they narrow down the potential list to a short list through a PRA exercise with local participants. They then identify the actors in the supply chain, introduce the different actors to each other and explore ways of addressing the supply chain constraints. They also identify the business service development (services, credit, knowledge on markets etc) that will be needed and how access to information can be increased.

RALF 01-08 (AKDN)

They have more or less the same approach as RALF 01-06. But integrated into wider programme and are concerned to build up local providers of services. They start with a comprehensive market survey (price, price surveys, actors etc). From there the Business Development Service (BDS) identify interesting market segments with potential; they assess different markets in detail, check that they will react to people's needs and focus on key products. They put together a detailed analysis of commodity chains, then form interest groups and develop sectors. Examples are quality development in apricots and walnuts. The BDS ensure that sectors of the chain react to the changes.

They have concluded that there is much to learn from Afghans how markets work. Markets are complex but appear to have no sense of quality, price elasticity poor and the challenges in market dynamics are less than in other countries – markets are not differentiated by quality; if we want to go for labelled product we will have to market it – traders will not.

RALF 02-07:

There is a need to be specific about terms that are used – market analysis, surveys and assessments are different; It appears that some RALF projects have selected products but not on the basis of market analysis; once a product has been decided on for technological, ecological reasons etc, then there is a need for more proper market analysis for each individual project – based on value chain analysis – how much value can you add in Afghanistan and who and how many will benefit? There needs to be more discussion on methods that are being used

Other general points/ questions that were made/ raised:

- There is a need to sharing information on market surveys and analysis
- There is a need to understand the informal aspects of markets – number of impediments to the markets, control of markets by actors, the unofficial dimensions, informal payments etc
- Are projects neutral in affecting market dynamics or can they empower producers?
- It is very difficult to change market structures
- Can we help market access and can this be done through working with the government?
- It is very difficult to intervene – farmers are not organised in relation to trade and work on an individual basis; difficult to work on building cooperative structures; trading appears never to have come to scale
- Although a trading nation, traders do not want to trade in Afghan products – there is more money to made on transit goods – electrical items, poppy, etc but not raisins; traders where most money;
- How do projects see themselves in relation to markets; market failures are more than just price and are as much as about market functioning – can projects build understand of how the markets functions – at the end of the day one is looking at something that will be attractive to opium poppy producers to position a product in a new way;
- There is a need to define better terms and what we mean by market analysis
- How are projects handled when there are no clear opportunities – but even a failure is a lesson learnt

Key Tasks for Follow –up

- Share copies of market studies on the web site; documenting of broad lessons on markets may be an important output
- Copies of previous High Value Products Market studies done in Afghanistan in the early 1990s to be looked for (A Fitzherbert) ;
- Need specific discussion on market study methods

### **Discussion on Sharing Lessons Learned, Cross Linkages**

Discussion Lead by D Radcliffe, N Wassimi, N Malik

Rapporteur: A RFitzherbert

David lead off the discussion by stressing the importance of sharing lessons learned maintaining a constant high level of dialogue between all stakeholders  
Both formally and informally – through workshops, meeting, emails and websites etc.

We need to be aware of those factors that inhibit information sharing.

Najib stressed the need to identify the common themes, such as the importance of understanding markets and being clear about the identity of the ultimate beneficiaries.

If these are farmers for instance, we need to talk to them and understand them and their needs and requirements.

In the course of general discussion it was agreed that some common themes applied to almost all the RALF projects and should be shared between them – such as ‘Market Information and understanding markets’. Some common themes connected several projects such as for instance ‘saffron’, high value crop production etc.

David stressed that as well as establishing and identifying common themes we need to identify the best processes by which information and lessons learned are effectively shared.

We should be aware that there are two sources of information – that which is generated internally to the RALF programme and that which emanates from external sources – as for instance work undertaken by the Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU).

It was suggested by Bahram that these workshops are useful for this purpose. Also perhaps it would have been useful to have included representatives from outside and parallel programmes such RAMP.

Najib said that we need to not lose sight of the poppy issue at the core of RALF.

It was suggested that sharing training courses might help. But it was agreed that individual projects must share the costs of such joint training.

It was suggested that the establishment of a website – for instance to elaborate on market issues would help to exchange information and lessons with other RALF project members

It was then noted and generally agreed that it would be necessary to appoint a RALF co-ordinator to organize such things. This is difficult for each individual project management to organize this. It was also agreed that this is the responsibility of ICARDA and that it needs to be done very professionally. Situations are complex and dynamic like markets and it might be necessary to provide some capacity in say the Ministry of Commerce

It was suggested and agreed that it would be most effective to have thematic technical workshops on special key topics such as say livestock issues or marketing. Also that the Government line ministries should be included in such workshops – e.g. the Ministers of MAAHF, MRRD, Commerce, etc. as appropriate.

