

SIGAR

**Special Inspector General for
Afghanistan Reconstruction**

OFFICE OF SPECIAL PROJECTS

SCHOOLS IN KUNDUZ PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN: OBSERVATIONS FROM SITE VISITS AT 6 SCHOOLS



APRIL 2018

SIGAR-18-40-SP



April 4, 2018

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

Mr. Gregory Huger
Assistant to the Administrator, Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs, USAID

Mr. Herbert Smith
USAID Mission Director for Afghanistan

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

This report is the sixth in a series that discusses our findings from site visits at schools across Afghanistan that were either built or rehabilitated by USAID.¹ The six schools discussed in this report are in Kunduz 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 six schools were open and in generally usable condition. However, we also found that the data USAID provided regarding the location of three schools, and the communities served by those schools, was inaccurate. As a result, our site inspection teams had difficulty finding those schools and relied on their knowledge of the area, and assistance from community members and provincial MOE representatives, to locate them. Lastly, we found that there may be problems with student and teacher absenteeism at all six schools, and that several schools appeared to have structural deficiencies (e.g. roofs that were not structurally sound) that could affect student safety.

We provided a draft of this review to USAID for comment on March 20, 2018. USAID provided comments on March 31, 2018. In its comments, USAID stated that it “was pleased to learn that all six schools were ‘open and in generally usable condition.’” Additionally, USAID stated that it will “inform the appropriate authorities within the Ministry of Education of the schools that SIGAR identified as having low attendance rates for students and teachers as well as the facilities with poor sanitation conditions, or showing signs of structural damage and safety hazards.” USAID’s comments are reproduced in appendix I.

We conducted our work in Kabul and Kunduz provinces, Afghanistan, and in Washington, D.C. from September through December 2017 in accordance with SIGAR’s quality control standards. These standards require that we carry out work with integrity, objectivity, and independence, and provide

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). We subsequently reviewed schools in Balkh, Khost, and Faryab (see, SIGAR, *Schools in Balkh Province: Observations From Site Visits at 26 Schools*, SIGAR, 17-32-SP, March 28, 2017; SIGAR, *Schools in Khost Province, Afghanistan: Observations from Site Visits at 23 Schools*, SIGAR 17-66-SP, September 12, 2017; SIGAR, *Schools in Faryab Province, Afghanistan: Observations from Site Visits at 17 Schools*, SIGAR-18-17-SP, December 12, 2017; and SIGAR, *Schools in Kabul Province, Afghanistan: Observations from Site Visits at 24 Schools*, SIGAR 18-31-SP, February 6, 2018).



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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

The United States has made significant investments in Afghanistan's education sector since the fall of the Taliban. Specifically, as of December 31, 2017, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) reported that it has disbursed approximately \$959 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 Kunduz, 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, 2015.⁸ 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 \$493 million (see, SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*, January 30, 2018, p. 187).

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 1396 (December 22, 2016 – December 21, 2017), Afghanistan reportedly had 16,049 general-education (government run, grades 1-12) schools, including 959 inactive/closed schools, with 8.95 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 October 2017, a report from the Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee said that this sub-population represents about 20 percent of total enrolled students, implying only about 7.2 million students were actually attending classes in Afghanistan.¹¹

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 Kunduz 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.

¹¹ SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*, January 30, 2018, p. 186.

using USAID funds were open and operational, and to assess their current condition.¹² To accomplish these objectives, we identified 29 USAID-funded projects to rehabilitate or construct schools in Kunduz province. We worked jointly with an Afghan civil society organization to locate and perform limited inspections of seven such schools in September 2017. However, we were only able to complete site visits at six of the 29 USAID-funded schools due to security concerns throughout Kunduz province, even in the capital city.¹³ Our site visits lasted for approximately one hour and were conducted during normal school days and operating hours.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ We also used Global Positioning System (GPS)-enabled cameras to secure geospatial coordinate- and date/time-stamped photographs for each school. These photos enabled us to determine school coordinates, identify potential problems, and assess general operations and usability for each school facility.

While a single site visit, during one of three possible shifts at a school, cannot substantiate claims of absent or “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 SIX SCHOOLS IN KUNDUZ PROVINCE

Our site inspection teams interviewed school staff and community members, inspected school grounds and buildings, and obtained photographic evidence at six of 29 schools constructed or rehabilitated by USAID and now operated by the Afghan MOE in Kunduz province. All of the 6 schools appeared to be open and in-use. We also found that the data USAID provided regarding the location of three schools, and the communities served by those schools, was inaccurate. As a result, our site inspection teams had difficulty finding those schools and relied on their knowledge of the area, and assistance from community members and provincial MOE representatives, to locate them. These schools include school S231A, S229A, and S232A.

