



SIGAR

Office of the Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

September 9, 2014

Mr. William Hammink
Mission Director for Afghanistan
U.S. Agency for International Development

Dear Mr. Hammink:

I am writing to inquire about the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) response to media reports that an Afghan school that recently collapsed was funded by a program supported by USAID.

According to the Afghan media (pertinent stories attached), up to 32 students and one teacher in Sar-i-Pul Province were injured when the roof of their classroom's collapsed. According to a local Afghan official, the National Solidarity Programme (NSP)¹ constructed the school four years ago.

USAID provides on-budget assistance via a multilateral trust fund managed by the World Bank known as the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF).² These funds are donated to the Afghan government in support of community-level governance initiatives and infrastructure development and are managed through the NSP. The Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development distributes these funds through contracts with non-governmental organizations and block grants to Community Development Councils for actual implementation of NSP projects.

In order to be informed concerning USAID's response to this tragic event, please respond to the following questions:

1. Has USAID independently confirmed the recent media reports of the damaged school in the Kork area of Sar-i-Pul Province and determined whether it was constructed using NSP funds?
2. Additionally, has USAID asked the World Bank, which administers USAID's support of the NSP through the ARTF, what it has done to verify the recent media reports concerning the damaged school?

¹ The Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development created the NSP in 2003 to develop the ability of Afghan communities to identify, plan, manage, and monitor their own development projects. The U.S. government supports the NSP through the ARTF.

² The ARTF is the largest single source of on-budget financing for Afghanistan's development. It conducts work in key sectors including education, health, agriculture, rural development, infrastructure, and governance. The ARTF is supported by 33 donors and administered by the World Bank. From 2002 to March 20, 2014, the World Bank reported that the 33 donors had pledged nearly \$7.8 billion, of which nearly \$7.0 billion had been paid in the trust fund. The United States is the ARTF's largest donor. It has pledged more than \$2.3 billion and paid in nearly \$2 billion.

3. If the school was built by the NSP as reported, what have USAID and the World Bank done to determine (a) why the classroom's roof collapsed and (b) who was responsible for the construction and maintenance of the school building? What has NSP done to hold those responsible accountable?

Please provide this information no later than September 24, 2014. I am making this request pursuant to my authority under Public Law No. 110-181, as amended, and the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended. Please provide the requested information to Jack Mitchell, Director of the Office of Special Projects, at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. Please do not hesitate to contact him if you have any questions.

Thank you for your cooperation. I look forward to your response and working with you in support of our nation's critical mission in Afghanistan.

Sincerely,



John F. Sopko
Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

CC: The Honorable James B. Cunningham
U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan

Enclosure: Afghan Media Reports

ENCLOSURE: AFGHAN MEDIA REPORTS

32 Students Wounded in Roof Cave-in *Pajhwok Afghan News* **20 May 2014**

Sar-i-Pul – Thirty-two school students and a teacher were injured on Tuesday when the roof of their classroom collapsed in the Kork area on the outskirts of the capital of Sar-i-Pul province.

Sar-i-Pul Civil Hospital official Dr Niamatullah Yaldash confirmed to Pajhwok Afghan News receiving 32 wounded students, aged between 6 and 7 years. Up to 50 students were in the classroom when the roof caved in.

At least four of the students were in critical condition, Dr. Yaldash said, adding that only hard plaster of the ceiling had fallen on the children.

Education Director Abdur Rauf confirmed the incident and said 31 students and a teacher were wounded in the incident. The building was constructed four years ago under the National Solidarity Programme.

A year ago, a room of the school collapsed at night. The director accused the provincial development council of negligence in overseeing the construction of the school building.

But development council head, Saifur Rahman rejected the allegation and said it was education department engineers' responsibility to supervise the construction process.

A resident of the village, Painda Mohammad whose five children were wounded, also criticised the education department. He recalled a room had already collapsed but education officials did not take the threat seriously.

