

# SIGAR

**Special Inspector General  
for Afghanistan  
Reconstruction**

**OFFICE OF SPECIAL PROJECTS**

OBSERVATIONS FROM SITE VISITS AT  
171 AFGHAN SCHOOLS FUNDED BY  
USAID



October 2019

SIGAR 20-03-SP

October 10, 2019

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

Ms. Karen Freeman  
Assistant to the Administrator, Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs, USAID

Mr. Peter Natiello  
USAID Mission Director for Afghanistan

Dear Administrator Green, Ms. Freeman, and Mr. Natiello:

As of July 2019, USAID has disbursed nearly \$1.1 billion to improve the quality of Afghanistan's education system. USAID programs have concentrated on teacher training, child literacy, community based education, textbook printing and distribution, and school construction or rehabilitation. Before the U.S. military intervention in 2001, several decades of conflict had decimated Afghanistan's education system. USAID has reported significant improvements to the education system in Afghanistan and the donor community has consistently highlighted Afghanistan's progress in the education sector. Although the number of students reported as attending school vary widely due to poor data quality, there clearly has been a significant increase in the number of children attending school, especially girls.

Between 2003 and 2013, USAID built or rehabilitated 566 schools across all 34 Afghan provinces. The lack of resources to sustain this large investment along with the harsh climate and continued insurgency, however, have resulted in significant deterioration of the U.S. investment and may hinder the achievement of our education goals. From October 2015 to October 2018, we visited 171 schools in 10 provinces throughout Afghanistan and issued 10 reports and 4 alert letters addressing the condition of those schools. We found that while 168 of the 171 schools (98.25 percent) were open and in generally usable condition, some of the schools had structural issues that could pose risks to the school's students and staff. In four instances, we wrote Alert Letters to notify USAID of unsafe conditions at specific schools that required immediate attention to ensure the safety of the teachers and children. Additionally, we found that many of the schools had structural deficiencies (e.g. showed signs of settlement or deterioration, cracks or large holes in their roofs, and damaged or removed windows and doors) that could potentially impact safety and the delivery of education. Finally, we observed that only 86 of 171 (50.29 percent) schools had enough tables and chairs for students. We also noted that 61 of the 171 schools (approximately 36 percent) did not have signage showing that the schools were built or rehabilitated by USAID as required by the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

This report summarizes our findings from site visits across ten provinces in Afghanistan. We provided a draft of this report to USAID for comment on September 24, 2019. USAID provided comments on October 8, 2019. In its comments, USAID stated that it "continues to work closely with the Afghan government to increase access to quality education by training teachers, printing and distributing textbooks, expanding community-based education, developing transparent and accountable systems, supporting higher education institutions, and strengthening the ability of the Ministry of Education (MoE) to administer a nationwide education system." USAID also noted that "management of the schools visited by SIGAR have transitioned and are now operated by the MoE," and that "USAID no longer has financial or managerial responsibility of these schools." USAID stated that it informed the MoE and Provincial Education Directors, to take appropriate action to address the issues identified by SIGAR and report back to USAID on progress.

In response to this report, USAID stated that it "will share the final report with the MoE and will request the MOE provide an update on the actions taken within 90 days of receipt of the report. USAID will also share the final report with each of the Provincial Education Directors in the ten provinces." USAID's comments are reproduced in appendix I.

We conducted our work in ten provinces throughout Afghanistan, and in Washington, D.C. under the authority of Public Law No. 110-181, as amended, and the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended; and in accordance with the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation*. Should you or your staff have any questions about this project, please contact Mr. Benjamin Piccolo, Director of Special Projects, at (703) 545-2192 or [benjamin.j.piccolo.civ@mail.mil](mailto:benjamin.j.piccolo.civ@mail.mil) or Mr. Parker Laite at (703) 545-5966 or [parker.s.laite.civ@mail.mil](mailto:parker.s.laite.civ@mail.mil).

Sincerely,



John F. Sopko  
Special Inspector General  
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

The United Nations Children's Fund characterizes education as a fundamental human right that is critical to development, can promote cohesive societies, and contributes to state building. According to the Afghan Minister of Education, “education is the fundamental cornerstone and a key pre-requisite for durable peace, stability and socio-economic development in every society – Afghanistan is not an exception.” By 2002, after decades of civil unrest, the education sector in Afghanistan was severely degraded. According to the MOE, the newly established Afghan government inherited a disabled and defunct education system with fewer than a million students; 20,000 teachers; 3,400 schools, many of which were inadequate; and no standard national curriculum or textbooks.<sup>1</sup>

To address these deficiencies, the United States has made significant investments in Afghanistan’s education sector since 2002. Specifically, as of July 9, 2019, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) reported that it has disbursed nearly \$1.1 billion to increase access to education, as well as improve the quality and relevance of, and to bolster the management capacity of Afghanistan’s education system.<sup>2</sup> USAID’s programs have concentrated on teacher training, child literacy, community based education, textbook printing and distribution, and school construction or rehabilitation. USAID-constructed or rehabilitated schools include primary, lower secondary, and higher secondary schools; teacher training colleges; universities; kindergartens; and trade schools.<sup>3</sup>

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.”<sup>4</sup> For example, in USAID’s 2019 fact sheet on education in Afghanistan, USAID cited an increased student enrollment from less than 1 million students in 2001 to over 9 million in 2019 (including over 3.5 million girls), as evidence of overall progress in the sector.

Nevertheless, numerous obstacles challenge Afghanistan’s education sector. They include insecurity, shortages of school buildings and textbooks, rural access issues, poor data reliability, and the alleged appointment of teachers on the basis of cronyism and bribery. These challenges 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 Education Management Information System, used for tracking the number of functioning schools, is imprecise.<sup>5</sup>

Concerned by these and similar allegations SIGAR issued an inquiry letter to USAID on June 11, 2015.<sup>6</sup> 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 our [USAID’s] projects that do not rely solely on data from MoE.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, MOE, *National Priority Program-Human Resources Development Cluster: Education for All, 2011*.