Some discussion was held on appropriate locations for such thematic workshops – and it was agreed in principle that these might be more appropriately held in provincial towns rather than only in Kabul. But timing and availability of key participants is a key factor. Few agencies have spare staff to be for ever attending such meetings and workshops.

Adam stressed the need to prepare for such workshops properly and leave sufficient time to think out and define the key issues. Some issues in this workshop could have done with a little more thinking through.

Michael Bowers of Mercy Corps said that it would be helpful if a list of possible thematic issues was drawn and a calendar established. ICARDA should co-ordinate this but each individual project management should draw up a list of what they see as being key issues from which to draw up this list.

#### **Discussion on Capacity Building:**

- **Is Capacity Building within RALF Adequate?**
- **What is Each Project's Contribution?**
- **Are Projects Providing Opportunities for Training?**
- **Are there Opportunities for Participatory Processes?**

Discussion Lead by: N Malik, A Fitzherbert, Prof. Bawary  
Rapporteur: J Rizvi

Najib opened the discussion by inviting delegates to deliberate on role of each RALF project in capacity building of MAAHF. Panel members and Principal Investigators of 11 RALF projects discussed the issue and identified many elements, and ways and means to achieve the goal of capacity building. Organization of trainings, workshops, field days, farmers' school, and hand on training were identified as effective tools. Work plans of many RALF projects cover these elements and will provide trainings at one or the other stage.

Anthony urged the participants to focus discussion on the following:

- What do we think 'Capacity Building' actually means?
- What capacities do we think are lacking, what should we be building?
- How will we assess what capacity has been built at the end of the programme?
- What functions do we think are lacking at present and which require their capacity to be

built? Are they institutional or individual or a combination of both and where are these located – in the central Government and ministries, at the provincial and district level, in the universities and training establishments or at the level of the rural community and / or the individual farmer?

- What is to be done and how?

Adam: Capacity building should be more than just training.

Bahram: Training in absence of support (inputs) will not improve the capacity. Trainings should be provided at individual (farmer, Ministry and NGO) and institutional level.

Gohar: DACAAR is providing training to Ministry staff in market analysis, linkage development, and management of farmers association.

Randhir: Relief International is imparting training at individual (students) and institutional (university staff). So far the project has trained 32 lead farmers, and AVRDC is working on transfer of technology.

Bawary (Dean, Faculty of Agriculture, Nangarhar University): Capacity building is a must for sustainable development. Institutional capacity building is always linked with the available facilities like, well equipped laboratories, research stations, and other teaching aids.

Javid: RALF project on mint has a strong component for capacity building that will be achieved through organization of field days, village schools (to train on medicinal uses of mints and in methods on how to use), and by training farmers in oil extraction and its marketing.

Kamal: Capacity of Ministry is not limited only because of degraded human resource base or availability of research facilities, the provincial offices of the Ministry even lack in basic facilities for transport, irrigation and communication.

Mercy Corps: RALF project is extending training but a well coordinated long-term plan is required for this purpose.

### **Extension/Expansion of RALF? :**

DFID and Project Partners

There was an extensive discussion on the pros and cons of expansion over consolidating the programme. There seemed a general consensus of the need to consolidate the work so far initiated. Discussion revolved around whether this will require or be possible with no additional fund extensions or if it would require additional funds. Different projects are at different stages and the demands of the various projects differ. For some projects both extra time and extra funds might be justified.

David urged the participants of the necessity of focusing on the project objectives before thinking of expanding in different directions. Before agreeing to extra funding it is necessary to carefully consider what can or might be achieved with the same funding, if necessary within an expanded time frame.

Najib: A no-cost extension into late of summer of 2007 will allow crop-based projects to obtain a third year's field data instead of just 2-years data with the current deadline of December 2006.

### **Project Logistics/Reporting:**

E Shamal and N Malik

The participants' attention was drawn to the fact that the next six monthly report is due in by June 20<sup>th</sup>. ICARDA will then consolidate these and submit them to DFID by July 10<sup>th</sup>. There are also ICARDA quarterly reports to DFID. These are necessary for feed back by the programme management.

## **RALF Website and Electronic Database:**

PI's/Collaborators, N Malik

The RALF Website, accessible by going to the ICARDA website ([www.icarda.org](http://www.icarda.org)), was established a year ago. All concept notes were posted in the interest of transparency and to demonstrate the process of selection.

The website can also be used for posting the Minutes of Workshops and Meetings. Because of security concerns and the sensitive issue of eradication of opium poppies, it was felt that the presentations should not be accessible to the public at large. The question of access and a password was raised. The password for opening and downloading the Project presentations will be provided to the Implementing Agencies of the RALF Projects and to DFID. The need to make copies on a CD was also discussed. The question was also asked about whether or not to establish a 'post box'.

