

NRCS International Development Activities

July 31, 2012

This two-page note from the International Programs Division of NRCS provides a brief overview of international development activities undertaken by NRCS staff during the first six months of 2012. Partnering institutions included the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS), USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), and the USAID-funded Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resources Management Collaborative Research Support Program (SANREM CRSP).

- **Senior Agriculture Advisor - USAID/South Sudan**
- **Support to the USAID-funded SANREM CRSP**
- **Pilot Soils Survey Capacity Building Project - USAID/Haiti**
- **Wetland Impacts and Mitigation Assessment - MCC/Ghana**
- **Technical Training for Livestock Waste Management – U.S. Embassy, FSM**
- **Grazing Lands Health and Monitoring – ARS and MCC/Mongolia**
- **Technical Review and Training: USDA-ICARDA Watershed & Irrigation Demonstration & Dissemination Project - USAID/Pakistan**
- **Agriculture Advisors in Afghanistan**

For additional information on these and other NRCS international activities, please contact IPD:

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Senior Agriculture Advisor - USAID/South Sudan

In May, Dr. Mike Gangwer, Soil Physicist (NRCS-Michigan) completed a six-month tour as the Senior Agriculture Advisor to USAID and the U.S. Embassy in South Sudan. Detailed to USDA's Civilian Response Corps, Dr. Gangwer's mandate was 1) to provide expert guidance on the agriculture sector and serve as the U.S. Government's representative in South Sudan's three southern-most states (Western Equatoria State, Central Equatoria State and Eastern Equatoria State), and 2) help coordinate U.S. Government efforts between implementing partners, the State Ministries of Agriculture and Forestry, and the farmers.

Support to the USAID - funded SANREM CRSP

Dr. Susan Andrews, the National Leader for Soil Quality and Ecosystems (NSSC, NRCS-Nebraska) and Dr. Charles Kome, Soil Scientist – World Soil Resources (ENTSC, NRCS-North Carolina) are on-going collaborators with the participating Universities under the USAID-funded SANREM CRSP (Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Collaborative Research Support Program). Drs. Andrews and Kome are research team members on "Conservation Agriculture for Food Security in Cambodia and the Philippines".

Dr. Andrews traveled to the Philippines, Vietnam and Cambodia to provide lectures and training on in-field assessment of soil quality to researchers, students and farmers. Two Soil Quality Test Kits and two Reactive Carbon kits were donated to the SANREM groups in the Philippines and Cambodia by USDA. Dr. Kome has also provided field training in North Carolina on soil quality and soil carbon assessment for doctoral candidates from Cambodia and the Philippines.

Pilot Soils Survey Capacity Building Project - USAID/Haiti

Dr. Thomas Reinsch, National Leader for World Soil Resources (SSD, NRCS-NHQ) and Dr. Charles Kome, Soil Scientist – World Soil Resources, conducted a second planning mission to Haiti in April, as part of the development of a proposed Soil Survey Pilot Demonstration and Capacity Building initiative for the Haitian Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development (MARNDR). Follow-up teleconferences were held in June and again in July with representatives of MARNDR, USAID/Haiti, FAS and NRCS, as part of the preparations for a stakeholders workshop in Port au Prince, tentatively for September 11, 2012.

Dr. Kome also collaborates with various U.S. and Haitian universities and institutions, promoting continuing collaboration and increased awareness for aligning and harmonizing agricultural and forestry research efforts, as well as promoting research and project interventions seeking to improve small-holder agriculture, soils management and research capacities in Haiti. He also has an active interest in sustainable and renewable energy in developing countries, collaborating with GEF (the Global Environmental Facility), UNIDO (The UN Industrial Development Organization), Purdue University and others in this area.

Wetlands Impacts and Mitigation - MCC/Ghana

At the request of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), in April wetland hydraulic engineer Richard Weber (CNTSC, NRCS-Texas) participated in an assessment of the possible impacts of drainage and highway works on wetlands functions and the local population in a densely populated low-income neighborhood of Accra. His findings concluded that increased peak discharges due to highway drainage improvements may contribute to small but likely unquantifiable increases in flood duration, any increased water levels would likely drop within hours of a storm event, and provided recommendations on follow-up site work (having the contractor remove fill from selected areas and grading) to restore wetland functions and decrease flood risk. Other mitigation options were identified in the event that additional action was determined to be necessary in the future.

Technical Training for Livestock Waste Management – U.S. Embassy, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)

Civil engineer Jonathan Bingham (NRCS-Utah) began a three-month Embassy Science Fellowship in May. He provided training to local partners and technical staff on the Pacific island of Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia. Among the topics covered were: engineering surveying, AutoCAD drafting, and basic pipeline hydraulics. The goal of the data collection is to provide off-site NRCS engineering staff in Guam with adequate surveying and site information that would enable them to develop engineering designs for improved piggery construction. Current piggery designs and management pose significant health risks to the local population and are major sources of environmental pollution. In addition to technical training, there were public outreach presentations to students at the College of Micronesia, and consultations with private land owners and local groups.

Grazing Lands Health and Monitoring - MCC/Mongolia

In early May, at the request of USDA's Agricultural Research Service, Rangeland Management Specialist Dr. Pat Shaver (WNTSC, NRCS-Oregon) participated in field work for developing an ecological site-based rangeland health and monitoring protocol for a national soil and vegetation monitoring system for Mongolia. This activity is being done to support MCC's efforts to provide for sustainable management and utilization of rangelands in selected peri-urban areas in Mongolia. This is similar to an assignment that Dr. Shaver did in collaboration with ARS for USAID/Kenya in 2011.

Technical Review and Training: USDA-ICARDA Watershed & Irrigation Demonstration & Dissemination Project - USAID/Pakistan

Dr. Thomas Reinsch, National Leader for World Soil Resources and Jon Fripp, Civil Engineer – Stream Mechanics (CNTSC, NRCS-Texas), participated in an evaluation of the implementation of the USDA-ICARDA Watershed and Irrigation Demonstration and Dissemination Project. They reviewed practices and technologies being or planned to be demonstrated at field locations. They identified and discussed with ICARDA options for additional activities related to the current program and the possible future incorporation of fertilizer applications. Planning is underway for follow-up visits.

Agriculture Advisors in Afghanistan

As of June 30th, there are currently eight NRCS employees on long-term detail (one year or longer) in Afghanistan. Detailed to the USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, they are serving either as agriculture advisors with the Provincial Reconstruction Teams, or as advisors with the Afghan Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock at the provincial and national levels.