

SIGAR

**Special Inspector General for
Afghanistan Reconstruction**

OFFICE OF SPECIAL PROJECTS

SCHOOLS IN FARYAB PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN: OBSERVATIONS FROM SITE VISITS AT 17 SCHOOLS



DECEMBER 2017

SIGAR-18-17-SP



December 12, 2017

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

Mr. Joakim Parker
Acting Assistant to the Administrator, Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs, USAID

Mr. Herbert Smith
USAID Mission Director for Afghanistan

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

This report is the fourth in a series that discusses our findings from site visits at schools across Afghanistan that were either built or rehabilitated by USAID.¹ The 17 schools discussed in this report are in Faryab province, Afghanistan. The purpose of this Special Project review was to determine the extent to which those schools were open and operational, and to assess their current condition.

We found that all 17 schools were open and in generally usable condition. However, we found that there may be problems with student and teacher absenteeism at one school in Maymana district (CHEP-016), and that several schools have structural deficiencies (e.g. roofs that were not structurally sound) that could affect the delivery of education.

We provided a draft of this report to USAID for comment on November 21, 2017. USAID provided comments on December 02, 2017. In its comments, USAID stated that it “has informed the appropriate authorities within the [Ministry of Education] MoE of the schools that SIGAR identified as lacking clean water, having poor sanitation conditions, or showing signs of structural damage and safety hazards.” Additionally USAID stated that it had alerted the Faryab Provincial Education Director of the observed low attendance rates in one school. USAID’s comments are reproduced in appendix I.

We conducted our work in Kabul and Faryab provinces, Afghanistan, and in Washington, D.C. from May through September 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. 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

¹ On November 4, 2016, we issued a review detailing our observations from site visits at 25 schools in Herat province (see, SIGAR, *Schools in Herat Province: Observations from Site Visits at 25 Schools*, SIGAR 17-12-SP November 4, 2016).

The United States has made significant investments in Afghanistan's education sector since the fall of the Taliban. Specifically, as of June 30, 2017, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) reported that it has disbursed approximately \$920 million for education programs in Afghanistan.² USAID's programs have concentrated on teacher training, child literacy, community-based education, textbook printing and distribution, and school construction or rehabilitation. The schools that have been constructed or rehabilitated by USAID include primary, lower secondary, and higher secondary schools; teacher training colleges; universities; kindergartens; and trade schools.³

USAID has claimed that the Afghan education sector is an area in which USAID programs "have contributed to measurable positive impacts on Afghanistan's development and stability."⁴ For example, in USAID's 2014 fact sheet on education in Afghanistan and in response to a 2013 SIGAR request for a list of its most successful programs in Afghanistan, USAID cited an increased student enrollment from 900,000 students in 2002 to 8 million in 2013 as evidence of overall progress in the sector.

Nevertheless, concerns with the Afghan education system have received attention at the highest levels of the Afghan government. The Afghan Minister of Education, Dr. Asadullah Hanif Balkhi, told parliament in May 2015, that nonexistent schools received funding and noted that the ministry's management system, the Education Management Information System, used for tracking the number of functioning schools, is imprecise.⁵ Similarly, in June 2015, the Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC) reported that "ghost"⁶ teachers have been a long-standing problem, and in most provinces, including Kabul, teacher attendance sheets are not filled out or are frequently forged.⁷

Concerned by these and similar allegations, SIGAR issued an inquiry letter to USAID on June 11,

The letter requested information regarding the reliability of data used by USAID to fund, oversee, and measure the effectiveness of its education programs in Afghanistan. In response, USAID stated that it "has been working with the Ministry of Education [MoE] for over a decade, has a good understanding of the challenges of working in Afghanistan, and has developed monitoring procedures, in compliance with standard practices, for USAID projects that do not rely solely on data from MoE."⁹

² USAID's active education programs have a total estimated cost of \$442 million (see, SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*, July 30, 2017, p. 184).

³ For the purposes of this report, we will collectively refer to these facilities as "schools," and individually, unless otherwise noted, as a "school."