<sup>2</sup> SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*, July 30, 2019, pp. 158-159.

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this report, we will collectively refer to these facilities as “schools,” and individually, unless otherwise noted, as a “school.”

<sup>4</sup> USAID, *Response to SIGAR Letter to the Department of State, USAID, and Department of Defense Requesting Top Most Successful and Least Successful Projects*,” May 09, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> UNAMA, “WJ Proceedings Summary,” May 27, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> SIGAR, *Afghanistan Education Data Inquiry Letter*, SIGAR 15-62-SP, June 11, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> USAID, “*Response to the Inquiry Letter on Afghanistan Education Data Reliability, (SIGAR Inquiry Letter-15-62-SP)*,” June 30, 2015.

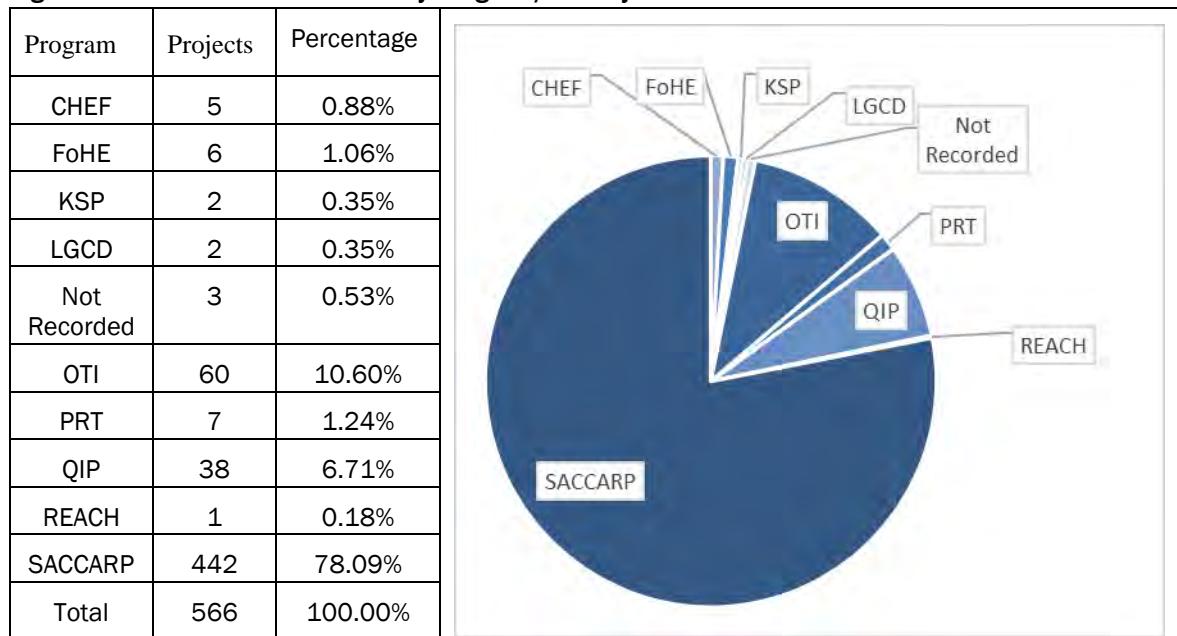
## BACKGROUND

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:<sup>8</sup>

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 USAID, between 2003 and 2013 USAID built or rehabilitated 566 schools across all 34 Afghan provinces. These schools were built or rehabilitated through the following programs and activities:<sup>9</sup> Construction of Health and Education Facilities (CHEF); Faculties of Higher Education (FoHE); Kabul Schools Program (KSP); Local Governance and Community Development (LGCD); USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI); Quick Impact Projects (QIP); Rural Expansion of Afghanistan Community-Based Healthcare (REACH); and the Schools and Clinics Construction and Refurbishment Program (SACCARP). For additional information on each, see Appendix II. Figure 1 depicts USAID-funded schools by program and activity.

**Figure 1 - USAID-Funded Schools by Program/Activity**



Source: SIGAR analysis of USAID-provided data

The majority of USAID built or rehabilitated schools were completed and handed over to MOE in 2006 (222 schools), 2005 (150 schools), and 2004 (76 schools) respectively. Although as of July 2019, USAID had no active programs to construct or rehabilitate any additional schools in Afghanistan, the World Bank has proposed economic initiatives if a peace agreement is reached. These economic initiatives, if approved and

