

## Data Sheet

<b>USAID Mission:</b>	Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade
<b>Program Title:</b>	Israeli/Middle East Programs
<b>Pillar:</b>	Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade
<b>Strategic Objective:</b>	905-112
<b>Status:</b>	Continuing
<b>Planned FY 2006 Obligation:</b>	\$0
<b>Prior Year Unobligated:</b>	\$154,000 DA; \$4,960,000 ESF
<b>Proposed FY 2007 Obligation:</b>	0
<b>Year of Initial Obligation:</b>	2004
<b>Estimated Year of Final Obligation:</b>	2009

**Summary:** This strategic objective supports the peace process in the Middle East while contributing to worldwide development in a variety of sectors. Its activities support U.S. foreign policy goals of regional stability and long-term development through international cooperation on investigator-initiated research grant programs relevant to development. There are two component programs. The U.S.-Israel Cooperative Development Research (CDR) Program is an open-topic, worldwide, peer-reviewed competitive grants program. CDR funds collaborative research involving scientists from Israel and the U.S. working with counterparts in developing countries. Grants are selected based upon technical merit and relevance to the needs of the developing countries. About 50 CDR projects are presently active, but no new funds will be provided for the CDR Program. The Middle East Regional Cooperation (MERC) Program is a USAID-managed, peer-reviewed competitive research grants program specifically focused on promoting technical cooperation between Arab and Israeli scientists, students, and communities on topics relevant to development in the Middle East. There are about 35 active MERC projects involving scientists and institutions in Jordan, Egypt, West Bank/Gaza, Morocco, Tunisia, and Lebanon. U.S. scientists may also participate in MERC grants, but all MERC projects must demonstrate significant levels of direct Arab-Israeli cooperation. The open-topic nature of both programs results in research sector changes from year to year. The grant competitions also provide a vehicle for identifying and funding developmentally relevant ideas that originate from outside USAID, and projects often involve non-traditional partners. These grants strengthen the long-term research capacity of developing countries by providing training and equipment as well as connections to the global research community.

### **Inputs, Outputs, Activities:**

**FY 2006 Program:** Increase Agricultural Sector Productivity (\$100,000 DA; \$1,780,000 ESF to be notified separately). Active grants in this sector include innovative research in saline/arid lands-adapted crops, plant breeding and biotechnology, development of crop lines resistant to viral and fungal diseases, integrated pest management including biological pest control, dual cropping and soil productivity, horticulture and new or non-traditional high-value crops, post-harvest crop-preservation practices, improved beekeeping/pollination, aquaculture, poultry and livestock diseases, breeding, alternative feed, and range management. Projects often include specific links to extension services, the private sector, and other implementers of research results.

Improve Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and Biodiversity (\$54,000 DA; \$1,300,000 ESF to be notified separately). Active grants in this sector include innovative research in wastewater treatment and re-use, biodiversity and habitat management, coral reef monitoring and restoration, alternative forestry and desertification, watershed studies, water resources management, satellite imagery and forecasting methodology, and geophysical studies for hazard assessment and mineral resources. Projects often include specific links to education and outreach programs, governmental regulatory bodies, and other implementers of research results.

Address Other Health Vulnerabilities (\$880,000 ESF to be notified separately). Active grants include innovative research on zoonotic (animal to human) diseases, heart disease, treatable genetic disease, air pollution hazards, and substance abuse and adolescent risk behavior in conflict communities. Projects often include specific links to hospitals and other implementers of research results.

Principal contractors and grantees for all components: Universities and other research institutions in Israel and some universities and research institutions in Jordan and the United States. Developing countries receive the majority of grant funds via subgrants.

**FY 2007 Program:** Increase Agricultural Sector Productivity (\$2,000,000 ESF notified separately). Grantees, specific topics, and accurate sector budgets will depend upon the competitive grant review process. Agricultural topic diversity similar to 2006 is expected.

Improve Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and Biodiversity (\$2,000,000 ESF notified separately). Grantees, specific topics, and accurate sector budgets will depend upon the grant review process. Topic diversity is expected to be similar to 2006. Water-related projects are likely to remain an important part of MERC's Middle East portfolio, given the importance of water to that region.

