



**United States Department of Agriculture**

**Natural Resources conservation Service**

# **International Programs Division Annual Report - FY 2005**



**“Serving Conservation Globally”**

*"We end, I think, at what might be called the standard paradox of the twentieth century: our tools are better than we are and grow better faster than we do. They suffice to crack the atom, to command the tides. But they do not suffice for the oldest task in human history: to live on a piece of land without spoiling it."*

*Aldo Leopold, Conservationist, 1887 - 1948*

## FOREWARD

Nature's fires, winds, rains and floods, cause great damage to public and private lands. Humans, however, through their activities cause more damage to our earth's environment than nature does. Aldo Leopold said it all when he said that we cannot live on a piece of land without spoiling it. Man indeed has an effect on his environment and through sound conservation the effect can be more positive than negative.

We are very fortunate in the U.S. in that we have county, state and federal experts who provide assistance and training in wise use of our soil and water resources. Many developing countries are not so fortunate. NRCS plays a very important role in assisting many countries with capacity building, knowledge transfer, and conservation policy development. Our experts have traveled to Bangladesh, Madagascar, East Timor, El Salvador, and many other countries to assist them in improving their agriculture and their agricultural technologies. NRCS has provided technical experts to war torn Afghanistan for 6 month details so that they could help farmers and others in the reconstruction of the country.

International Programs Division (IPD) is proud to assist our NRCS travelers as they prepare for their short and long-term international assignments. The needs of our travelers vary and we try to ensure that their needs are met. We also try hard to make sure that their trips are positive and productive.

Our NRCS international travelers represent our agency, USDA and the United States of America. They are our "Ambassadors for Conservation" and we are extremely grateful for some of the personal and professional sacrifices they make as they travel to assist in countries whose needs are so much greater than ours.

As the Director of NRCS' International Programs Division I take pride in the hard work that my staff did to assist our internal and external customers. I look forward to working with you in the future and I will continue to ensure that you get the best service that IPD can provide as you plan and prepare for your next international assignment.

Melvin Westbrook  
Director, International Programs Division



# Technical Assistance

NRCS employees travel throughout the world to provide short and long-term technical assistance. NRCS bases its assistance depending on the needs of the host country.

Afghanistan was a major focus for NRCS in 2005. Eight employees were selected to serve for assignments six months (long-term;) some of whom are still in Afghanistan providing assistance at various locations. Six NRCS specialists traveled to Afghanistan for 30 (short-term assignments) days or fewer. As agricultural advisors in military compounds they worked closely with national and provincial agriculture leaders.

The following employees served, or are serving, on 6 month assignments:

- **Bill O'Donnell, Assistant State Conservationist, Morgantown, West Virginia**
- **Alex Johnson, District Conservationist, Conway, South Carolina**
- **Jeffrey Sanders, RC&D Coordinator, Cookeville, Tennessee**
- **Stacy Crevello, RC&D Coordinator, Carencro, Louisiana**
- **Drew Adam, District Conservationist, Brattleboro, Vermont**
- **Alan Wood, State Project Engineer, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania**
- **Jeff Knowles, District Conservationist, Kealahou, Hawaii**
- **Manuel Ayala, Jr., International Program Specialist, International Programs Division, Beltsville, Maryland**



Afghan students learn to use hand levels to help them do field work.



Villagers learn to make gabions for conservation



NRCS Engineer Jon Fripp discusses conservation systems with an Afghan official

## Technical Assistance

NRCS has supported the Department's initiative to provide assistance in the reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan.

Specialists traveled on short-term assignments to assist Afghanistan officials and farmers. They looked at different cotton varieties, seed and fertilizer quality. They provided training in erosion control and gravity flow watering systems. Training was held in the classroom and in the field.



President Hamid Karzai speaking with Stacy Crevello. Stacy is the first NRCS woman to serve in Afghanistan.