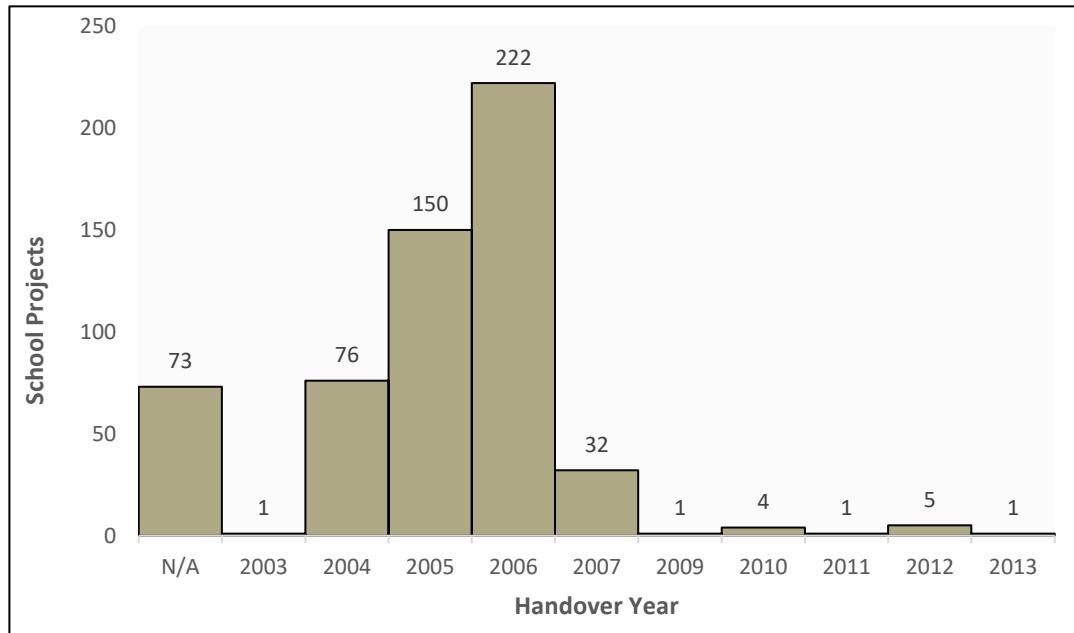
<sup>8</sup> SIGAR, *Primary and Secondary Education in Afghanistan: Comprehensive Assessments Needed to Determine the Progress and Effectiveness of Over \$759 Million in DOD, State, and USAID Programs*, SIGAR 16-32-AR, April 26, 2016, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> USAID-funded activities include the Office of Transition Initiatives and Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

funded by the donor community would include the construction and maintenance of school facilities. The World Bank proposes to use the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), of which the United States is a major contributor, to fund these economic initiatives. If a peace agreement is reached and the World Bank proposal is approved, a mechanism will be needed to ensure that MOE has the capacity to maintain the schools. Figure 2 shows a breakdown of USAID-funded schools by year they were handed over to the Afghans.

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**Figure 2 - USAID-Funded Schools by Year of Handover**



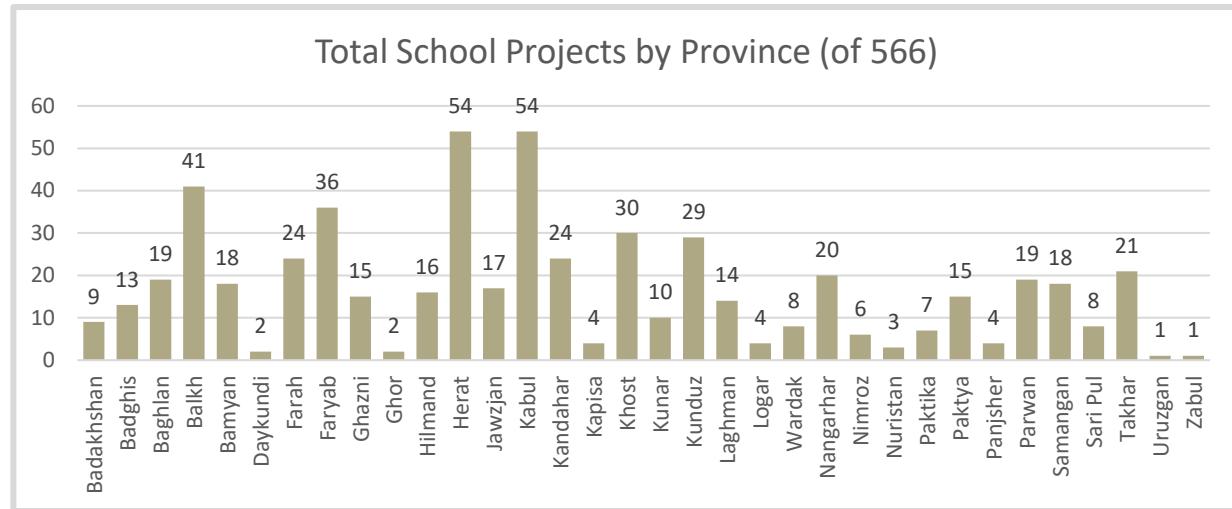
Source: SIGAR analysis of USAID-provided data

NOTE: USAID did not provide handover data for 73 projects.

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USAID built or rehabilitated schools in all 34 Afghan provinces, with Herat and Kabul receiving the greatest number of schools (54 schools each), followed by Balkh (41 schools) and Faryab (36 schools) respectively. Figure 3 provides a breakdown of USAID-funded schools by province.

**Figure 3 - USAID-Funded Schools by Province**



Source: SIGAR analysis of USAID-provided data

Under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, agencies implementing foreign assistance greater than \$1 million are required to evaluate recipient nations capacity to “effectively maintain and utilize the project, taking into account among other things the maintenance and utilization of projects.”<sup>10</sup>

### SIGAR’s Reports on USAID-Funded Schools in Afghanistan

As part of our examination of the Afghan education sector, and to assess the extent to which USAID-funded schools were maintained and utilized, we visited 171 schools from October 2015 through October 2018 and issued 10 reports and 4 alert letters.<sup>11</sup> The following discussion summarizes the results of those reports.

<sup>10</sup> Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, Pub. L., No. 87-195, 22 U.S.C. 2361§ 611. (e) (2019).

<sup>11</sup> This is the eleventh and final report in a series that discusses our finding 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; SIGAR, Schools in Faryab Province, Afghanistan: Observations from Site Visits at 17 Schools, SIGAR-18-17-SP, December 12, 2017; SIGAR, Schools in Kabul Province, Afghanistan: Observations from Site Visits at 24 Schools, SIGAR 18-31-SP, February 6, 2018; SIGAR, Schools in Kunduz Province, Afghanistan: Observations from Site Visits at 6 Schools, SIGAR 18-40-SP, April 4, 2018; SIGAR, Schools in Parwan Province, Afghanistan: Observations from Site Visits at 14 Schools, SIGAR 18-67-SP, August 21, 2018; SIGAR, Schools in Baghlan Province, Afghanistan: Observations From Site Visits at 14 Schools, SIGAR 19-10-SP, January 08, 2019; SIGAR, Schools in Paktika Province, Afghanistan: Observations From Site Visits at 6 Schools, SIGAR 19-21-SP, Feburary 27, 2019; and SIGAR, Schools in Bamyan Province Afghanistan: Observations from Site Visits at 16 Schools, SIGAR 19-33-SP, April 10, 2019).