⁴ USAID, Response to SIGAR Letter to the Department of State, USAID, and Department of Defense Requesting Top Most Successful and Least Successful Projects, May 9, 2013.

⁵ UNAMA, "WJ Proceedings Summary," May 27, 2015.

⁶ The word "ghost" has been used to refer to teachers, students, and schools that are registered with the Afghan Ministry of Education, but that do not actually exist.

⁷ Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, "Vulnerability to Corruption Assessment of Teacher Recruitment in the Ministry of Education," June 2015, p. 6.

⁸ SIGAR, *Afghanistan Education Data Inquiry Letter*, SIGAR 15-62-SP, June 11, 2015.

⁹ USAID, "Response to the Inquiry Letter on Afghanistan Education Data Reliability, (SIGAR Inquiry Letter-15-62-SP)," June 30, 2015.

THE AFGHAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Afghan Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for administering general education, Islamic education, technical and vocational education, and teacher and literacy training in Afghanistan. The MOE-administered education system consists of three levels:¹⁰

1. Primary Education: Grades 1 through 6, where students age 7 to 12 learn reading, writing, arithmetic, and national culture.
2. Lower Secondary Education: Grades 7 through 9, for students age 13 to 15.
3. Higher/Upper Secondary Education: Grades 10 through 12, where students age 16 to 18 choose between continuing an academic path that could lead to university or studying subjects such as applied agriculture, aeronautics, arts, commerce, and teacher training.

According to the MOE's Education Management Information System (EMIS) for Afghan fiscal year 1395 (December 22, 2015 – December 21, 2016), Afghanistan reportedly had 15,709 general-education (government run, grades 1-12) schools, including 904 inactive/closed schools, with 8.4 million students enrolled. The number of enrolled students includes both students who regularly attend school as well as those that have been absent for up to three years. The MOE counts students who have been absent for up to three years as enrolled because, it says, they might return to school. In December 2016, Minister of Education Assadullah Hanif Balkhi said that after adjusting school records to remove registered but permanently absent students, six million students were actually attending classes in Afghanistan.

To help the MOE gather school data to guide its decision making – and help understand how donor funding is benefitting Afghanistan's education system – donors funded EMIS, which tracks educational statistics such as the number of teachers working and students enrolled in schools. However, the Afghan government, as well as USAID, have stated that the EMIS data is imprecise and inaccurate, and USAID funded two assessments of EMIS data quality to identify and address gaps in the system.

USAID's first assessment identified key weaknesses within EMIS, including a lack of oversight, inconsistent monitoring at schools, insufficient capacity and training on EMIS forms and procedures, inadequate financing and overreliance on donor-funded assistance, and lack of coordination resulting in duplicative data collection and inefficiencies. USAID's second assessment focused on verifying EMIS data to assess its reliability and identifying inconsistencies at the national, provincial, and local school levels. The assessment found that EMIS data collection varied at the school-level and there was an urgent need for training. School officials lacked a clear understanding of the EMIS form and how to fill it out – particularly student and teacher data – resulting in data discrepancies and inaccurate information. For example, the assessment documented seven percent more teachers marked present in attendance registers than actually found at schools.

As part of our ongoing examination of the Afghan education sector, and to assist USAID and the Afghan government to improve education-related data throughout Afghanistan, we initiated this special project to determine whether schools purportedly built or rehabilitated in Faryab province

¹⁰ 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, pg. 10.

using USAID funds were open and operational, and to assess their current condition.¹¹ To accomplish these objectives, we identified 36 USAID-funded projects to rehabilitate or construct schools in Faryab province. We worked jointly with an Afghan civil society organization to perform limited inspections of 17 such schools in May 2017. Our site visits lasted for approximately 1–5 hours and were conducted during normal school days and operating hours.¹² At each site visit, we observed and recorded information about school resources and structures, completed standardized survey questionnaires, and, where available, interviewed school officials and community members.¹³ We also used Global Positioning System (GPS)-enabled cameras to secure geospatial coordinate- and date/time-stamped photographs for each school. Through this process, we identified geospatial coordinates and potential problems at each facility, and assessed general operations and usability.