## Flood Damage

Record snowfalls caused a lot of flooding throughout Afghanistan. NRCS staff provided technical assistance in flood mitigation, restoration of damaged lands, and in the distribution of seed and fertilizer.



This damaged canal provides water for approximately 4,600 acres



Flood waters damaged this road making it impassable to vehicles.

NRCS agricultural advisors also assisted in getting tractors and machinery to remove debris from the land and to get the fields back into production after they had been destroyed by flood waters.



NRCS staff taught East Timorese how to assess soil samples.

Training was provided to 22 East Timorese staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, and Ministry of Land and Property.



Participants in East Timor using Global Positioning Systems to locate position on map as part of a workshop that showed the East Timorese basics of orienteering, using soils maps and interpreting soil characteristics.



Craig Ditzler (left) and Micheal Golden (right) stand in an area affected by desertification in Southwest Iceland.

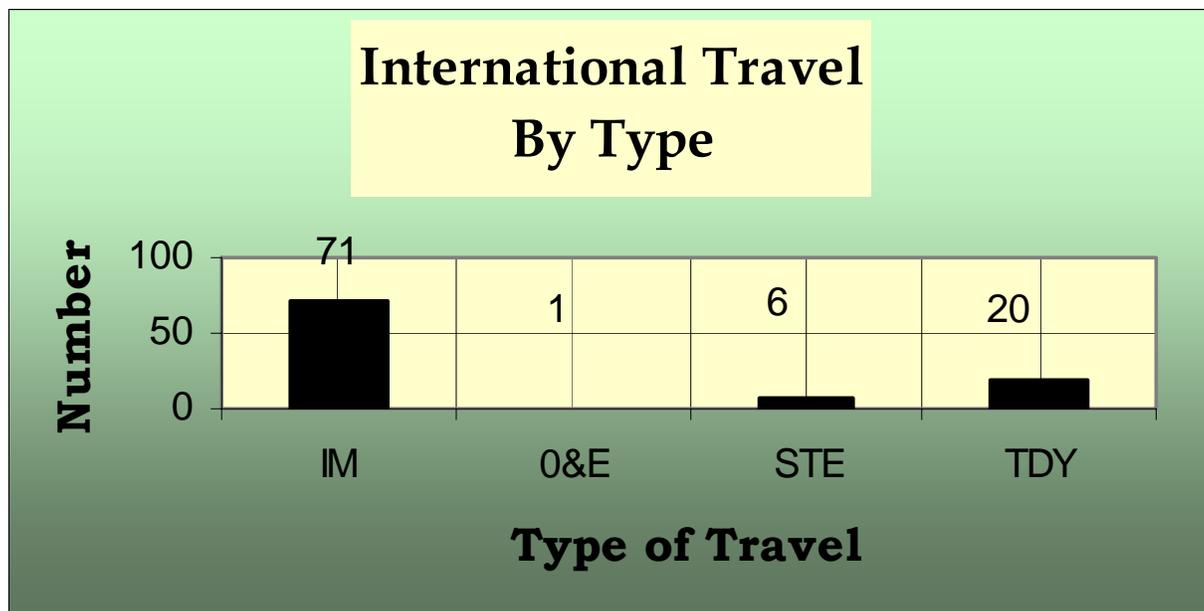
## International Meetings

Many agency employees are members of professional societies, associations and organizations. Some of their professional meetings were held in foreign countries. Seventy-one NRCS employees attended international meetings for information exchange, as members of committees, or to present papers at the meetings. Participation at international meetings plays a very important role in NRCS' mission for international conservation. These meetings allow NRCS employees to inform others of our achievements in addressing natural resource concerns and how we implement innovative technologies on America's private and public lands. Additionally, NRCS employees learn from our foreign hosts.



