Water and Livelihoods Initiative (WLI)
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)
Improving Rural Livelihoods through Sustainable Water and Land-use Management in the MENA Region: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen

Newsletter

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The goal of WLI is to improve the livelihoods of rural households and communities in areas where water scarcity, land degradation, water quality deterioration, food security and health problems are prevalent in eight participating countries including Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen. The main objective is to develop and pilot test integrated water and land management strategies.

Strategic advances

A number of strategies were pursued during the quarter including widened geographical scope to address livelihood improvements for rural households in Tunisia, up-scaling strategies for all participating countries, and activation of regional thematic groups on modeling and socio-economics. The WLI Monitoring and Evaluation plan and system was also operationalized, and connection of WLI work in the field to national policy framework strengthened during the reporting period. Moreover, research teams in all eight countries worked to flesh out their draft workplans to the level of comprehensive research plans, as recommended in the 2012 External Review of WLI. Teams also referred more to national agricultural and water management strategies, and began describing how their workplans relate to them.

Strategies, tools and mechanism for integrating water and land use

The teams got off to a great start this year with pilot testing activities at the field level on over 40 technologies and strategies. Some teams adopted technologies that were in use by other WLI teams in other parts of the region including water harvesting that began in Lebanon. Teams have also begun downloading data on climate predications to address challenges resulting from climate change.

The WLI Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan and system, including indicators and targets for results to be achieved through pilot testing of technologies and strategies over the period 2013-15 was launched through circulation of a Simplified M&E Plan for Operational Use at Country Level, 2013.

In Lebanon, WLI team members from Lebanon's Agricultural Research Institute (LARI) and the American University of Beirut (AUB), worked together towards the formulation of a strategy for upscaling. The WLI Palestine and Yemen teams prepared datasets and maps including land suitability and similarity analyses to justify upscaling of pilot-tested interventions.

A range of crop water requirement and productivity models other than SWAT were identified by the WLI Tunisia team for use in quantification of reduced irrigation water requirements and increased water productivity through the improvement of irrigation management strategies. These included deficit irrigation strategies for the flood-irrigated and drip-irrigated systems, and also introduction of supplemental irrigation in the rainfed systems. Water quality management also received growing attention during this quarter, as research teams explored options for the use of poor and marginal quality water, as well agricultural practices to conserve water quality through reduced and more efficient use of agrochemicals.

Work with heavy machinery to create ponds, Completed in Atfu this quarter.

Enhancing Knowledge, skills and qualifications

Knowledge enhancement in the quarter was dominated by various efforts from WLI partnering universities, both regional and international. The American University in Cairo (AUC) made use of funds allocated to WLI Egypt to organize a knowledge Exchange event focusing on agribusinesses for smallholder producers in El Bustan (New Lands). Requests for a no-cost extension by Texas A&M (TAMU) and University of Florida (UF) were approved allowing a graduate student from TAMU to complete his work through the WLI Student Exchange Program.

Preparation for two regional knowledge enhancing activities on modeling and socio-economics are also underway. Theoretical contributions to WLI research concerning water user associations were provided by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI).

Improving livelihoods of rural households

During this quarter, the Sustainable Water and Livelihoods Framework (SWLF), including core indicators required by USAID through the WLI logframe and FtF indicator reporting, was elaborated through discussion with WLI Tunisia and WLI Iraq teams. Ten indicators reflecting the five capitals have been identified, five of which are already being reported through the FtF indicator system since 2012. Methodological groundwork to enable reporting of the remaining five is expected to begin in 2014. ICARDA's Social, Economic, and Policy Research Program (SEPRP) plans to work with WLI teams to implement and illustrate the success of WLI through the SWLF, and to produce technical notes on key topics. WLI Jordan made an outstanding contribution to this work during the first quarter by identifying simple calculations needed to translate kg of dry matter produced from restored vegetation in rangeland areas into kg of increased meat production, enabling assessment of contributions from water harvesting to on-farm income.

Preparations for the development of a more cross-scale approach to understanding and achieving livelihood improvements, connecting to national statistics were considered in the WLI Tunisia and Iraq research activities. The teams continue to explore the relations between the farm, household, and internal units of the household.

Resource Mobilization

Efforts to reach other donors were accelerated by the WLI team. In Egypt, the team submitted a short report on their achievements to the USAID mission and prepared a draft internal discussion document on opportunities for upscaling to be discussed amongst the team members. In Yemen, a brainstorming meeting, involving ICARDA, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), members of the donor community and national partners, was held. The WLI regional team also developed a proposal for a prize nomination by USAID, worked with International Center for Biosaline Agriculture's (ICBA) Modeling and Monitoring Agriculture and Water Resources (MAWRED) program to develop scientific collaboration at the regional level, and continued to support regional networking for proposals to the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) grant scheme.

Discussion was initiated with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD, approaches made to Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and other institutions including United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) who were approached with two funding proposals to be submitted in the second quarter. WLI teams also built on achievements made previously through WLI to continue their work directly with other donors, including the Australian Center for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). Further coordination is anticipated through three CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs) of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) system including CRP 1.1., CRP 5 and CRP 7.

For more information please visit the WLI website at http://temp.icarda.org/WLI/ or contact the Project Manager, Dr. Caroline King at c.king@cgiar.org