While a single site visit, during one of two shifts at a school, cannot substantiate claims of ghost teachers or students, it does provide valuable insight into the operations of a school on a normal school day.

CONDITIONS REPORTED AND OBSERVED AT 17 SCHOOLS IN FARYAB PROVINCE

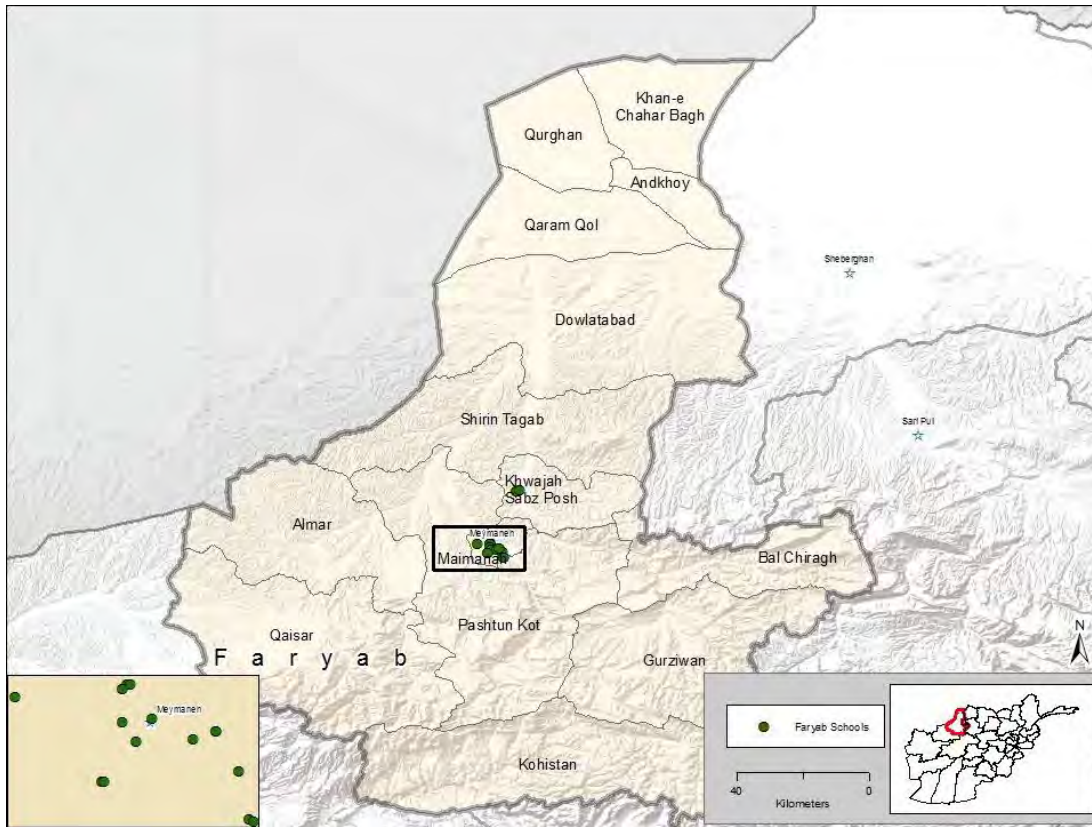
Our site inspection teams interviewed school staff and community members, inspected school grounds and buildings, and obtained photographic evidence at 17 of 36 schools constructed or rehabilitated by USAID and now operated by the Afghan MOE in Faryab province. All of the 17 schools appeared to be open and in-use. Figure 1 shows the general location of the schools we visited in Faryab.

¹¹ This report is the fourth in a series that will discuss our findings from site visits at USAID-funded schools across Afghanistan (see, SIGAR, *Schools in Herat Province: Observations from Site Visits at 25 Schools*, SIGAR 17-12-SP November 4, 2016; SIGAR, *Schools in Balkh Province: Observations From Site Visits at 26 Schools*, SIGAR, 17-32-SP; SIGAR, *Schools in Khost Province, Afghanistan: Observations from Site Visits at 23 Schools*, SIGAR 17-66-SP).