32 Students Injured After School Roof Collapse *Afghan Zariza* **By Zariza Correspondent** **20 May 2014**

At least 32 school students, including a teacher were seriously injured today after the roof of their classroom buckled in Kork region of Sar-i-Pul province.

Dr Niamatullah Yaldash, official at Sar-i-Pul Civil Hospital, said they (sic) 32 injured students, aged between 6 to 7 years have been admitted to the hospital. The incident took place when 50 students were inside the classroom. Dr Yaldash said 4 students are critical as they sustained serious injuries after hard plaster of ceiling had fallen on them.

Confirming the incident, Abdur Rauf, Education Director, said the building was constructed 4 years ago under the National Solidarity Programme.

Earlier, a year back, one of the room of school had buckled at night and Rauf accused provincial development council for their negligence in the construction of the school. However, the council head Saifur Rahman dismissed the accusations and stated that it was the responsibility of education department's engineers to ensure the safety of the school building.

Nearly 30 Students Injured
Frontier News
By Afghan Islamic Press (AIP)
21 May 2014

SHEBARGHAN (AIP): Nearly 30 students were injured as a portion of a school's roof collapsed in northern Sar-e-Pul province Tuesday, education officials said.

Abdul Ghafoor Sarpuli, provincial education director, told Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) that a portion of Korak Uzbeki school in Sar-e-Pul city collapsed as a result nearly 30 students were wounded.

The roof of class 1 collapsed due to the use of substandard material, he said, the students sustained minor injuries. An eyewitness told AIP of the 35 students studying in class 1, more than 20 students were injured and discharged from hospital after receiving first aid.

The education authorities said contractor of the school would be grilled.



MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 22, 2014

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

FROM: Sepideh Keyvanshad, Acting Mission Director 

SUBJECT: Response to the Inquiry Letter (SIGAR-14-89-SP)

REF: SIGAR-14-89-SP- Inquiry Letter- Korak Uzbeki School Collapse in Sar-i-Pul, Afghanistan dated September 9, 2014

Thank you for your inquiry regarding the media reports of a roof collapse at the Korak Uzbeki School in Sar-i-Pul that injured students. The school in question was built under the World Bank's Educational Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP) in 2011. USAID did not provide any funding for EQUIP in 2011, and, therefore, did not contribute to the Korak Uzbeki School or its construction. USAID has contacted World Bank to learn more about the circumstances surrounding this incident.

- 1. Has USAID independently confirmed the recent media reports of the damaged school in the Kork area of Sar-i-Pul Province and determined whether it was constructed using NSP funds?*

The school is not a part of the National Solidarity Programme (NSP). The World Bank has indicated that the school is located in the Kawarak village in Sar-i-Pul province. It was built in 2011 under EQUIP by the local shura (community council) via a community contract.

- 2. Additionally, has USAID asked the World Bank, which administers USAID's support of the NSP through the ARTF, what it has done to verify the recent media reports concerning the damaged school?*

The World Bank confirmed the school was not constructed under the NSP and was not funded by USAID. The World Bank also advised USAID that the

Ministry of Education (MoE) confirmed the school's roof did not collapse on Tuesday, May 20, 2014, and there was no structural failure. Rather the plaster ceiling in one of the classrooms separated from the roof structure and fell on the students, injuring a total of 27 primary grade students. The World Bank informed USAID that a MoE School Monitoring Team visited the students in the hospital and visited the school, verifying these facts.

3. *If the school was built by the NSP as reported, what have USAID and the World Bank done to determine (a) why the classroom's roof collapsed and (b) who was responsible for the construction and maintenance of the school building? What has NSP done to hold those responsible accountable?*

The World Bank confirmed the school was not constructed under the NSP, and was not funded by USAID. The World Bank team, including its engineer, is working closely with the MoE's infrastructure department (ISD) on improving quality and monitoring of school construction.

Should you require further information on this school ceiling incident please consult directly with the World Bank.