



SIGAR

Office of the Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

March 30, 2018

The Honorable Mark Green
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development

Mr. Gregory Huger
Assistant to the Administrator for Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs
U.S. Agency for International Development

Mr. Herbert B. Smith
USAID Mission Director for Afghanistan

Dear Administrator Green, Mr. Huger, and Mr. Smith:

I am writing to alert you to a safety matter that warrants action by your agency. At one school building in the Puli Khumri district of Baghlan province (referred to herein as SR-09),¹ a school that was rehabilitated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM)² under a cooperative agreement with USAID is currently in use³ and poses a serious danger to students, teachers, and anyone else in or near the school due to severe structural deterioration. In short, the building is in danger of collapsing.⁴

As you know, SIGAR is engaged in efforts to determine the operational condition of schools constructed or renovated by USAID in provinces throughout Afghanistan.⁵ As part of this effort, we visited Baghlan facility SR-09 in December 2017.⁶ While our site inspection focused on assessing the overall operating conditions at the facility, we also completed a basic safety review of the structural integrity of classroom buildings at SR-09 that included the collection of photographic documentation.

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 School administrators stated that the school has an expected enrollment of 700 students. During our site visit, we observed only a small fraction of the expected enrollment. Given the time of year, and because exams were reportedly being conducted during our visit, we will be visiting the school in early 2018 to observe operations on a more normal school day.

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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).

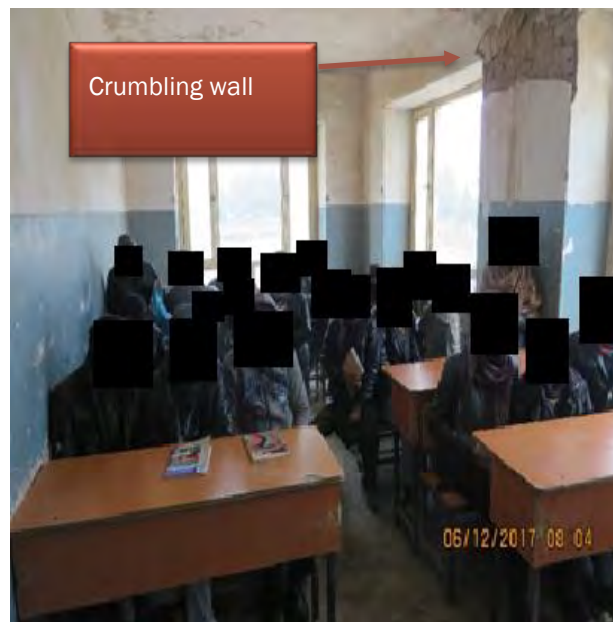
⁶ We also issued an alert letter to USAID on February 27, 2018, due to similarly unsafe conditions at SR 06, another school in Baghlan province, Afghanistan (see, SIGAR, *Alert Letter: Structural Damage at Educational Facility SR 06*, SIGAR 18-32-SP, February 27, 2018).

Following the site visit, SIGAR analysts and engineers examined photographs of SR-09 and found damage that is both substantial and potentially life-threatening. Specifically, we identified a classroom building that appears unsafe, structurally unsound, and with damage that may be beyond repair or rehabilitation. Much of the structural damage observed at the school appears to have resulted from significant blast damage, which according to interviews was caused by local criminal elements. This damage, likely caused by explosives, has already compromised load bearing walls, and the surrounding walls and ceiling appear to be on the verge of collapse. Adjacent walls also show signs of stress as well as moderate to severe soil settlement, resulting in further danger to occupants. Adding to the danger posed by the degraded structural integrity of the building, the school is located in a highly seismic area and we believe it is likely to collapse in the event of an earthquake.⁷ Photos 1-4 show the damage at SR-09.

Photo 1: Outside of SR-09 Showing Significant Blast Damage



Photo 2: SR-09 Classroom Showing Visible Cracks and Crumbling Wall



Source: SIGAR December 6, 2017.

⁷ Baghlan is prone to high to very high seismic activity due to the proximity of the Chaman fault line as well as smaller faults within the province.

Photo 3: Destroyed Wall and Roof at SR-09



Source: SIGAR December 6, 2017.

Photo 4: Areas Adjacent to Destroyed Wall and Roof Show Additional Structural Damage



Source: SIGAR December 6, 2017.

SIGAR has notified the Afghan government of this issue. To help ensure appropriate action, we also strongly urge USAID to contact its partners in the Ministry of Education and alert them to the unsafe conditions at SR-09. The SR-09 school building should not be used as a classroom or for any other purpose, and its continued use puts the lives of staff and students at risk.

We provided a draft of this alert letter to USAID on March 15, 2018. In its response, dated March, 28, 2018, USAID thanked SIGAR for alerting it of the structural damage at educational facility SR-09 and stated that it “will inform key personnel within the Ministry of Education and the Baghlan Provincial Education Directorate of the situation and of the hazards of continued use of the facility.”

We conducted our work in Kabul, Afghanistan; Baghlan, Afghanistan; and Washington, D.C. from December 2017 through March 2018, 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. 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John F. Sopko', written in a cursive style.

John F. Sopko
Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction



USAID | AFGHANISTAN

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

MEMORANDUM

March 28, 2018

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

FROM: Herbert Smith, Mission Director *W*

SUBJECT: Mission Response to Draft SIGAR Alert Letter on the
Structural Damage at Educational Facility SR-09.

REF: SIGAR Transmittal email dated March 15, 2018

USAID thanks SIGAR for alerting us to the structural damage at educational facility SR-09. USAID will inform key personnel within the Ministry of Education and the Baghlan Provincial Education Directorate of the situation and of the hazards of continued use of the facility.

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