¹² We define a normal school day in Afghanistan as Saturday-Thursday between 08:00AM and 3:30PM.

¹³ The survey had eight sections: general observations, school compound observations, student and teacher observations, Building observations, staff interviews, community interviews, interview background, and inspector input. Prior to completing on-site visitation, staff were trained on how to locate and access a school, perform internal and external observations, fill questionnaires properly, and take GPS-embedded and date/time-stamped photographs. One official from each school was asked to complete the survey/questionnaire and provide responses for the school to provide insights related to personnel enrollment and attendance, school functionality, and other relevant information. An inspection supervisor attended several site inspections to ensure that staff collected survey information in a standardized manner, accurately accounted for all questions on the questionnaire, and properly photographed facilities.

Figure 1 - Location of Schools Visited in Faryab Province



Source: SIGAR analysis.

Site Visits at 17 Schools in Faryab During One Shift on a Normal School Day: Number of Students Observed

School staff reported that the 17 schools we visited typically operated one (5 schools) or two (12 schools) shifts of approximately 1-5 hours each per school day. We interviewed school staff and asked questions about total enrollment and estimated number of students present during the observed shift. Survey responses were collected and analyzed for irregularities. On average, officials reported an enrollment of 604 students with an average of roughly 450 students expected to attend a school on a typical shift, and an expected absentee rate of 25.5 percent (or about 154 students).

We observed and tallied the students present at the schools during each site visit. A median of 400 students were observed at each of the 17 schools inspected in Faryab province, which represents 80 percent of all students reportedly enrolled by school staff. At one school, we observed less than 40 percent of students reportedly enrolled. Table 1 provides a list of reported and observed numbers of students at each school.

Table 1 - Reported and Observed Student Data at 17 Schools in Faryab Province during One Shift on a Normal School Day

USAID School No.	District	School Type	School Level	Observed Operational Status	Reported Student Enrollment for this shift ¹	Approximate Number of Students Observed During Shift ²	Observed Student Percentage ³	Reported Number of Daily Shifts
S074B	Maymana	Girls only	P, L, H	Open/In-use	350	350	100.00%	2
SR 11	Maymana	Boys only	P, L	Open/In-use	610	590	96.72%	1
S072B	Maymana	Boys only	P, L, H	Open/In-use	650	600	92.31%	2
S080	Maymana	Girls only	P, L, H	Open/In-use	380	350	92.11%	2
S074A	Maymana	Girls only	P, L	Open/In-use	930	850	91.40%	1
S082	Maymana	Boys only	P, L	Open/In-use	450	400	88.89%	2
S074A	Maymana	Boys only	P, L	Open/In-use	680	600	88.24%	1
S083	Maymana	Boys only	P, L	Open/In-use	250	220	88.00%	2
S076B	Maymana	Girls only	P, L, H	Open/In-use	250	200	80.00%	2
S073A	Maymana	Boys only	P, L, H	Open/In-use	900	700	77.78%	2
S077B	Maymana	Boys only	P, L	Open/In-use	550	400	72.73%	2
SR 17	Maymana	Girls only	P, L, H	Open/In-use	350	250	71.43%	2
S079B	Khawaja Sabz Posh	Boys only	P, L, H	Open/In-use	350	250	71.43%	2
S076A	Maymana	Girls only	P, L, H	Open/In-use	650	450	69.23%	2
S079B	Khawaja Sabz Posh	Girls only	P, L, H	Open/In-use	400	250	62.50%	1
S075A	Maymana	Girls only	P, L, H	Open/In-use	1200	700	58.33%	1
CHEF-016	Maymana	Co-ed	C	Open/In-use	275	100	36.36%	2
			Median Average		450	400	80.00%	2

Key: C – college or university; H – higher secondary school; L – lower secondary school; and P – primary school
Source: SIGAR analysis

Notes:

Observed students may reflect double counting of students observed both inside and outside of schools.

¹ Reported students are adjusted to account for daily reported absent students.