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**Figure 4 - SIGAR Site Visits Across 10 Afghan Provinces**

Province:	Number of Reported Inspections	School Visit Dates
Herat	25	Nov – Nov 2015
Balkh	26	Oct – Nov 2015
Khost	23	Mar – May 2017
Faryab	17	May - May 2017
Kabul	24	Apr – Jun 2017
Kunduz	6	Sep – Sep 2017
Parwan	14	Mar – Apr 2018
Baghlan	14	Mar – Apr 2018
Paktika	6	Jun – Jun 2018
Bamyan	16	Sep– Oct 2018
	171	

Source: SIGAR analysis

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Our site visits lasted for approximately one to four hours and were conducted during normal schools days and operating hours.<sup>12</sup> At each site visit, we observed and recorded information about school resources and structures, completed standardized survey questionnaires, and where available, interviewed schools officials and community members.<sup>13</sup> We also used Global Positioning System (GPS)-enabled cameras to secure geospatial coordinates-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.

We conducted our work in Afghanistan, and in Washington, D.C. under the authority of Public Law No. 110-181, as amended, and the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended; and in accordance with the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation*.

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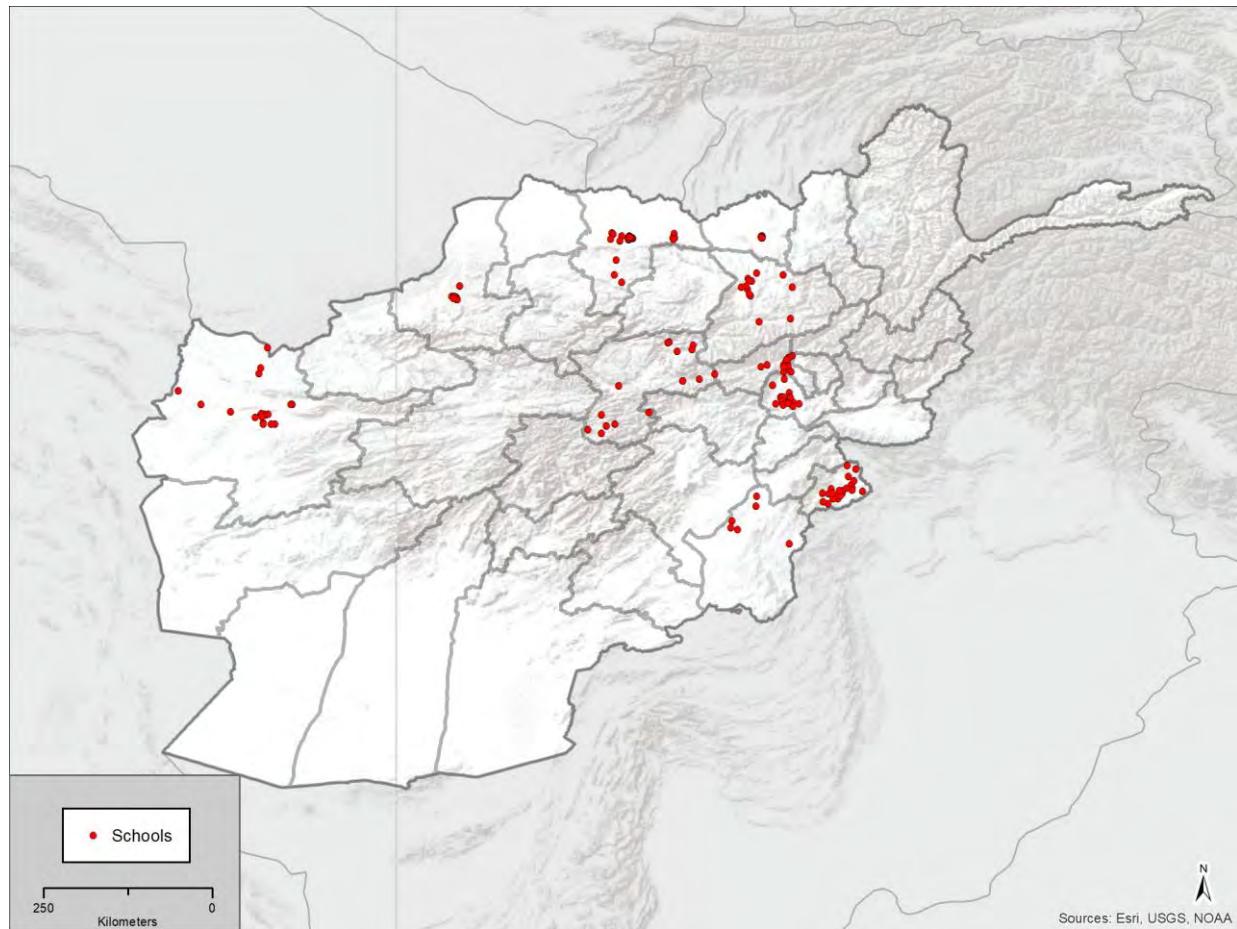
<sup>12</sup> We define a normal school day in Afghanistan as Saturday-Thursday between 08:00 and 3:30PM.

<sup>13</sup> 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 out 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 student and teacher enrollment and attendance, school functionality, and other relevant information. An inspection supervisor attend 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.

