Success stories of the 14 Food Technology and Agribusiness graduate students in India

Implemented by Purdue University under the USAID funded USWDP program
One of the best days in my life was the day I received the USAID-USWDP scholarship to pursue an MS degree. It was an amazing opportunity that changed my life for the better. I started my career as a lecturer at Herat University back when BS degree holders could teach at universities. The Ministry of Higher Education later toughened the criteria, however, and now required lecturers and professors should have at least an MS degree. With only a BS degree, I was essentially stuck, not knowing if I could continue in my dream of being an educator.

I was unable to finance my MS degree on my own due to my modest income and that of my family. With this new law requiring university educators to have an MS degree, my family was even more financially stressed as mine was our only income.

Hopeless and disappointed, I looked everywhere to change this situation, but with little luck. I was close to resigning from my job at the university when I was offered this marvelous opportunity by USWDP-Purdue. The scholarship would not only save my job, but allow me to build on my education and become a better professor.

I started my studies at University of Horticulture Sciences in Bangalore, India in 2016. Since then, I have tried to take every advantage I can become a better teacher to be able to provide better higher education to students in Afghanistan. I have also worked with directly with professors from Purdue University on developing the Food Technology undergraduate curriculum, new ways to teach more effectively, and how to conduct and publish research. Upon completion of my degree, I will return to Afghanistan and I know I will make a significant contribution towards the development of my country.

Abdullah Masoumi
MSc. Student
Postharvest Technology Department, University of Horticulture sciences
Have you ever had the feeling of being backed into a corner? I have. The story begins when I was a junior lecturer at Herat University and an announcement from the Ministry of Higher Education disallowed bachelor degree holders from teaching at universities. This news was very disconcerting, because I was a bachelor degree holder teaching at a public university.

Puzzled and worried about the situation I looked for solutions. It was impossible for me to support my family, retain my job, and pursue an MS degree – especially in the field food technology as there was not such program in Afghanistan. But then came along USWDP with a life-saving scholarship opportunity.

The USAID-USWDP scholarship is a thrilling opportunity for me to pursue a Master in Food Technology abroad and qualify to teach in the newly-established Food Technology Department in Agriculture at Herat University. The program provides Afghan students with a market-oriented degree using a curriculum focused on food processing, safety and hygiene among other topics. There is rapid growth trend in the Afghan food industry, which requires locally available graduates to take food processing to the next level. I had the opportunity to work directly with professors from Purdue University on developing the Food Technology undergraduate curriculum, new ways to teach more effectively, and how to conduct research.

I cannot wait to complete my studies and return to my country to start my job as a teaching faculty in the Herat University Food Technology Department to share the knowledge with students, and contribute to the Afghanistan food industry in a significant way.

Ahmad Shafiq Foshanji
MSc student
University of Horticultural Sciences Bangalore
My journey starts from having no opportunity to pursue graduate education to getting an outstanding opportunity to do so. As a bachelor degree holder university lecturer, I faced unemployment with the new higher education law requiring MS degrees of all lecturers if it were not for the generous USAID-USWDP scholarship.

As a public university lecturer, I could not support my family and pursue an MS degree at the same time. So, I looked for alternatives and scholarship opportunities to build my capacity and continue teaching, which is my passion. Luckily, I received the prestigious USAID-USWDP scholarship.

In 2016, I started my studies at the University of Horticultural Science Bangalore, India. I am using this opportunity to the best of my ability, so that after I complete my studies and return to Afghanistan, I will be an effective educator and member of the university faculty. I hope to transfer all of my knowledge and experiences from my studies at the University of Agricultural Sciences Bangalore to students in the new Department of Food Technology at Herat University.

I am grateful to be a recipient of the USWDP scholarship and would like to present my sincere gratitude to USAID-USWDP and Purdue University for such amazing opportunity. I also promise to advance the higher education system in my country as the providers of this excellent scholarship (USAID and USWDP) did for me.

Basir Ahmad Rahimi
MSc student
University of Horticultural Sciences Bangalore
Since I have started my studies at University of Horticulture Sciences Bangalore in 2016 I have tried my best to be involved in all academic events to gain valuable knowledge, skills and enhance my knowledge. I attended all the lectures and seminars regarding my field of study. If it had not been for the USAID-USWDP scholarships, I would have not been able to pursue my master or even continue my job as a lecturer. I am very honored to be a recipient of the USAID–USWDP scholarship.

Upon completion of my degree, I will return to my country and contribute in developing of my country by applying all the knowledge, experiences and skills which I have gained here. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to USAID, USWDP and Purdue University for giving me this opportunity to pursue my master degree in food technology. I am so glad that I got the scholarship because it is a unique opportunity for me to pursue my master degree and I will use this opportunity to the best of my ability.