² Observed students reflect the sum of students on school grounds; in cases where we were unable to conduct a precise count without interrupting school operations, we approximated the number of students observed at the facility.

³ The Observed Student Percentage column reflects the observed students as a portion of total reportedly enrolled students for the shift observed.

As shown in Table 1, the schools we visited in Faryab province appear to be well attended, with 13 schools having more than 70 percent of reportedly enrolled students present during the shift we observed, of which five schools had attendance exceeding 90 percent of reportedly enrolled students. Photo 1 shows students attending class in Maymana, and Photo 2 shows the inside of another school in Maymana during our visits.

Photo 1 - 600 out of 650 Expected Students were Observed at School S702B in Maymana



Source: SIGAR: May 20, 2017.

Photo 2 - Only 100 out of 275 Expected Students Observed at School CHEF-016 in Maymana



Source: SIGAR: May 17, 2017.

Site Visits at 17 Schools in Faryab During One Shift on a Normal School Day: Number of Teachers Observed

School staff reported a median average of 20 teachers assigned to each school with approximately 19 expected to be on-site during our visits. Our site visits found a median average of 12 teachers on school grounds, i.e., approximately 83 percent of the number of teachers reportedly assigned to the shift, and we observed one school where approximately 50 percent of assigned teachers were on-site.¹⁴ Table 2 provides a list of reported and observed numbers of teachers at each inspected school.¹⁵

Table 2 - Reported and Observed Teacher Data at 17 Schools in Faryab Province during One Shift on a Normal School Day

USAID School No	District	School Type	School Level	Observed Operational Status	Reported for current Shift ¹	Approximate Number Observed in One Shift	Observed Teacher Percentage	Reported Number of Daily Shifts
S076B	Maymana	Girls	P, L, H,	Open/In-use	10	10	100.00%	2
S082	Maymana	Boys	P, L	Open/In-use	4	4	100.00%	2
S080	Maymana	Girls	P, L, H	Open/In-use	13	12	92.31%	2
S072B	Maymana	Boys	P, L, H	Open/In-use	23	20	86.96%	2
S074A	Maymana	Boys	P, L	Open/In-use	29	25	86.21%	1
SR 11	Maymana	Boys	P, L	Open/In-use	21	18	85.71%	1
S074B	Maymana	Girls	P, L, H,	Open/In-use	12	10	83.33%	2
S083	Maymana	Boys	P, L	Open/In-use	6	5	83.33%	2
S074A	Maymana	Girls	P, L	Open/In-use	23	19	82.61%	1
SR 17	Maymana	Girls	P, L, H	Open/In-use	13	10	76.92%	2
S076A	Maymana	Girls	P, L, H	Open/In-use	20	15	75.00%	2
S075A	Maymana	Girls	P, L, H	Open/In-use	29	20	68.97%	1
S077B	Maymana	Boys	P, L	Open/In-use	12	8	66.67%	2
S079B	Khwaja Sabz Posh	Boys	P, L, H	Open/In-use	12	8	66.67%	2
S079B	Khwaja Sabz Posh	Girls	P, L, H	Open/In-use	24	16	66.67%	1
S073A	Maymana	Boys	P, L	Open/In-use	33	20	60.61%	2
CHEF-016	Maymana	Co-Ed	C	Open/In-use	19	10	52.63%	2
			Median Average		19	12	83%	2.00

Key: C – college or university; H – higher secondary school; L – lower secondary school; and P – primary school
Source: SIGAR analysis

¹⁴ Numbers in text are rounded.

¹⁵ Numbers only reflect the number of teachers observed on school grounds during site inspections. It does not provide additional context into the reasons for a teacher's absence or whether the absence was sanctioned by school officials.

Notes:

Observed teachers may reflect double counting of teachers observed both inside and outside of schools.

¹ The Observed Teacher Percentage column reflects the observed teachers as a portion of total reportedly assigned teachers for the shift observed.

