



SIGAR

Office of the Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

August 15, 2017

The Honorable Wade Warren
Acting Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development

Dear Administrator Warren:

I am writing to alert you to a safety matter that warrants immediate action by your agency. At one building near a school in the Khost district of Khost Province (facility SR 21),¹ a school that was rehabilitated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM)² under a cooperative agreement with USAID, we observed serious structural damage. While we do not believe the building to be part of the school that was rehabilitated by IOM, it is currently being inappropriately used as a classroom and poses a serious danger to students and teachers.³

As you know, SIGAR is engaged in efforts to determine the operational condition of schools constructed or renovated by USAID in provinces throughout Afghanistan.⁴ As part of this effort, SIGAR inspectors visited Khost facility SR21. While the site inspection focused on assessing the overall operating conditions at the facility, the inspectors also completed a basic safety review of the structural integrity of classroom buildings at facility SR 21 that included the collection of photographic documentation. Following the site visit, SIGAR engineers examined photographs of SR 21 and other buildings nearby being used as classrooms. At one such building, we found damage that is both substantial and potentially life-threatening. Specifically, we identified a building occupied by staff and students that appears unsafe, structurally unsound, and with damage that appears to be beyond repair or rehabilitation.

Structural failures observed in photos taken in the building indicate that the reinforcing structure of the building near SR 21 cannot withstand the weight of several of its own concrete sections, and we believe that complete detachment of these sections is imminent. Anyone under these concrete sections is in danger of being seriously injured or killed. Furthermore, the danger of building collapse is likely in the event of an earthquake.⁵

¹ SIGAR is using the unique USAID facility reference number, rather than specific names for schools, to protect identifying information.

² IOM served as an implementing partner under a cooperative agreement with USAID on the Schools and Clinics Construction and Refurbishments Program in 2004.

³ This site visit was conducted by SIGAR's Afghan partners. Our Afghan partners conducted initial field work, including taking GPS, time, and date stamped photographs, and administering survey instruments developed by SIGAR. SIGAR analysts and engineers then analyzed the information collected in order to develop this alert letter.

⁴ USAID data indicates that the agency has constructed or renovated 566 schools in Afghanistan since 2003. From fiscal year 2002 through fiscal year 2014, USAID had 31 ongoing or completed programs that supported primary and secondary education in Afghanistan, for which it spent approximately \$614 million to implement. In addition to the construction and rehabilitation of educational facilities, USAID has implemented programs to fund various other activities including ministerial capacity development, teacher training, child literacy, community-based education, and textbook printing and distribution (see SIGAR, Primary and Secondary Education in Afghanistan: Comprehensive Assessments Needed to Determine the Progress and Effectiveness of Over \$759 Million in DOD, State, and USAID Programs, SIGAR 16-32-AR, April 26, 2016).

⁵ Due to the proximity of the Chaman, Gardez, and Sanobi fault lines as well as smaller faults within the province, Khost is prone to low and medium intensity seismic activity.

Photo 1: Building near SR 21 Being Used as a Classroom



Source: SIGAR April 20, 2017.

Photo 2: Unrepairable Damage to Building near SR 21 Being Used as a Classroom



Source: SIGAR April 20, 2017.

Photo 3: Unrepairable Damage to Building near SR 21 Being Used as a Classroom



Source: SIGAR April 20, 2017.

These large sections of concrete are loosely connected by strands of exposed reinforcing bars.

Photo 4: Unrepairable Damage to Building near SR 21 Being Used as a Classroom



Source: SIGAR April 20, 2017.

Of particular concern at the building being used as a classroom near facility SR 21 is the number of staff and students in the damaged building at any given time. Specifically, while conducting our site inspection, we observed several teachers and dozens of children in the building and found that it was being used as a classroom.

SIGAR strongly urges USAID to immediately contact its partners in the Ministry of Education and alert them to the unsafe conditions at the building which was apparently serving as an auxiliary facility to SR 21. We are concerned that continued use of this building puts the lives of staff and students at risk, and that the building is not safe and should not be used as a classroom or for any other purpose.

We provided a draft of this alert letter to USAID on August 2, 2017. In its response, dated August 9, 2017, USAID thanked SIGAR for alerting it of the structural damage of educational facility SR21, and stated that it had “informed key personnel within the Ministry of Education of the situation and of the hazards of continued use of the facility.”

We conducted our work in Kabul, Afghanistan; Khost, Afghanistan; and Washington, D.C. from April 2017 through July 2017, in accordance with SIGAR’s quality control standards. These standards require that we carry out work with integrity, objectivity, and independence, and provide information that is factually accurate and reliable. For more information on the policies and procedures and quality control standards for conducting special project work, please see SIGAR’s website (www.SIGAR.mil) SIGAR performed this special project under the authority of Public Law No. 110-181 and the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended. Should you or your staff have any questions about this project, please contact Mr. Matthew Dove, Director of Special Projects, at (703) 545-6051 or matthew.d.dove.civ@mail.mil.

Sincerely,



John F. Sopko
Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

CC:

William Hammink
Assistant Administrator for Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs
U.S. Agency for International Development

Mr. Herbert B. Smith
USAID Mission Director for Afghanistan



USAID | AFGHANISTAN
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

MEMORANDUM

August 9, 2017

TO: John F. Sopko
Special Inspector General for
Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR)

FROM: Herbert Smith, Mission Director

SUBJECT: Mission Response to Draft SIGAR Alert Letter titled:
“Structural Damage at Educational Facility SR 21” (SP-
152/SIGAR-17-XX-SP)

REF: SIGAR Transmittal email dated August 02, 2017

USAID thanks SIGAR for alerting us to the structural damage at educational facility SR 21. USAID has informed key personnel within the Ministry of Education of the situation and of the hazards of continued use of the facility.

cc: Ravindral Suaris, Controller, USAID/Afghanistan
Joan Simon Bartholomaus, U.S. Embassy/Kabul
OAPA Audit
Robert Davidson, Education Office Director, USAID/Afghanistan

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