Nasir Ahmad Sahel

MSc student

at University of Horticulture Sciences Bangalore
One of my best decisions in life was to teach at the Agriculture faculty at Shaikh Zayed University in Khost. Agriculture is vital to the future development of Afghanistan and at the same time there are no graduate studies opportunities for this field in Afghanistan. In 2013, I decided to teach agri-business management and be a pioneer in helping change the economy of Afghanistan to focus on agri-business rather than totally relying on foreign aid.

One day I was busy teaching at the University when my colleague told me that the Ministry of Higher Education announced that bachelor degree holders can no longer teach at universities. I was shocked to hear this as I loved my job, I loved teaching.

I had no option, but to get a Master in Agri-business Management, but that was not available in Afghanistan. After extensive search, I was lucky enough to find the USAID-funded USWDP scholarship. And after rigorous processes I was finally selected for this wonderful scholarship opportunity. That was a proud day for me and my family.

In 2016, I started my studies at the University of Agricultural Sciences in Bangalore, India. I did my best to learn not only from the lectures but also study and research on my own. Because I know after a few months I will be teaching the future agri-business entrepreneurs of Afghanistan.

I have no words to appreciate the generous support of USAID-USWDP, and Purdue University, for providing such scholarship opportunities.

Rafiq Atif

MBA (Agri-business Management) Student

University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, India
Most of us know the feeling of getting something we wanted so desperately for so long. For me this feeling was on the day which I was contacted by the USAID implementing partner USWDP for winning a prestigious graduate studies scholarship. I was thrilled to know of my selection for this astounding opportunity as it was my only chance to get a Master in Agri-business Management and hold my teaching job at the Faculty of Agriculture at Nangarhar University.

I say hold my job because the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education released a statement banning bachelor degree holders for being recruited as lecturers and the current bachelor degree holders would have to find a way to get a Master degree. The news was frustrating for me as with it came questions and worries of how to finance my studies, where to study, and many more in the face of economic problems in the family.

This is where USWDP came along with a wonderful scholarship opportunity and brought a dream come true moment. My academic journey did not stop with me getting the scholarship, rather started with this opportunity as I started availing the opportunity to best possible use by studying really hard and participating in seminars and site visits.

I will return to Afghanistan and Nangarhar University and stand in front of students. I want to be knowledgeable of my syllabi and course material and teach better. Which is why I am learning as much as I can now. I am grateful to USAID, USWDP and Purdue University for giving me this wonderful opportunity to pursue a Master degree in Agri-Business Management.

Yar Mohammad Hedayat

MBA (Agri-business Management) Student

University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, India
I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Purdue for awarding me the USAID-USWDP scholarship to pursue my MBA in India. I was thrilled to learn of my selection for this wonderful opportunity and I am deeply appreciative of the Purdue-USWDP support.

I am an MBA (Agri-business Management) student with the aspiration of becoming a professor of agribusiness at Kunduz University. I want to transfer my acquired skills and knowledge to the Agribusiness management students at Kunduz University. The financial assistance I received, immensely helped me in covering my educational expenses, other than that, a Master degree would have remained as a wish only. As per the recent MoHE announcement, I wouldn’t have continued as a university lecturer with a bachelor degree. Then the USAID’s USWDP program provided me the opportunity to further polish my skills and enhance my understanding of the Agribusiness operations. Not only we have met the requisite Master’s degree, we have gained an insight of curriculum development, teaching methodology, research publication, and ways to establish industry-university linkages.

I would like to thank Purdue again for taking the lead in initiating this degree program at Kunduz university. I have personally benefited a lot from Purdue’s overwhelming technical support. I promise that I will tirelessly work to return the favors I have bestowed to Agribusiness management students at Kunduz University. I would also like to thank USAID and the American people for funding efforts to develop higher education in Afghanistan.

Sincerely

Abdul Kafil Bidar

Student of MBA, University of Agricultural Sciences /India.
I am mighty pleased that I was awarded the prestigious USAID-USWDP scholarship in times when I needed it the most. My MBA studies at the University of Agricultural Sciences commenced in 2016. I promptly got acquainted to the academic environment of the University. I actively participated in all the academic lectures, seminars, guest lectures and industrial visits. All this vastly improved my knowledge of my selected field of MBA – Agri-business Management.