In addition to the RALF Website, ICARDA is also creating an Electronic Database for RALF for the purpose of maintaining the programme's archives (Semi-Annual and Annual Project reports to ICARDA, Quarterly, Semi-Annual and Annual ICARDA Reports to DFID, etc.). This database will initially reside on the ICARDA Intranet but could become available to DFID later on.

## **Scheduling Future Workshops/Field Trips:**

PI/Collaborators, N Malik

The next event will be a thematic workshop in the fall of 2005. The Second (formal) RALF Programme Workshop will be in late February / early March 2006.

The question was posed about having a larger more inclusive RALF event

Adam again urged that more time and careful thought be given to the design and subject matter of the workshops and to the selection of themes.

Najib indicated that once the minutes had been consolidated some of these issues would be revisited. Consideration might possibly be given to regional visits and gatherings (such as the RALF Field Trip of April 24<sup>th</sup> to Nangarhar) to give different projects the chance of 'looking over the fence' at what others are doing. Finally, Najib would like to meet with the individual project managers, next week, in order to schedule the best time for field visits this summer and fall.

## **RALF Reception:**

A "Reception", co-hosted by Jackie Creighton (A/head, DFID-Afghanistan) and N Malik (on behalf of Prof. Dr El-Beltagy) was held at the conclusion of the Workshop on April 20<sup>th</sup> at the Intercontinental Hotel

-H.E. Deputy Minister M Sharif addressed the audience on the "Role of RALF in Capacity Building at MAAHF", whereas David Radcliffe talked about DFID's Alternative Livelihood Strategy.

-Invited guests included Kenneth Neils (Chemonics), S Heiselberg (DANIDA), M Aslan (UNIFEM), Fazludin Fazl (Director General of Extension, MAAHF) and Jorgen W Hansen (MAAHF, SSPSRL-Project Lead).

## **RALF Field Trip to Nangarhar Province**

The Objectives of the RALF Field Tour were:

-To see Project 01-04 (Introduction, Evaluation and Promotion of 7 Crop Legumes and Vegetables) and Project 02-11(Cultivation of Mint as a Viable Alternative Livelihood) and close-by RAMP and Relief International Projects along the route

-To interact with Provincial officials

-To interact with farmers in Behsud and Sorkhroad Districts.

-To find out about any shifts in opium poppy cultivation and its implications

-MAAHF participants from Kabul included Deputy Minister Sharif and DG of Agricultural Research Institute of Afghanistan, Mr Qaderi

-Project collaborators from Nangarhar University included Prof. Bawari (Dean of Faculty of Agriculture) and Prof. Torakai (Head of Dept of Agronomy). Over a hundred undergraduate students of the Faculty of Agriculture turned out for the tour of the RCBD Field Experiment (01-04) at the University Research Farm. The Chancellor of NU, Prof. Nisar Ahmad emphasized the importance of the RALF research project in "Capacity Building" for the younger generation in eastern Provinces of Afghanistan.

-Nangarhar Provincial participants included Directors and Deputy Directors of MAAHF, MRRD and officials from the Canal (Nangarhar Development Authority).

-Large numbers of farmers and village elders had assembled for the RALF Field Tour at Behsud, Joy-10, Joy-15 and Kariz Kabir. At the Mint Research/Demonstration site in Behsud, where farmers were obtaining the first of the six cuts, when asked by Adam to compare their income from cultivation of mint to that of poppies, the farmers confirmed that their total income from 6 cuts of mint would be comparable or could even surpass the income they obtained in 2004 from poppies.

#### Significant Reduction in Poppy Cultivation in Nangarhar Province:

The Deputy Governor of Nangarhar Province, Dr Asif Qazizada, who joined the tour participants for lunch at the Spinghar Hotel in Jalalabad, confirmed what was heard from the farmers earlier that day that a significant reduction in poppy cultivation has occurred in Nangarhar in 2005. Only two Districts (Achin, Dur Baba) still have large areas under poppy cultivation. He warned, however, that the impact of this reduction in poppy cultivation is unemployment, poverty and a lot of expectations on the part of the farmers from the Afghan government, the international organizations and the NGO community. If farmers' expectations are not realized, there could be social unrest. At one of the large gatherings at the Kariz Kabir (RALF Demonstration Site on Vegetables), the representative of Kariz Kabir farmers addressed the audience after DM Sharif's presentation and pointed out that: "the sacrifices that the farmers of Nangarhar Province are making today by not planting poppies is on behalf of the whole humanity. The farmers of Nangarhar are in turn expecting that the international community does not abandon them in their struggle to combat poppies". The farmers urged DM Sharif and the NGO community to help them with the introduction of new crop technologies and provide inputs for adoption of these technologies.

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