## CONDITIONS REPORTED AND OBSERVED AT 171 SCHOOLS ACROSS 10 PROVINCES IN AFGHANISTAN

From October 2015 through October 2018, we conducted site visits at 171 schools<sup>14</sup> across 10 provinces that are now operated by the Afghan MOE. We found that 168 (or 98.25 percent) of 171 schools were open and in use, however, at many of these facilities we observed structural damage, health or safety concerns, unused or damaged equipment, and other deficiencies. In four instances, these concerns warranted alert letters warning of potential harm to occupants of schools.<sup>15</sup> Figure 5 shows the general location of the schools we visited across Afghanistan.

**Figure 5 - Location of Schools Visited Across Ten Provinces in Afghanistan**



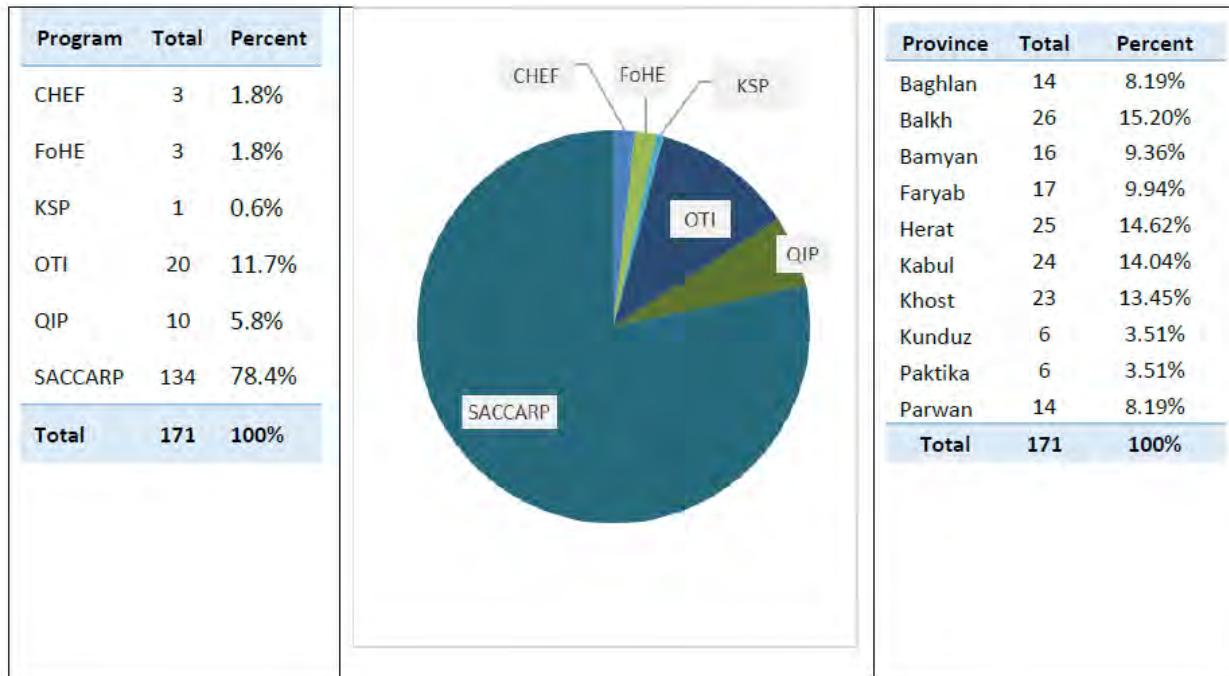
Source: SIGAR analysis

<sup>14</sup> SIGAR conducted site visits at 171 schools, which comprised 168 distinct USAID-funded projects; three projects covered two separate schools: two projects were in Faryab province and one was in Herat province. In all three instances the project location included two separate schools: a boys' school and a girls' school. We conducted independent site visits and completed questionnaires at all six schools.

<sup>15</sup> See SIGAR, Alert Letter: Structural Damage at Educational Facility S145A, SIGAR-16-38-SP, May 19, 2016; SIGAR, Alert Letter: Structural Damage at Educational Facility SR-21, SIGAR-17-60-SP, August 15, 2017; SIGAR, Alert Letter: Structural Damage at Educational Facility SR-06, SIGAR-18-32, February 27, 2018; SIGAR, Alert Letter: Structural Damage at Educational Facility SR-09, SIGAR-18-36-SP, March 30, 2018.

The USAID-funded schools we visited were rehabilitated or constructed under six different USAID programs/activities, with the majority of schools, 134 (78 percent), being built or rehabilitated under the SACCARP program. Figure 6 depicts a breakdown of schools we visited by program and province.

**Figure 6 - Breakdown of Schools SIGAR Visited by Program and Province**



Source: SIGAR analysis of USAID-provided data

Note: Percentages rounded.

## MANY SCHOOLS HAD STRUCTURAL AND OPERATIONAL DEFICIENCIES

During our site visits we noted structural and operational issues, such as roof damage, broken windows and doors, exposed wiring, missing or broken light bulbs, electricity or water inadequacies, and schools lacking functioning or maintained toilet facilities. Some of these deficiencies could potentially affect safety and may contribute to lower attendance of students and teachers.

### Most Facilities Lacked Electricity and Functioning Lights

We found that 68 of 171 (39.77 percent) of the schools we visited lacked electricity. Moreover, 134 of the schools' classrooms (78.36 percent) lacked functioning lights due to missing wiring, missing or broken light bulbs, or because the classrooms themselves were not connected to the school's power source. Photos 1 and 2 show common electrical issues such as exposed wiring and missing bulbs at two schools in Faryab and Paktika Provinces.