Soil Conservation Service of Iceland logo depicting the country behind 3 Lymegrass seed heads

Micheal Golden, Director Soil Survey Division and Craig Ditzler, National Leader for Soil Classification and Standards, participated in an international conference held in Iceland. The conference was sponsored by Soil Conservation Service of Iceland (SCS). The Icelandic SCS was established in 1907 and is the oldest soil conservation organization in the world. According to Craig Ditzler, *"the SCS has a significant land reclamation research component as well as a program to grow, harvest and distribute seeds for conservation plantings. Lymegrass, Alaskan Lupine, and birch trees are significant species used in Icelandic reclamation work."*



IM - INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

O&E - OVERSIGHT & EVALUATION

STE - SCIENTIFIC and TECHNICAL EXCHANGE

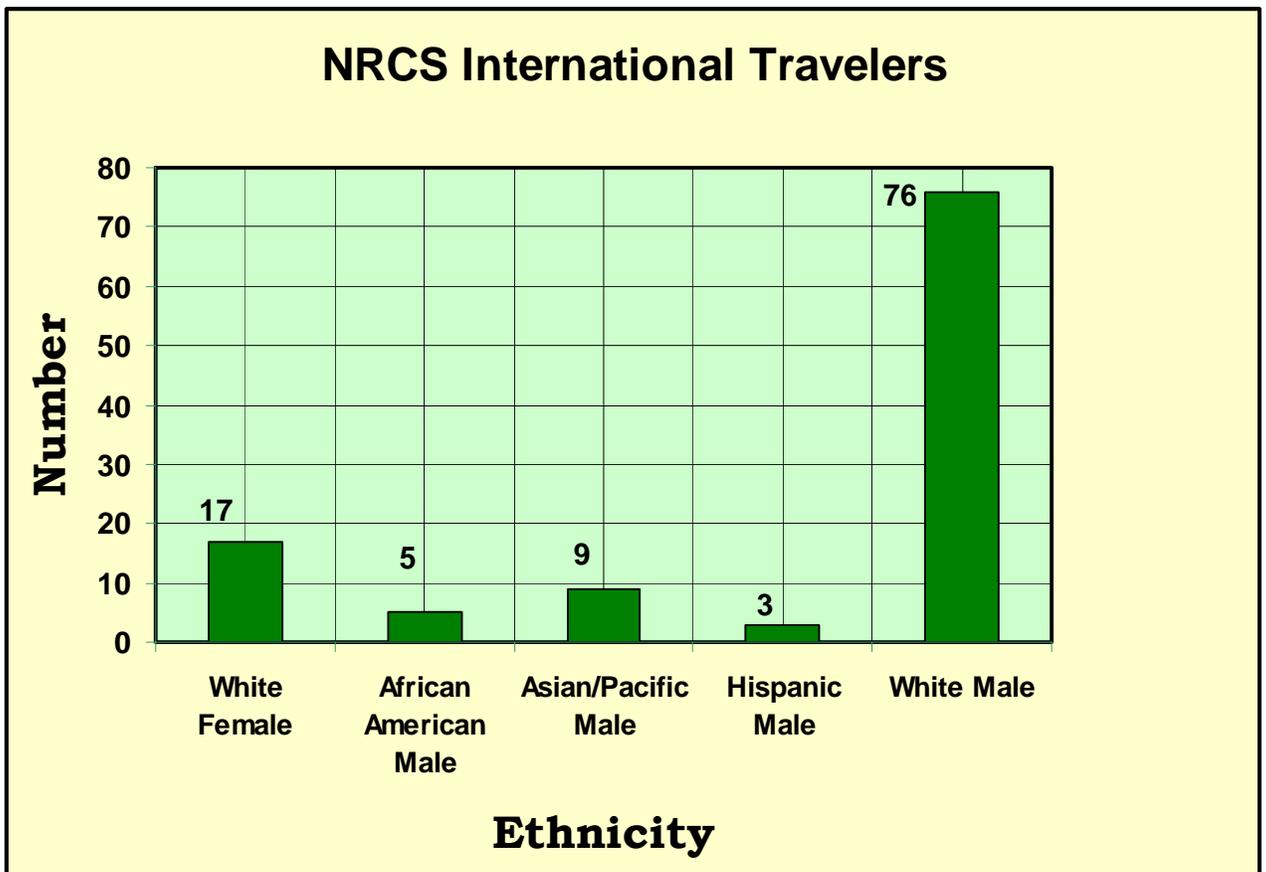
TDY - TEMPORARY DUTY

## INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS DIVISION (IPD)

IPD strives to send as many women and minorities as possible on foreign assignments. IPD staff encourage women and minorities to submit proposals for international opportunities and to let us know of their interests in international short-term and long-term assignments.

In 2005, women and minorities constituted 31percent of the travelers. Foreign assignment opportunities are limited, and unless IPD staff knows of an employee's interest in short-term or long-term details, some employees may not be considered for an assignment.

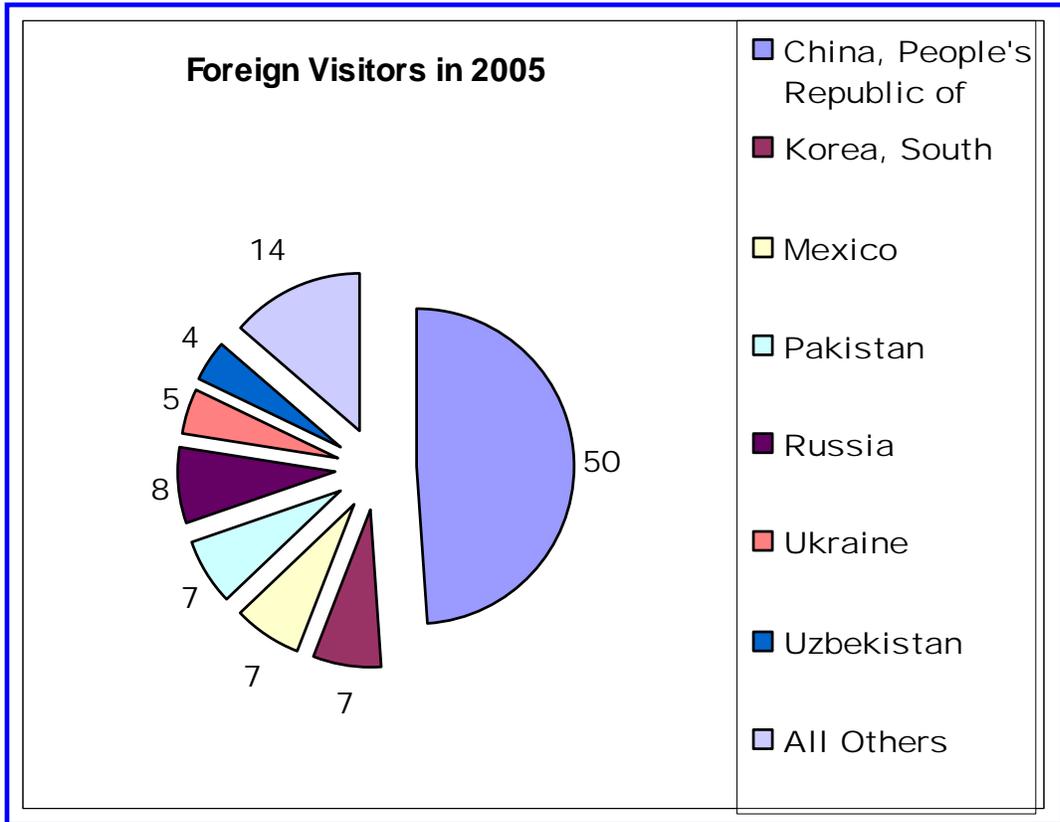
IPD developed a database of employees interested in international assignments to streamline requests from host countries. For more information about the database please contact us at: (301) 504-2271 or e-mail [ipd@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:ipd@wdc.usda.gov).