¹² This report is the sixth 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, March 28, 2017; SIGAR *Schools in Khost Province, Afghanistan: Observations from Site Visits at 23 Schools*, SIGAR-17-66-SP, September 12, 2017, and SIGAR, *Schools in Faryab Province, Afghanistan: Observations from Site Visits at 17 Schools*, SIGAR-18-17-SP SIGAR, *Schools in Kabul Province, Afghanistan: Observations from Site Visits at 24 Schools*, SIGAR 18-31-SP, February 6, 2018).

¹³ In total, we visited seven schools in Kunduz province, however, one of these schools was not included in the observations presented in this report because we were not able to complete the inspection due to the unwillingness of school staff to be interviewed.

¹⁴ We define a normal school day in Afghanistan as Saturday-Thursday between 08:00AM and 3:30PM.

¹⁵ 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 visits, 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.

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

School staff reported that the six schools we visited typically operated one (one school) or three (five schools) shifts of approximately 3-4 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. Officials reported a median average enrollment of 1360 students with a median average of roughly 1250 students expected to attend a school on a typical shift, and an expected absentee rate of eight percent (or about 110 students).

We observed and tallied the students present at the schools during each site visit. A median of 425 students were observed at each of the six schools inspected, which represents a median of 52 percent of all students reportedly enrolled and expected to be present during the observed shift. At three schools, we observed less than 50 percent of students expected to be in attendance during the observed shift. Table 1 provides a list of reported and observed numbers of students at each school.

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

USAID School No.	District	School Type	School Level	Observed Operational Status	Reported For this shift (Students) ¹	Approximate Number Observed in One Shift ² (Students)	Observed Student Percentage ³	Reported Number of Daily Shifts
S231A	Kunduz City	Girls only	P, L, H	Open	1500	900	60%	3
SR 03	Kunduz City	Boys only	P, L, H	Open	670	400	60%	3
S228A	Kunduz City	Boys only	P, L, H	Open	1740	1000	57%	3
SR 02	Kunduz City	Boys only	L, H, C	Open	810	380	47%	1
S229A	Kunduz City	Girls only	P, L, H	Open	1000	400	40%	3
S232A	Kunduz City	Boys only	P, L, H	Open	1750	450	26%	3
			Median Average		1250	425	52%	3

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 expected attendance. However, since SIGAR did not observe attendance across all shifts, we could not determine how the proportion of students observed in one shift compares to other shifts at each school. This figure represents the percentage of students observed on-site compared to the total adjusted number of students reported by school officials during the survey interview.

As shown in Table 1, the schools we visited are poorly attended, with no school surpassing more than 60 percent of the expected attendance. Photos 1 and 2 show students attending class in Kunduz City, and Photo 2 shows the inside of another school in Kunduz City during our visits.

Photo 1 - Well Attended Classrooms at School S231A in Kunduz City



Source: SIGAR, September 20, 2017.

Photo 2 – Poorly Attended Classrooms at School S232A in Kunduz City



Source: SIGAR, September 21, 2017.

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

School staff reported a median average of 44 teachers assigned to each school with approximately 40 expected to be on-site during our visits. Our site visits found a median average of 27.5 teachers on school grounds, approximately 68 percent of the number of teachers reportedly assigned to the shift, and we observed one school where approximately 40 percent of assigned teachers were on-

site. Table 2 provides a list of reported and observed numbers of teachers at each inspected school.¹⁶

Table 2 - Reported and Observed Teacher Data at Six Schools in Kunduz 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 (Teachers)	Approximate Number Observed in One Shift ² (Teachers)	Observed Teacher Percentage ³	Reported Number of Daily Shifts
S231A	Kunduz City	Girls only	P, L, H	Open	41	38	93%	3
SR 03	Kunduz City	Boys only	P, L, H	Open	18	16	89%	3
SR 02	Kunduz City	Boys only	L, H, C	Open	50	35	70%	1
S232A	Kunduz City	Boys only	P, L, H	Open	30	20	67%	3
S228A	Kunduz City	Boys only	P, L, H	Open	70	40	57%	3
S229A	Kunduz City	Girls only	P, L, H	Open	39	16	41%	3
			Median Average		40	27.5	68%	3

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

Notes:

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

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

³ The Observed Teacher Percentage column reflects the observed teachers as a portion of total attendance. However, since SIGAR did not observe attendance across all shifts, we could not determine how the proportion of teachers observed in one shift compares to other shifts at each school. This figure represents the percentage of teachers observed on-site compared to the total adjusted number of teachers reported by school officials during the survey interview.

ALL SIX SCHOOLS WE VISITED IN KUNDUZ PROVINCE HAD STRUCTURAL AND OTHER DEFICIENCIES

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

¹⁶ 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, whether the absence was sanctioned by school officials, or whether the teacher was not counted for other reasons.

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 6 schools had access to electricity, however all six of the schools lacked some functioning lights due to faulty wiring or broken bulbs. Photo 3 shows one of the common issues, exposed and nonfunctional wiring.

Photo 3 – Nonfunctional wiring to lights and sockets at School S229A in Kunduz City



Source: SIGAR, September 20, 2017.