Address Other Health Vulnerabilities (\$1,000,000 ESF notified separately). Grantees, specific topics, and accurate sector budgets will depend upon the competitive grant review process. Health sector topic diversity similar to 2006 is expected.

USAID plans to continue MERC as an open, competitive grants program utilizing external peer review advice while emphasizing developmental relevance and capacity strengthening of scientists and institutions in developing countries. Consistent with U.S. policy in the Middle East, maximizing direct Arab-Israeli cooperation will remain a major criterion in selecting MERC projects. As resources permit, USAID plans to engage organizations that sponsor research utilization and commercialization partnerships to maximize the development impact of the technical results from this portfolio. This would supplement the sustainability requirements already built into USAID's pre-award review process.

**Performance and Results:** The activities under this objective are achieving the goal of catalyzing significant Arab-Israeli technical cooperation, even in the face of continued unrest and transitions in the Middle East. The number of Arab-Israeli MERC projects and new applications are both increasing, as is the degree of direct cooperation within projects. None of the 13 MERC awards under negotiation in 2006 are U.S.-led. Several Jordanian and Palestinian students began graduate research in Israel. MERC projects attracted the cooperation of other Arab countries, leading to increased interaction and data sharing among researchers in the Middle East. Through CDR, students from Africa, Asia, and Latin America conducted part of their graduate research in Israel, where, at less cost than studying in a U.S. lab, they acquired technical expertise, as well as needed lab equipment for their home countries.

The programs also achieved numerous development successes in 2005. A CDR project in Guatemala developed and commercialized tomato lines resistant to tomato yellow leaf curl virus. This virus was recently cited as the most damaging horticultural disease in West Africa, prompting CDR scientists to provide seeds to scientists in West Africa to test in field trials. A Palestinian-Israeli MERC project studying epidermolysis bullosa (EB), a debilitating inherited skin disease, discovered that EB is genetically different in Mideast populations than in Western ones where all prior research was conducted. This should allow better detection and interventions that can increase life expectancy and quality for EB patients. Another MERC project identified a primary route through which mango malformation disease, which can devastate fruit yields, is spread to new seedlings and developed cost-effective methods to reduce disease transmission. As a result, the scientists produced and distributed 3,000 pamphlets to Egyptian farmers with simple guidelines to significantly reduce the spread of infection. Recommendations from a MERC project on the potential environmental impacts of the proposed Red Sea-Dead Sea Conduit were incorporated by the World Bank into their Terms-of-Reference, which will guide future decisions on the Conduit. Through two CDR projects on honeybees, the number of hives used to produce honey as an added source of income increased from 120 to 700 in smallholder farms in a region of northern Jordan. A CDR project improved understanding of tomato plant adaptation to heat and drought conditions, resulting in the introduction of heat-resistant cultivars of tomatoes in Kazakhstan as a means of increasing yields. These tomatoes are now used by the local tomato paste canning industry.

## US Financing in Thousands of Dollars

### Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade

905-112 Israeli/Middle East Programs	DA	ESF
<b>Through September 30, 2004</b>		
Obligations	1,523	4,900
Expenditures	197	242
Unliquidated	1,326	4,658
<b>Fiscal Year 2005</b>		
Obligations	1,346	5,468
Expenditures	295	2,101
<b>Through September 30, 2005</b>		
Obligations	2,869	10,368
Expenditures	492	2,343
Unliquidated	2,377	8,025
<b>Prior Year Unobligated Funds</b>		
Obligations	154	4,960
<b>Planned Fiscal Year 2006 NOA</b>		
Obligations	0	0
<b>Total Planned Fiscal Year 2006</b>		
Obligations	154	4,960
<b>Proposed Fiscal Year 2007 NOA</b>		
Obligations	0	5,000*
Future Obligations	0	15,000
Est. Total Cost	3,023	30,328

Notified elsewhere, not included in USAID's 2007 request.