## Foreign Visitors

In FY '05 IPD coordinated more than 100 foreign visitors from different countries. They visited with NRCS staff to learn about our national conservation programs, share information and tour states to see our crops, forages and technologies.

State Conservationists, Center Directors, Division Directors and Deputy Chiefs all played important roles as itineraries and training were developed for our foreign guests.



Many of the foreign visitors are students, administrators, farmers and volunteers who come to the U.S. to observe and discuss conservation programs. Most of the programs developed for visitors are hands-on and field oriented. They are individually tailored to the needs, capabilities, and desires of the visitor to provide maximum benefits. Programs are conducted by NRCS employees in the course of their normal on-the-job duties rather than in a classroom setting.

IPD anticipates a continuing need for hosting international visitors and we encourage you to recognize that this program plays an important role in international resource conservation and outreach.

## International Volunteers

Every year, NRCS offices have the opportunity to host foreign volunteers. In FY '05 NRCS offices in New York, Iowa, and Missouri had the privilege of hosting volunteers from Guinea, France and Mexico. The international visitors contributed more than 665 hours (more than 16 weeks) helping NRCS field staff in planning, survey, and design work. They worked with Toolkit, ArcGIS, edited conservation practice databases and standards, and concentrated on non-point pollution.

Thank you to all of the NRCS offices who worked with international volunteers.



Ben Hamid Bah  
Missouri Field Office  
From: Ivory Coast



Olexander G. Takira  
New York State Office  
From: Ukraine



Michael Chimaliza  
New York Field Office  
From: Malawi



Beat Frick  
Iowa Field Office  
From: Switzerland

## Embassy Science Fellows Program

The Embassy Science Fellows Program (ESFP) enables overseas posts to acquire high-level scientific advisory capacity on science and technology issues important to their missions. The ESFP provides agency staff with opportunities for valuable international experience, often involving participation in national and international standard-setting bodies, and provides access to platforms that influence foreign governments and public opinion on strategic topics.

The ESFP is a challenging and very rewarding experience. This experience helps employees grow professionally and personally while assisting foreign countries. The ESFP is usually advertised in the spring of the year and selections are then made when the advertisement closes.



David Bandrowski, NRCS Civil/Environmental Engineer participated in the ESFP in FY '05 and spent more than 4 months in Bolivia gathering and analyzing data.

David Bandrowski (second from left) takes a soil sample. He worked in Bolivia to study the effects of contamination from coca cultivation and its transformation into cocaine in the cocaine growing watersheds of Bolivia.

Soil and water are contaminated as the result of coca cultivation. David also trained Government of Bolivia officials to use new technologies for their use in interdiction and eradication of coca.



David Bandrowski (center) takes a water sample and also records his location on GPS units in Bolivia.

## International Programs Division (IPD) Staff

The IPD staff works hard and takes great pride in assisting you with your travel plans and international assignments. They are here to ensure all necessary documents have been obtained prior to your departure, to answer questions, and to assist you in case problems arise while you are on travel.



Herby Bloodworth, International Program Specialist



Manuel Ayala, Jr., International Program Specialist



Marita McCree, International Program Specialist



Jeanette "Peaches" James, Program Assistant

## Afterward

I joined the International Programs Division as the Division Director in July 2004. I have learned a lot from the staff and I have appreciated their dedication and hard work.

Much has happened in the last year since I joined IPD. The Tsunami that devastated Indonesia kept us talking about help we could provide. We continued to support the reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan by sending , we finalized IPD's international travel policy, an electronic employee database was developed plus the many visitors that have come to National Headquarters.

I met all my counterparts in the different USDA agencies and developed very good working relationships with our internal and external customers.