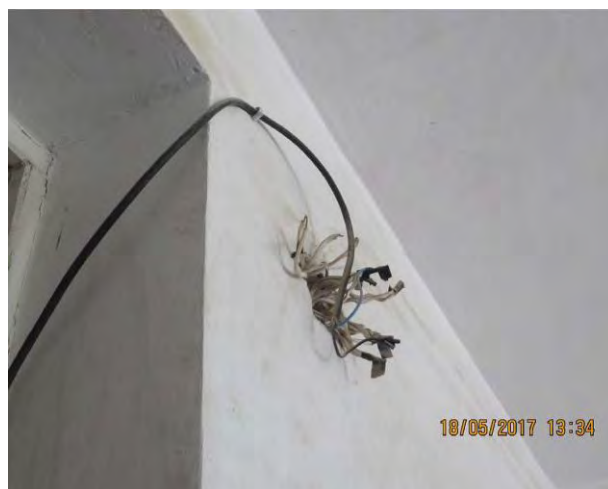
SEVERAL SCHOOLS IN FARYAB PROVINCE HAD STRUCTURAL AND OTHER DEFICIENCIES

In addition to documenting the number of teachers and students observed, we examined the basic physical condition of the 17 USAID-constructed or -rehabilitated schools in Faryab province, and identified several schools lacking basic needs. Additionally, we found schools that had structural deficiencies, faulty wiring and broken light bulbs, and poor sanitary conditions that could potentially endanger students, teachers, and other occupants.

All of the Visited Schools Had Electricity

During our site visits, we observed and documented whether the schools had electricity and interviewed school staff to inquire about school operations. We found that all 17 schools had access to electricity, however 15 of 17 schools lacked some functioning lights due to faulty wiring or broken bulbs. Photo 3 shows one of the common issues, exposed and nonfunctional wiring, at one of the schools.

Photo 3 - Exposed Wires at School S076A in Maymana



Source: SIGAR May 18, 2017.

Observations on Access to Water and Overall Sanitary Conditions

16 of the 17 schools we visited had access to clean water. School S082 in Maymana district was the only school without access to clean water; the school had an empty well. Photo 4 shows an empty water well at School S082 in Maymana, and Photo 5 shows an example of a functioning well at School S074A in Maymana.

Photo 4 - Empty Well at School S082 in Maymana



Source: SIGAR May 21, 2017.

Photo 5 - Functioning Well at School S074A in Maymana



Source: SIGAR May 20, 2017.

Our site inspections found that several schools face sanitary issues relating to toilets. Of the schools inspected, all of the 17 schools had functioning toilets, but only two of those schools had toilets that appeared to be cleaned or maintained.

Potential Structural Deficiencies

During our site visits, we observed schools with structural deficiencies, including some deficiencies that potentially put the safety of students and teachers at risk. Specifically, we found 11 schools with roofs that appeared to be structurally deficient and leaking, including three that had roofs that were either cracked or had large holes. We also found that two schools had damaged walls, three schools had broken windows, and two schools that had damaged doors. Photo 6 shows ceiling and structural damage in one of the schools.

Photo 6 - Ceiling and Structural Damage at School S073A



Source: SIGAR May 17, 2017.

We also observed missing or broken doors and windows at three of the 17 schools we visited, Photo 7 shows an example of broken windows and broken doors at School S080 and School S082.

Photo 7 - Broken Windows at School S080 and Doors at School S082 in Maymana



Source: SIGAR May 21 and 22, 2017.

SIGAR observed classes at all 17 schools and found that classrooms at 12 of the 17 schools had enough tables and chairs for the students who were present: in classrooms at five schools we observed that students were sitting on the floor. Additionally, we observed classes conducted outdoors at 14 of the 17 schools. Photos 8 and 9 show examples of classrooms SIGAR observed, where students were sitting on the floor or where class was conducted outside. In addition, several of the facilities had stockpiles of broken furniture or unused equipment on school grounds. Photos 10 and 11 shows broken tables and chairs at school S076A and at School S076B.

Photo 8: - Sitting on Floor at School S079B

Photo 9 - Class Outdoors at School SR 11



Source: SIGAR May 23, 2017.

Source: SIGAR May 20, 2017.