As I am from a middle-class family from the South of Afghanistan, I was happily performing my duties as a lecturer the faculty of Agriculture at Kandahar University. But my happiness was short-lived when I heard about the new Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) policy of that bachelor degree holders could no longer teach at universities. This was a big blow for an aspiring individual like me. I was like in a state of shock, I didn’t know what should I do? I didn’t have the resources to pursue higher studies at my own expenses. I was hoping to get a scholarship that would fund my educational expenses. I was lucky enough by meeting USWDP-Purdue competitive scholarship requirements for a Masters degree in Agribusiness Management. I am so happy, and feel privileged that I was one of the recipient of the scholarship. Having earned it by efforts, I wasn’t going to let myself and my institution down. I therefore, worked tirelessly and used this opportunity to the best possible way. I have learnt new skills and my horizon of understanding and analysis has significantly broadened.

When I go back to my home land (Afghanistan), I would contribute to the sustainability of the program by providing leadership to the program. I will apply my learnt knowledge, experiences, and skills in my work which I gained at UAS. I would like to express my honest appreciation to USWDP and Purdue University for giving me this opportunity to pursue a master’s degree in this field. I am thankful to USAID for all its programs in Afghanistan.

Azizul Rahman Babai
MBA Student
University of Agricultural Sciences, India
I am glad that I am one of the junior Afghan faculties who have received USAID-USWDP scholarship to pursue my MBA in Agri-business Management at the University of Agricultural Sciences in Bengaluru. My goal in life is to be useful to others and studying Agri-business Management is one of the ways to be a useful member of the Afghan society. I am keenly pursuing my MBA in Agribusiness Management at one of the high-ranking universities in India.

I was born in a remote region of South-eastern Afghanistan. I grew to fewer higher education opportunities in the area. But somehow, managed to obtain a bachelor degree in Agriculture. I was lucky enough to get a lecturer position at Shaikh Zayed Khost University. Yet I was upset to know of the ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) policy that bachelor degree holders could no longer teach at universities. That meant like my teaching career was likely to end soon as I could not afford to pursue a Master degree by self-finance. I was eagerly looking for a scholarship opportunity that could finance my master degree expenses. Fortunately, at the very time, USWDP-Purdue came with such an opportunity. I was one of those extremely lucky junior faculty that could meet the required criteria. I was selected after a rigorous selection process. I am now pursuing the second year of my studies in Bangalore. Being a part of the Purdue initiated agribusiness program, I will definitely use this opportunity to the best of my abilities.

Upon completion of my MBA degree in agribusiness Management, I will go back to my home country and resume teaching at Shaikh Zayed University in Khost. I will share all my knowledge, experiences and skills that I have gained in the span of these two years with the students of Shaikh Zayed University. I highly appreciate USWDP and Purdue University’s efforts for giving me an opportunity to pursue a master degree. Thanks to USAID and USWDP for improving higher education in Afghanistan.

Sediq Omar

MBA Student

University of Agricultural Sciences, India
I am very happy to be one of the USAID-USWDP scholarship recipients. Since I started my MBA degree at the University of Agricultural Sciences in 2016, I have made great effort to be fully involve in the academic environment, gain valuable knowledge and skills and obtain the required credits. I participated in all courses and seminars to build my professional capacity for improving the capacity of my students.

I have worked as an Assistant Professor for a long time in the faculty of Agriculture at Balkh University, but due to certain constraints, I could not manage to obtain a Master degree. When I heard that the Ministry of Higher Education announced that bachelor degree lecturers could no longer teach at universities, I was shocked and worried about my job. The opportunity that USWDP created for me is great and appreciable, because chances were too less for me to get such a good scholarship.

During my studies at the University of Agricultural Sciences I got a lot of skills and updated knowledge necessary for improving my country’s Agricultural situation, by learning these skills, I will transfer this knowledge to my student once I return to my country. I would like to thank Purdue university by initiating this market oriented degree at Balkh university. I would also like to thank USAID and USWDP for making this possible.

Abdul Samie Maulavizada
MBA Student
University of Agricultural Sciences, India
I am pleased to be a recipient of the USAID-USWDP scholarship and studying at the University of Agricultural Sciences in Bangalore, India. I started my degree program in 2017 and it will be finished in 2019. I am doing my best to be involved in all academic activities and gain valuable knowledge and skills to improve myself in the field of Agribusiness Management.

When the Ministry of Higher Education of Afghanistan issued a policy that bachelor degree is not sufficient for university lecturer, I had to decide whether I should pursue a Master degree or resign from the post of a lecturer. The later, doesn’t seemed to be an option. But the problem of financing a Master degree expenses was still there. There were no opportunities for me to pursue master degree and it seemed like I was to resign. Fortunately, USWDP came along with this excellent opportunity and I did my best to register in this program, as this was the last opportunity for me to remain a fulltime lecturer at Kandahar university. I was selected after a transparent and rigorous process, and now I am in the second year of my studies here in Bangalore.