As I look ahead to FY '06 I know that we in IPD will continue to maintain the quality of work that we did in FY '05. If there is anything that I or my staff can do to improve our quality of service please let me or the staff know and we will make every possible effort to implement your suggestions. I and my staff also look forward to working with everyone who will be traveling abroad on official business. I hope that I will be able to maintain the working relationships I have established with NRCS supervisors and managers and with other USDA agency folks with whom I have had the pleasure to work with.

Thank you all for the support you gave us to make IPD successful in FY '05. Thank you especially to my staff; without them none of what we accomplished this last year would have been possible.

You may contact me or my staff at:  
phone: (301) 504-2271  
e-mail: [ipd@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:ipd@wdc.usda.gov)

In conservation and in service, I am

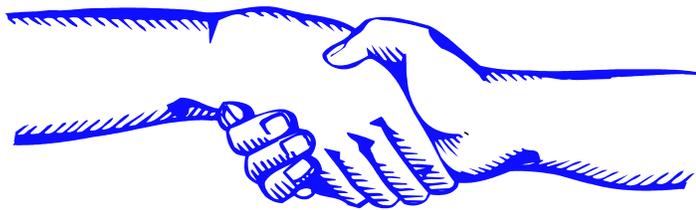
Melvin Westbrook, Director, International Programs Division

NRCS worked very closely with the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS). Otto Gonzalez, Afghanistan Team Leader, Foreign Agricultural Service, had the following comments about the cooperation and collaboration between NRCS and FAS:

The Natural Resources Conservation Service has continued to play a major part in USDA's collaboration with the Department of State, Department of Defense, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Through the dedicated and excellent collaboration of the NRCS International Programs Division with the International Cooperation and Development program area of the Foreign Agricultural Service, NRCS has fielded 11 different people in Afghanistan in FY 2005, more than any other USDA agency. Eight of those NRCS employees served as the official civilian agricultural advisors on Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), which are usually U.S. military units, as well as foreign military units, charged with fostering security and stability while implementing a variety of reconstruction projects. The USDA agricultural advisors on the PRTs worked closely with the PRT Commander, and civilian counterparts from the Department of State and USAID, as well as the Afghan Government, the United Nations, and other donor governments. While USDA advisors on PRTs, all volunteers from within the Department, came from various USDA agencies, those from NRCS distinguished themselves with their wide skill set and programmatic expertise relevant to many agricultural problems faced in Afghanistan. The USDA agricultural advisors on PRTs serve 6-month assignments, working under very challenging circumstances, and in an often unpredictable and volatile security situation.

In addition to service on PRTs, NRCS technical specialists have assisted USAID in their efforts to help the Afghan Government conserve biological diversity and improve its capacity to manage and rehabilitate watersheds. Arnold King (Texas), on short-term assignment of a few weeks worked with the Afghan Conservation Corps on the development of conservation education materials for use in schools, as well materials to use in training their laborers. The team of Jon Fripp (Texas) and Jon Chris Hoag (Idaho) in only two weeks developed and delivered a 22 module workshop, "Introduction to Watershed Management," with fully illustrated materials in both English and in Dari, including lectures and field exercises. Fripp and Hoag worked closely with the Afghan Conservation Corps, conducting a week-long program for 35 staff of Afghan Government's Department of Forest and Range.

The International Programs Division has been a strong and cherished partner of the International Cooperation and Development program area of the Foreign Agricultural Service in its coordination of USDA's technical assistance for Afghanistan. A secure and stable Afghanistan is in the interest of U.S. national security, but it can only be achieved with successful reconstruction of Afghanistan's agricultural sector. NRCS is playing a very major, well-recognized, and key role in this effort.



It has been a pleasure working with the FAS staff. Through our collaboration we were able to accomplish much.



Photo by: Manuel Ayala, Jr., April 12, 2005

**“With the morning sun comes a new day. There is continued hope that in the words of the Afghan people: “Insha'Allah ” (in the name of Allah) this new day will bring peace to war torn Afghanistan.”**

PEOPLE



PARTNERSHIPS



SUCCESS



United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service



“Serving Conservation Globally”

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