Photo 10 - Broken Furniture Pile at School S076A



Source: SIGAR May 18, 2017.

Photo 11 – Broken Furniture Pile at School S076B



Source: SIGAR May 21, 2017.

CONCLUSION

We visited 17 schools built or rehabilitated by USAID in Faryab province, and found that all 17 schools were open and in generally usable condition. We observed that roughly 80 percent of students were in attendance across all 17 schools, and that roughly 80 percent of teachers were present at the time of our inspections.

In addition, we observed that some schools in Faryab province lacked clean water, had poor sanitation conditions, or showed signs of structural damage and safety hazards. We encourage USAID to share the results of this review with the Afghan government and advise the MOE: (1) to investigate the one school (CHEF-016) where we observed low attendance; and (2) that fixing the structural and other deficiencies highlighted in this report could reduce the safety risks to students and school staff, and improve the delivery of education.

AGENCY COMMENTS

We provided a draft of this report to USAID for comment on November 21, 2017. USAID provided comments on December 02, 2017. In its comments, USAID stated that it “has informed the appropriate authorities within the [Ministry of Education] MoE of the schools that SIGAR identified as lacking clean water, having poor sanitation conditions, or showing signs of structural damage and safety hazards.” Additionally USAID stated that it had alerted the Faryab Provincial Education Director of the observed low attendance rates in one school. USAID’s comments are reproduced in appendix I.



USAID | AFGHANISTAN

MEMORANDUM

December 2, 2017

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

FROM: Herbert Smith, Mission Director 

SUBJECT: Mission Response to Draft SIGAR Review Letter titled:
"Schools in Faryab Province, Afghanistan: Observations
from Site Visits at 17 Schools" (SP-153/SIGAR-18-XX-
SP)

REF: SIGAR Transmittal email dated November 21, 2017

USAID thanks SIGAR for the opportunity to comment on this Draft Review.

USAID is pleased to learn that all 17 schools visited were "open and in generally useable condition," per your report. We are also pleased that SIGAR found that roughly 80% of students and approximately 80% of teachers were in attendance across all 17 schools during the time of inspections.

We note, as the report indicated on page 5, that these schools are "now operated by the Afghan Ministry of Education (MOE) in Faryab province" and are no longer USAID's responsibility.

USAID has informed the appropriate authorities within the MoE of the schools that SIGAR identified as lacking clean water, having poor sanitation conditions, or showing signs of structural damage and safety hazards. Additionally, based on SIGAR's findings, USAID has alerted the Faryab Provincial Education Director of the observed low attendance rates in one school.

USAID continues to work closely with the Afghan government to increase access to quality education by training teachers, expanding community-based education, developing transparent and accountable systems, supporting higher

U.S. Agency for International Development
Great Massoud Road
Kabul, Afghanistan

Tel. 202-216-6288 / 0700-108-001
Email: kabulusaidinformation@usaid.gov
<http://afghanistan.usaid.gov>

education institutions, and strengthening the ability of the MoE to administer a nationwide education system.

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

SIGAR's Mission

The mission of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) is to enhance oversight of programs for the reconstruction of Afghanistan by conducting independent and objective audits, inspections, and investigations on the use of taxpayer dollars and related funds. SIGAR works to provide accurate and balanced information, evaluations, analysis, and recommendations to help the U.S. Congress, U.S. agencies, and other decision-makers to make informed oversight, policy, and funding decisions to:

- improve effectiveness of the overall reconstruction strategy and its component programs;
- improve management and accountability over funds administered by U.S. and Afghan agencies and their contractors;
- improve contracting and contract management processes;
- prevent fraud, waste, and abuse; and
- advance U.S. interests in reconstructing Afghanistan.

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- Phone International: +1-866-329-8893
- Phone DSN International: 312-664-0378
- U.S. fax: +1-703-601-4065

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Public Affairs Officer

- Phone: 703-545-5974
- Email: sigar.pentagon.ccr.mbx.public-affairs@mail.mil
- Mail: SIGAR Public Affairs
2530 Crystal Drive
Arlington, VA 22202