Observations on Access to Water and Overall Sanitary Conditions

All six of the schools we visited had access to clean water. Photo 4 shows a working water well at School S228A in Kunduz City, and Photo 5 shows an example of a functioning well at School S229A in Kunduz City.

Photo 4 – Water tank at School S228A in Kunduz City



Source: SIGAR, September 19, 2017.

Photo 5 - Functioning Well at School S229A in Kunduz City



Source: SIGAR, September 20, 2017.

Our site inspections found that several schools face sanitary issues relating to toilets. Of the schools inspected, none of schools had functioning toilets and none of the restroom facilities appeared to be cleaned or maintained.

Structural Deficiencies

During our site visits, we found that four of six schools had structural deficiencies, including some that potentially put the safety of students and teachers at risk. Specifically, we found one school that had a roof that leaked, two schools had damaged walls, one school had broken windows, and two schools had damaged doors. Photo 6 shows ceiling and structural damage in one of the schools.

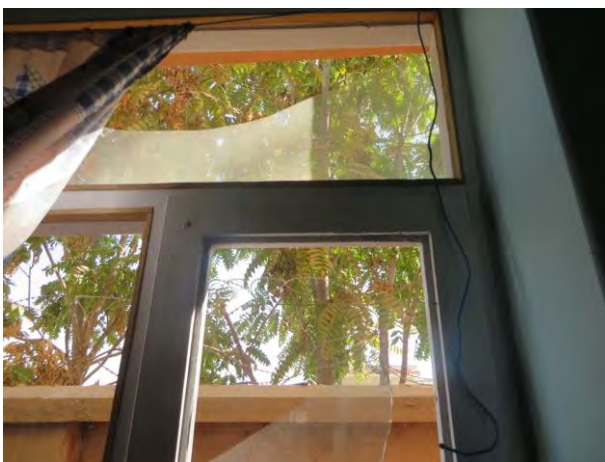
Photo 6 - Ceiling and Structural Damage at School SR02



Source: SIGAR, September 20, 2017.

We also observed missing or broken doors and windows at two of the six schools we visited. Photo 7 shows an example of broken windows and broken doors at School S228A and School SR03.

Photo 7 - Broken Windows at School S228A and a Broken Door at School SR03 in Maymana



Source: SIGAR, September 19 and 20, 2017.

Observations of Classroom Instruction

We were able to observe classes at all 6 schools and found that classrooms at two of the six schools had enough tables and chairs for the students who were present: in classrooms at four schools we observed that students were sitting on the floor. Additionally, we observed classes conducted outdoors at all six of the 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 SR03 and at School SR02.

Photo 8: - Sitting on floor at School S223A



Source: SIGAR, September 21, 2017.

Photo 9 - Class outdoors at School S231A



Source: SIGAR, September 20, 2017.

Photo 10 - Broken furniture pile at School SR03



Source: SIGAR, September 20, 2017.

Photo 11 - Broken furniture pile at School SR02



Source: SIGAR, September 20, 2017.

CONCLUSION

We visited six schools built or rehabilitated by USAID in Kunduz province, and found that all six schools were open and in generally usable condition. We observed that roughly 50 percent of students were in attendance across all six schools, and that roughly 70 percent of teachers were present at the time of our inspections.

In addition, we observed that some of these schools had poor sanitation conditions, and all six 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 (S232A) where we observed extremely low student attendance (26 percent); (2) to work on improving the toilet facilities at all six schools; and (3) address structural and other deficiencies highlighted in this report to reduce the safety risks to students and school staff, and improve the delivery of education.

AGENCY COMMENTS

We provided a draft of this review to USAID for comment on March 20, 2018. USAID provided comments on March 31, 2018. In its comments, USAID stated that it “was pleased to learn that all six schools were ‘open and in generally usable condition.’” Additionally, USAID stated that it will “inform the appropriate authorities within the Ministry of Education of the schools that SIGAR identified as having low attendance rates for students and teachers as well as the facilities with poor sanitation conditions, or showing signs of structural damage and safety hazards.” USAID’s comments are reproduced in appendix I.




USAID | AFGHANISTAN

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

MEMORANDUM

March 31, 2018

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 Kunduz Province, Afghanistan: Observations
from Site Visits at 6 Schools” (SIGAR-18-XX-SP)

REF: SIGAR Transmittal email dated March 20, 2018

USAID thanks SIGAR for the opportunity to comment on this draft review.

USAID is pleased to learn that all six schools visited were “open and in generally useable condition,” as reported by SIGAR in the review.

USAID will inform the appropriate authorities within the Ministry of Education of the schools that SIGAR identified as having low attendance rates for students and teachers as well as the facilities with poor sanitation conditions, or showing signs of structural damage and safety hazards.

USAID notes, as the report indicated on page 5, that these schools are “now operated by the Afghan Ministry of Education (MOE) in Kabul province” and are no longer USAID’s responsibility.

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

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under project code SP-159.

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