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**Photo 1 - Exposed Wires at School S076A in Faryab Province**



Source: SIGAR: May 18, 2017

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**Photo 2 - Unusable Lights due to missing bulbs at PRTSRN018 in Paktika Province**



Source: SIGAR: June 7, 2018

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### Observations on Access to Water and Overall Sanitary Conditions at the Schools We Visited

We observed that 138 (or 80.70 percent) of the 171 schools we visited had access to clean drinking water. These schools obtained clean drinking water through a number of sources, such as the local city network (15 schools), water wells (110 schools), a fountain or karez (1 school), or rivers and streams (2 schools). The 33 schools that did not have access to clean water reported either a broken water pump (3 schools) or an empty well (11 schools) as reasons for lack of clean water.<sup>16</sup> Seven other schools reported “Some Other Reason” and 12 schools reported a lack of drinking water with inconclusive information.

We also noted that 141 schools face sanitation issues relating to toilets. Of the 171 schools inspected, we observed that while 160 (93.57 percent) possessed functioning toilets or latrines, only 21 (12.28 percent) of the schools possessed toilets that appeared to be cleaned or maintained. Photo 3 shows an example of a functioning water fountain at a School in Parwan while Photo 4 shows an example of a poorly maintained latrine in Paktika.

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<sup>16</sup> One school reported both a broken pump and an empty well.

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**Photo 3 - Functioning City Water Supply Fountain at School SR 116 in Parwan.**



Source: SIGAR: December 5, 2017

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**Photo 4 - A Poorly maintained latrine at School PRTSRN018 in Paktika**



Source: SIGAR: July 06, 2018

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### **Structural Deficiencies at Several Schools Could Present Safety Hazards**

During our site visits, we observed structural deficiencies at a large number of schools, including some deficiencies that potentially put the safety of occupants at risk. Specifically, we found that of the 171 schools, 61 appeared to have structurally unsound roofs (35.67 percent). Of 171 schools, 25 (14.62 percent) reported cracks or large holes in their roof while 93 (54.39 percent) schools reported roof leaks. We also observed damaged or removed windows at 64 of 171 (37.43 percent) and damaged or removed doors at 90 of 171 (52.63 percent) schools. Finally, of 171 schools we observed 16 (9.36 percent) with signs of settlement or deterioration in the school's building foundation. Photo 5 shows an example of a roof with a large hole in Kunduz, Photo 6 shows an example of broken walls in Faryab, Photo 7 shows an example of broken windows at a school in Paktika, and Photo 8 shows an example of a wall crack observed on the interior and exterior of an exterior wall column at a school in Bamyan.

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**Photo 5 - Damaged Roof in School SR02 in Kunduz**



Source: SIGAR: September 20, 2017

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**Photo 6 - Broken walls at School S075A in Faryab Province**



Source: SIGAR: May 18, 2017

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**Photo 7 - Broken Windows at School PRTSRN019 in Paktika**



Source: SIGAR: June 10, 2018

**Photo 8 - Cracked wall at School IOMBYN002 in Bamyan**



Source: SIGAR: June 01, 2018

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### **Many Schools lacked Sufficient Desks, Chairs, and other Equipment, Classes were also Frequently Observed taking Place Outdoors**

We observed instances of schools lacking enough space or equipment for their students. Specifically, we found that only 86 of 171 (50.29 percent) schools had enough tables and chairs for students and that in many facilities piles of large quantities of broken chairs and desks could be observed. In several cases, SIGAR observed schools stockpiling large quantities of broken furniture such as desks, tables, and chairs in piles of furniture or filling auxiliary rooms. Similarly we found classes conducted outside of designated classroom buildings, such as in tents, in administrative areas, or outside on rugs. Specifically, we found that 76 (or 44.44 percent) of 171 schools were observed to be teaching outside of designated areas. Finally, during a limited number of inspections we observed schools with computer equipment that lacked access or consisted access to electricity.

Photo 9 illustrates an example of a pile of broken furniture at a school in Khost, Photo 10 shows class being conducted outdoors in Faryab, Photo 11 shows class being conducted outside in Balkh, and Photo 12 shows unused computer equipment in Khost.

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**Photo 9 - Outdoor Broken Furniture Pile at School SR 07 in Khost**



Source: SIGAR: April 10, 2017

**Photo 10 - Class being conducted outside at school SR-11 in Faryab**



Source: SIGAR: May 20, 2017

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**Photo 11 - Class being conducted outside at School SR 19 in Balkh province.**



Source: SIGAR: November 11, 2015

**Photo 12 - Unused equipment at School SR 21 in Khost, a School without Electricity**



Source: SIGAR: April 19, 2017

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## MORE THAN A THIRD OF SCHOOLS LACK SIGNS INDICATING USAID AS A DONOR

USAID is congressionally mandated to mark USAID-funded assistance programs in accordance with Section 641 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, according to USAID's internal regulations, "USAID program, project, or activity sites financed by USAID contracts, including visible infrastructure projects (roads, bridges, buildings, etc.) or others that are physical in nature must prominently display the USAID identity."<sup>18</sup> According to a USAID factsheet, this effort, "enhances the visibility and value of U.S. assistance while transparently informing beneficiaries of the source of that aid."

While we found that the majority of schools had signs that clearly indicated that USAID provided funding to build or rehabilitate the school or that the MOE was the school's administrator, some of the schools did not. Specifically, 61 schools (approximately 36 percent) lacked clear reference to USAID as the donor and 24 schools (approximately 14 percent) did not clearly identify the MOE as the administrator. Additionally, some of the signs we observed, indicating USAID as a donor, were defaced or had faded. At one school in Bamyan province we observed a sign indicating the Islamic Republic of Iran as the school's donor, despite USAID records showing that the school had been funded through USAID. We did not observe any additional signs at this school indicating USAID as a donor.

USAID may waive these regulations due to a variety of factors including safety and political concerns, however, USAID was unable to provide any documentation showing that such waivers were granted. Additionally, we observed several instances in which signs were removed or defaced to remove clear reference to the United States, or USAID programs. Consequently, it is unclear whether citizens in proximity to these schools are aware of USAID's efforts or the goodwill that fostered these projects. Photo 13 shows a plaque indicating the Islamic Republic of Iran as a donor a USAID-funded school in Bamyan province. Photo 14 shows an example of a USAID plaque in which the American Flag has been removed.