I would earn my MBA in September 2019, afterwards, I will return to Afghanistan and transfer all those knowledge and skills to the Afghan students enrolled in the Agribusiness Department at Kandahar University. I will try my best to train them in best manner to make able them to serve for the society effectively and efficiently. My vision is to improve the knowledge of Afghan students regarding agribusiness to increase agriculture-based Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Afghanistan.

Ahmadullah Baryalai

MBA (Agri-business Management) Student

University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, India
I joined Balkh University as an assistant professor in 2013. After successfully completing my probationary period, I was eligible for any scholarship in the university’s favor. I had incredible aspirations to pursue higher education, necessary for career and professional development. But, due to numerous unforeseen events, I couldn’t fulfill my aspirations at the beginning of my professional career.

Initially, there were lots of opportunities for young professionals to enhance their professional careers by obtaining higher degrees. But as years went by, and the aid from donor countries dwindled, it was increasingly competitive and difficult to get funding for higher educations.

MoHE, on the other hand, on the recommendations of quality enhancement committee, declared a deadline for the faculty of all public universities to obtain Master’s degree, or they might get fired if anybody fails to receive master’s degree. I was almost desperate to pursue my MS degree, but funding was still an issue.

I was extremely pleased to know that USWDP-Purdue in its partnership agreement had agreed to finance the expenses of two faculty staff of Balkh University, department of Agriculture. I thought that a brilliant opportunity has knocked at my doors, and after a thorough process, I was lucky enough to be one of the successful candidate for the award.

I am on course of completing my degree requirements by the end of July 2018. During the two plus years that I spent at University of Agricultural Sciences has significantly improved my attitude towards various situations. I would like to inject that positive changes in my students after I rejoin my institution in August this year.

I would like to thank USWDP-Purdue for supporting me, and the people of Afghanistan in difficult times.

NoorulHaq Noori

MBA (Agri-business Management) Student

University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, India
I am Fahimullah Taeb, an awardee of the privileged USWDP-Purdue scholarship of MBA Agribusiness. I am tremendously honored to be a recipient of the scholarship along with other university colleagues from across Afghanistan. The selection process was extremely competitive, and only those individuals could apply that would meet a tough previously set criteria. I was lucky enough to be one of the 10 faculty members who were selected after the rigorous selection process.

I hail from the Eastern Province of Nangarhar and wanted to pursue a career as a professor at Nangarhar University. As MoHE and Nangarhar University had risen the bars for new lecturers’ appointment, I needed to have at least a Master’s degree to be considered for one such position with the faculty of Agriculture. I was aware that a bachelor’s degree is no longer sufficient for good professional positions. Thus, pursuing a Master’s degree was always on my mind. But my economic conditions would suppress any wish of a Master’s degree in any International university. With such high opportunity cost, I wasn’t able to full my ambitions for receiving a Master’s degree, and thus an eligibility to teach at Nangarhar University.

Thankfully, USWDP-Purdue funded my higher education for Masters in Agribusiness Management in India. The one and a half year that I have been at UAS has brought about significant professional improvements in me. These include knowledge of Agribusiness Management, research, and statistics.

Upon return to my home university, I would pursue my career as a lecturer at the department of Agribusiness at Nangarhar University. I would teach with lots of passion and try to return the favor to my country and its people.

Fahimullah Taeeb

MBA (Agri-business Management) Student

University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, India
I hail from Kunduz province, where Agriculture production is in abundance, yet the living standards is well below the national average. During my bachelor level studies, I got to know that a significant portion of farm income is a result of post-harvest practices.

This and the MoHE policy that a university lecturer should be a minimum master in his relevant field, increased my curiosity to study further in the field of Agribusiness management. Like most Kunduzis, I also belonged to low income family, studying an MBA in top regional universities was still a mere wish.

Luckily, USWDP-Purdue university agreed that two junior Kunduz university Agriculture faculty would be provided a fully funded scholarship for pursuing MBA in Agribusiness management at the University of Agricultural Sciences in Bangalore. I was one lucky to having received this amazing scholarship.

My two years at UAS has significantly improved my knowledge and understanding of real world business phenomenon. The curriculum related workshops have acquainted me with the prospective curriculum that we will teach when we return home. I am well on course of fulfilling the MBA degree requirements.

Upon return to Kunduz university, I would assume leadership position in the department and try to provide high quality Agribusiness education to our students so they get absorbed in the local agribusiness industry.

I would like to re thank USWDP, Purdue university, and USAID, for providing me this opportunity, I promise their efforts wouldn’t go in vain and we would achieve the desired results.

Sebghatullah Rashid Rasooli

MBA (Agri-business Management) Student

University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, India