



**SIGAR**

Office of the Special Inspector General  
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

June 5, 2017

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

Dear Acting Administrator Warren,

I am writing to request information regarding USAID's Initiative to Strengthen Local Administrations (ISLA) program. The stated goal of the program is to "enable the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) to improve provincial governance in the areas of fiscal and development planning, representation of citizens, and enhanced delivery of public services."<sup>1</sup> ISLA is focused on improving subnational governance and systems in order to enable the Afghan government at the local and provincial levels to deliver "services that more closely respond to all citizens' needs in health, education, security, justice, and urban services."<sup>2</sup>

According to USAID, "ISLA aims to enhance the institutional and human capacity of provincial line directorates and provincial development committees to ensure that local priorities are integrated into the national budgets through provincial development plans."<sup>3</sup> The fiscal year 2017 ISLA work plan states that, "The project will work within the existing system to improve its functionality. This is done by fostering a combination of top-down and bottom-up consultative processes between central and provincial levels, to formulate plans and budgets that align both with local community service delivery priorities and with national developmental priorities as well as available resources."<sup>4</sup> The contract to implement this

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<sup>1</sup> USAID, *Initiative to Strengthen Local Administrations (ISLA)*, FY 2017 Annual Work Plan, January 31, 2017. P. iii.

<sup>2</sup> SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*. April 30, 2017, p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> USAID, *Initiative to Strengthen Local Administrations (ISLA)*, FY 2017 Annual Work Plan, January 31, 2017. P. iii.

five-year, \$48 million program, was awarded to Tetra Tech ARD in February 2015 and is expected to conclude in January 2020.<sup>5</sup>

SIGAR first reported on issues related to sub-national governance in an October 2010 audit of donor coordination and provincial capacity in Nangarhar province.<sup>6</sup> At that time, we raised concerns that Nangarhar's provincial development plan (PDP) may be, "outdated, unused, and not implemented" and that "the central ministries viewed PDPs as not fiscally constrained, prioritized, or reflective of the will of the populace. Moreover, the PDPs were not tied to any dedicated funding and were largely ignored by the national and provincial governments, the U.S. government, and the international community."<sup>7</sup> We also found that, nearly all of the Afghan government's core development activities are centralized in Kabul at the ministry level.<sup>8</sup>

Building the capacity of sub-national government structures in Afghanistan remains an important issue in Afghanistan and fosters closer ties between the Afghan government and the citizenry. The ISLA program appears to be a step in the right direction to remedy several of the issues related to sub-national governance that we raised in 2010. Effective planning and budget execution, delivery of basic services, and construction of needed infrastructure projects are important to the safety and stability of Afghanistan as well as to the improvement in the lives of the Afghan population.

Given the important purpose and anticipated expense of this program, SIGAR's Office of Special Projects is considering examining ISLA. In order to aid in our planning and to properly scope this potential undertaking please provide the following no later than June 20, 2017:

- 1) Copies of ISLA's three initial assessments. Specifically,
  - a. The Rapid Provincial Needs Assessment for each of the 16 participating provinces.
  - b. The baseline assessment for each of the 16 participating provinces.
  - c. The Rapid Capacity Assessment at the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) and Ministry of the Economy (MoEc).
- 2) Available provincial development plans for the 16 participating provinces during the years ISLA has been or will be active.
- 3) A list of all projects, training, or other activities facilitated by ISLA, including available meeting notes or training materials indicating the topics covered, outcomes, and/or recommendations made at those meetings?

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<sup>5</sup> The initial contract amount was \$62M.

<sup>6</sup> SIGAR, *Weaknesses in Reporting and Coordination of Development Assistance and Lack of Provincial Capacity Pose Risks to U.S. Strategy in Nangarhar Province*, SIGAR Audit 11-1, October 26, 2010

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12

I am submitting this request 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 potential project, please contact Mr. Mathew Dove, Director of Special Projects, at (703) 545-6051 or [matthew.d.dove.civ@mail.mil](mailto:matthew.d.dove.civ@mail.mil).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. F. Sopko', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.


John F. Sopko  
Special Inspector General  
for Afghan Reconstruction



**MEMORANDUM**

June 13, 2017

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

**FROM:** Walter Doetsch, Office Director  
Office of Democracy and Governance 

**SUBJECT:** Mission Response to SIGAR Inquiry Letter on USAID's  
Initiative to Strengthen Local Administrations (ISLA)  
(SIGAR SP-169/SIGAR-17-45-SP)

**REF:** SIGAR Transmittal email dated 06/05/2017

This letter refers to Special Inspector General Sopko's June 5, 2017 letter regarding USAID's Initiative to Strengthen Local Administrations (ISLA) program.

In its letter, SIGAR requested USAID to provide no later than June 20, 2017 documents pertaining to ISLA program implementation. USAID has assembled and is providing the requested documents accompanied by this letter explaining the nature and scope of the documents assembled at SIGAR's request. Please see the explanation below.

**SIGAR Request:**

*1)a. The Rapid Provincial Needs Assessment for each of the 16 participating provinces.*

**USAID's Response:**

The name of the Rapid Provincial Needs Assessment for each of the 16 participating provinces was changed to "Capacity Assessment," which is one report with 16 chapters on the 16 provinces. The report is attached.

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Kabul, Afghanistan

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

**SIGAR Request:**

*1)b. The baseline assessment for each of the 16 participating provinces.*

**USAID's Response:**

The baseline assessment was conducted in eight randomly selected provinces. The assessment is attached.

**SIGAR Request:**

*1)c. The Rapid Capacity Assessment at the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) and Ministry of the Economy (MoEc).*

**USAID's Response:**

The Rapid Capacity Assessment of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) and the Ministry of Economy (MoEc) is attached.

**SIGAR Request:**

*2) Available provincial development plans for the 16 participating provinces during the years ISLA has been or will be active.*

**USAID's Response:**

Provincial Development Plans (PDPs) are not ISLA's responsibility. These are Government of Afghanistan owned, written, and produced documents. While ISLA does provide technical assistance in how to create, compile and write the PDPs, the PDPs are not deliverables under ISLA. The PDPs have been finalized at the provincial level, and are currently being reviewed at the central GIRoA level. Nevertheless, USAID has 10 of the PDPs, in Dari, in its possession. The PDPs were shared with USAID for information purposes only. The PDPs are attached.

**SIGAR Request:**

*3) A list of all projects, training, or other activities facilitated by ISLA, including available meeting notes or training materials indicating the topics covered, outcomes, and/or recommendations made at those meetings?*

**USAID's Response:**

A schedule of activities undertaken by the ISLA program during the period 2015 – 2017 is attached.

cc: Robert Clark, Controller, USAID/Afghanistan  
Joanie Simon Bartholomaus, U.S. Embassy/Kabul  
OAPA Audit