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<sup>17</sup> Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, Pub. L., No. 87-195, 22 U.S.C. 2401, §641. (2019).

<sup>18</sup> (CFR) 700.16.(a) USAID Automated Directives System (ADS) 320 "Branding and Marking." § 320.3.2.4 (b) Marking Requirements for Specific Contract Deliverables. Partial Revision date 01/02/2015.

**Photo 13 - Iran Plaque at (IOMBYN046) in Bamyan province.**



Source: SIGAR: September 5, 2018

**Photo 14 - An example of a USAID Plaque in which the American Flag was removed In Khost.**



Source: SIGAR April 11, 2017

## CONCLUSION

USAID has disbursed nearly \$1.1 billion to increase access to education and improve the management capacity of Afghanistan's education system. In the past 18 years, USAID has made significant improvements to the education system in Afghanistan and the donor community has consistently highlighted Afghanistan's progress in the education sector. Although the number of students attending school vary widely due to poor data quality, there clearly has been a significant increase in the number of children attending school, especially girls. However, the condition of the schools can impact the Afghan children's learning experience. Between 2003 and 2013, USAID built or rehabilitated 566 schools across all 34 Afghan provinces. The lack of resources to sustain this large investment along with the harsh climate and continued insurgency, however, have resulted in significant deterioration of the U.S. investment and may hinder the achievement of our education goals.

We conducted site visits at 171 schools across ten provinces throughout Afghanistan that USAID paid to construct or rehabilitate and that are now operated by the Afghan MOE. On a positive note, we found that 168 of the 171 schools were open and in use and most were in generally usable condition, however three of the schools were closed during our visits, two of which were not in a condition suitable for use as an educational facility. Additionally, four facilities were in particularly hazardous condition. We alerted USAID to the conditions at these schools. Finally, many lacked electricity; showed signs of damage or lack of maintenance that in some cases might be hazardous to children; lacked sufficient desks, chairs, or tables; or were teaching class outside in tents or on rugs. Most of the schools we visited had not been adequately sustained.

As of July 2019, USAID has no active construction or rehabilitation projects of additional schools in Afghanistan. However, the World Bank has proposed economic initiatives if a peace agreement is reached. These economic initiatives, if approved and funded by the donor community would include the construction of additional schools. The World Bank proposes to use the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), of which the U.S. is a major contributor, to fund these economic initiatives. If a peace agreement is reached and the World Bank proposal approved, a mechanism will be needed to ensure that MOE has the capacity to maintain the schools.

## AGENCY COMMENTS

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We provided a draft of this report to USAID for comment on September 24, 2019. USAID provided comments on October 8, 2019. In its comments, USAID stated that it “continues to work closely with the Afghan government to increase access to quality education by training teachers, printing and distributing textbooks, expanding community-based education, developing transparent and accountable systems, supporting higher education institutions, and strengthening the ability of the Ministry of Education (MoE) to administer a nationwide education system.” USAID also noted that “management of the schools visited by SIGAR have transitioned and are now operated by the MoE,” and that “USAID no longer has financial or managerial responsibility of these schools.” USAID stated that it informed the MoE and Provincial Education Directors, to take appropriate action to address the issues identified by SIGAR and report back to USAID on progress..

In response to this report, USAID stated that it will share the final report with the MoE and will request the MOE to provide an update on the actions taken within 90 days of the report. USAID will also share the final report with each of the Provincial Education Directors in the ten provinces. USAID’s comments are reproduced in appendix I.

## APPENDIX I – AGENCY COMMENTS

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# USAID | AFGHANISTAN

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

### MEMORANDUM

October 8, 2019

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

**FROM:** Peter Natiello, Mission Director

**SUBJECT:** Mission Response to Draft SIGAR Special Project Report titled: "Observations from Site Visits at 171 Afghan Schools Funded By USAID" (SIGAR-19-XX-SP/SP-217)

**REF:** SIGAR Transmittal Email dated September 24, 2019

USAID would like to thank SIGAR for the opportunity to comment on the draft "Observations from Site Visits at 171 Afghan Schools Funded By USAID" report.

SIGAR observed and reported that USAID has made significant improvements to the education system in Afghanistan and that the donor community has consistently highlighted Afghanistan's progress in the education sector. In addition, SIGAR observed that there has been a significant increase in the number of children attending school, especially girls; and that 168 of the 171 schools were open and in use, and most were in generally usable condition.

In the draft report, SIGAR states that the lack of resources to sustain the large investment along with the harsh climate and continued insurgency have resulted in significant deterioration of the U.S. investment and may hinder the achievement of our education goals. In addition, SIGAR reported that three of the schools were closed during their visits, two of which were in a condition they considered unsuitable for use as an educational facility. Also, SIGAR reported that four facilities were in particularly hazardous condition; many

U.S. Agency for International Development  
Great Massoud Road  
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<http://afghanistan.usaid.gov>

schools lacked electricity; showed signs of damage or lack of maintenance that in some cases might be hazardous to children; lacked sufficient desks, chairs, or tables; or were teaching class outside in tents or on rugs; and most of the schools they visited had not been adequately sustained.

USAID continues to work closely with the Afghan government to increase access to quality education by training teachers, printing and distributing textbooks, expanding community-based education, developing transparent and accountable systems, supporting higher education institutions, and strengthening the ability of the Ministry of Education (MoE) to administer a nationwide education system. However, USAID notes that management of the schools visited by SIGAR have transitioned and are now operated by the MoE. Consistent with program design, USAID no longer has financial or managerial responsibility of these schools. For each of the Special Projects in the ten provinces that are the subject of this capping draft report, USAID informed the MoE and each of the Provincial Education Directors, requesting them to take appropriate action to address the issues identified by SIGAR and to report back to USAID on progress.

USAID will share the final report with the MoE and will request the MoE to provide USAID with an update on the actions taken to address the deficiencies within 90 days of receipt of the report. USAID will also share the final report with each of the Provincial Education Directors in the ten provinces.

cc: Elizabeth A. Chambers, Controller, USAID/Afghanistan  
U.S. Embassy/Kabul  
OAPA Audit  
James Borger, Education Office Director, USAID/Afghanistan

## APPENDIX II – USAID-FUNDED EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

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According to USAID, between 2003 and 2013 USAID built or rehabilitated 566 schools across all 34 Afghan provinces. These schools were built or rehabilitated through the following programs and activities: Construction of Health and Education Facilities (CHEF); Faculties of Higher Education (FoHE); Kabul Schools Program (KSP); Local Governance and Community Development (LGCD); USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI); Quick Impact Projects (QIP); Rural Expansion of Afghanistan Community-Based Healthcare (REACH); and the Schools and Clinics Construction and Refurbishment Program (SACCARP). Below is a description of each project/activity.

### Construction of Health and Education Facilities (CHEF)

From January 2008 through June 2016, The Construction of Health and Education Facilities (CHEF) program worked to support Afghanistan's Ministries of Public Health and Education by providing critical infrastructure such as hospitals, midwife training centers, teacher training colleges, and other medical and education facilities. Examples of CHEF's work in Afghanistan include the construction or renovation of Hospitals in Kabul, Paktika, Paktia, Logar, Khost, and Nangarhar Provinces; the renovation of a health clinic in Jawzjan; and the construction of "...three midwife training centers in Khost, Bamyan, and Badakhshan...". Although allocated 57\$ million according to USAID factsheets, as of SIGAR-16-32-AR, USAID had dispersed \$20,288,023 or less than half of allocated funds.

### Faculties of Higher Education (FoHE)

The six-year, \$10 million (allocated) Faculties of Higher Education (FoHE) program, sought to support Afghanistan's Ministry of Higher Education by constructing two-story buildings at six university campuses across the country. From May 2008 to December 2014, FoHE constructed six buildings in Balkh, Bamyan, Faryab, Herat, Jawzjan, and Parwan Province schools, with each building containing ten classrooms, four laboratories, and a library/IT center, along with the requisite office space for faculty.

### Kabul Schools Program (KSP)

The Kabul Schools Program (KSP) operated from June 2007 - March 2011 and partnered with the United Nations Office of Project Services. The KSP supported the MOE through providing professional engineering services, project management, and construction of schools and multiple classroom blocks throughout Kabul. Its primary goals included constructing two schools, Ghazi High School and Sardar-e-Kabuli High School in Kabul. These schools were expected to provide 10,000 students access to "high-quality learning facilities." These schools were constructed with the intention to be both earthquake resistant and disabled student-accessible. As of 2016, KSP has used \$30,007,441 in its efforts supporting Afghanistan's Ministry of Education.

### Local Governance and Community Development (LGCD)

From 2006 – 2011, LGCD worked in 21 Afghan provinces to assist the afghan Government in extending its reach into unstable areas and engage with at-risk populations, create an environment that enables communities to take active roles in their own stability and development, and address underlying causes of instability and support for insurgents. LGCD implemented small scale infrastructure projects such as foot bridges, road repair, light rehabilitation, and drainage projects. According to the USAID master list, only 2 facilities were listed as LGCD projects, SIGAR did not inspect either facility.

## **Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI)**

In support of US foreign policy, the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) seizes emerging windows of opportunity in the political landscape to promote stability, peace, and democracy by catalyzing local initiatives through adaptive and agile programming. OTI has laid the foundation for long-term development in over 60 engagements in conflict-prone countries by promoting reconciliation, jumpstarting local economies, supporting emerging independent media, and fostering peace and democracy through innovative programming. OTI was active in Afghanistan from 2002 to at least 2016, and provided infrastructure and economic development, democracy and governance, education and health, and food security assistance. USAID OTI was involved in increasing the Afghan media's capacity through establishing independent media outlets, journalism training, and the creation and dissemination of radio programs and print publications nationwide. OTI also worked to prevent electoral violence by distributing messages promoting peace through several forms of media, including radio, TV, and print. Finally, OTI worked to rehabilitate over one hundreds roads "to improve access and increase trust between communities and local government officials." According to USAID files, 60 school construction or rehabilitation projects were attributed to OTI.

## **Quick Impact Projects (QIP)**

Designed to be small, efficient, and cost effective (with over 90% of the projects being implemented costing less than \$350,000), the Provincial Reconstruction Teams' Quick Impact Projects (PRT-QIP) completed over 440 projects by the time its four-year tenure ended in September 2007. The types of projects that the PRT-QIP would work on included community irrigation systems, media projects, small power systems, road improvement, and projects focusing on the construction or rehabilitation of government buildings, schools, and clinics.

## **Rural Expansion of Afghanistan Community-Based Healthcare (REACH)**

From April 2003 to December 2006, USAID maternal and child health program REACH worked with the MoPH and other implementing partners to provide standard packages of services to health facilities throughout Afghanistan. According to USAID data provided in 2015, one school project, a women's dormitory in Kandahar, was noted as a REACH program project. SIGAR did not inspect this facility.

## **Schools and Clinics Construction and Refurbishment Program (SACCARP)**

The Schools and Clinics Construction and Refurbishment Program assisted in the construction and rehabilitation of school and health clinics throughout Afghanistan. SACCARP consisted of several iterations labeled SACCARP I – VI. As of 2016, SACCARP iterations consisted of the following known disbursements to build 533 schools and clinics.

This project was conducted  
under project code SP-217.

## 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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