



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**MEMORANDUM**

April 10, 2015

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

FROM: Donald L. "Larry" Sampler *Handwritten signature*  
Assistant Administrator for  
Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs (OAPA)

SUBJECT: Response to the Inquiry Letter on USAID's Promoting Gender Equity in National  
Priority Programs (SIGAR Inquiry Letter-15-40-SP)

REF: SIGAR-15-40-SP- IL- USAID Promote dated March 27, 2015

USAID places the highest priority on its support for Afghan women as an integral part of our long term strategic partnership with Afghanistan. Their role is vital to Afghanistan's future prosperity and stability and we are committed to supporting Afghan women as they seek to expand upon the gains they have already made. In addition to promoting women in leadership through Promote, USAID supports Afghan women throughout its portfolio: programming in teacher training for female teachers, community based education to increase access to education for rural girls, and continued assistance for women in agricultural careers are a few examples of the continued USAID support for women in non-Promote populations. Additionally, the mission's new projects on Anti Trafficking and addressing Gender Based Violence create critical safety nets for vulnerable female populations that are outside of the Promote base.

The Promote program is USAID's major effort to facilitate the entrance of Afghan women into the ranks of Afghanistan's leadership and ensure that progress to date is cemented. The program was designed from the beginning to achieve sustainable results through the elevation of women into leadership positions in the Afghan government, private sector and civil society. Through their leadership positions, these women can advocate from the frontlines on issues affecting their human rights and be meaningfully included in decision making processes. We consulted closely with the Afghan Government, civil society and the private sector in the design of the program. President Ghani reiterated the importance of supporting Afghan women and girls during his

address to a joint session of Congress when he noted the need for qualified women candidates for leadership positions in the government.

USAID appreciates SIGAR's interest in this important issue and we welcome the opportunity to further explain and refine our program as we proceed with implementation. Similar to the information we provided in our briefings, below you will find answers to the questions including in your recent letter including information on how USAID is aligning comprehensive monitoring and management structures to support this ambitious investment in Afghan women.

Since the November 2014 award and subsequent launch of Promote, USAID has made important progress towards the project's full implementation, including significant attention to establishing complete monitoring and detail-oriented management systems. As of early March 2015, the consortium of Promote partners implementing Promote Component 1 completed critical implementation documents, including their work plan and the participant selection plan. The remaining three Task Orders for Promote components (Women in Government [WIG], Women's Civil Society and Networking, and Women's Leadership in the Economy) were finalized and announced for procurement in early 2015.

In regards to SIGAR's concern it did not receive adequate information during the November 2014 data call, the project had just launched and there were few official documents to share. The contractor could not realistically have produced work-plans in the few weeks that elapsed between the award and SIGAR's data call deadline, and USAID could not realistically have approved such documents during preparation for a high-level launch. The letter from SIGAR also states that 'evaluation reports' for Promote were not received during the data call. The activities under Promote have not yet begun; therefore, they are not ready for evaluation, and there are no 'evaluation reports' to provide.

Finally, while SIGAR mentions the three main implementing partners, SIGAR failed to recognize or acknowledge the importance of Afghan firms and organizations in the Promote consortium. For example, Tetra Tech is working on the Women's Leadership Development component through several Afghan partners including the Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit, the Afghan Women's Learning Center, and Netlinks. Afghan ownership is essential for the project's sustainability and it is hoped that as the program matures, SIGAR will be able to report on its successes and to acknowledge the ever increasing role Afghans play in securing their own future.

Please find a full response to each of your questions below.

**1. How did USAID determine the total amount of funding required for Promote?**

- a. Please explain how the agency determined that U.S. taxpayers would fund \$216 million and international partners would fund \$200 million for this program. In other words, what is the support for and basis of this estimate?**

All of USAID's funding estimates for projects are based on an Independent Government Cost Estimate (IGCE) carried out early in the project's design. The IGCE established an estimated cost for each of the activities, or direct costs, as well as indirect costs. Together these components make up the project's Total Estimated Costs. Please note our emphasis that these are **estimated** costs based upon best available data at the time of program design.

During the design of the Promote project (2012-2013), USAID performed an IGCE which included totals for each of the components and a Total Estimated Cost (see Attachment 1). The first project total came out to \$300 million dollars, an aggregate of the total activity levels for each component, plus the Household Survey. This was later reduced when the Promote 'legacy' component budget (~\$75 million) was removed from the indefinite-delivery/indefinite quantity contract (IDIQC) to allow for its design, separate from the Promote procurement. The IDIQC was selected for Promote because in the case of additional donor funds, new activities could be issued as needed and the contract would not need to be modified, avoiding critical delays.

USAID realized early on that the Promote project had great potential to engage other donors increasingly interested in the issue of women's rights. For example, USAID found that in 2013, annual spending for gender-related programming by international donors in Afghanistan was approximately \$350 million, as reported by the United Nations (UN) Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-managed Financial Tracking System.<sup>1</sup>

The ceiling was set to accommodate an additional \$200 million to allow for flexibility of potential contributions, but to not exceed USAID maintaining the majority of funding. It is notional funding. Promote activities are fully funded. The project will be able to complete all activities without any additional donor funds. The ceiling of \$200 million of additional donor contributions was set to avoid a re-design process in the case donors wanted to partner.

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<sup>1</sup> CARE International, Donor Spending on Gender in Emergencies 2013, November 2013

- b. Of this \$416 million, how much will be spent in Afghanistan on Afghan women, and how much will be spent on security and overhead costs for the three contractors and program implementers?**

The estimated indirect cost for the Promote components is 20 percent. This includes the General and Administration Costs (13 percent) and the contractor fees (7 percent). Therefore, the approximate total funding benefitting Afghan women is estimated at 80 percent of \$216 million, or \$172 million. The majority of this will be spent in Afghanistan.

The *actual* percentage of direct versus indirect costs for Promote varies by component (due to the diverse nature of activities) and implementer. Promote Task Orders are written to encourage implementers to use cost-saving measures to reduce indirect costs. This was reflected in the proposals received. Proposals included cost-saving measures such as using existing infrastructure and low-cost venues, building on open-access curriculum resources, and utilizing Afghan staff as much as possible. For the Women's Leadership Development (WLD) Task Order (Component 1), the implementer, Tetra Tech, has estimated an indirect cost that is approximately 15 percent of the total estimated costs.

For the component Afghan Women's Leadership in the Economy, of the \$75 million total, at least 60 percent, or \$45 million, will be channeled through Afghan experts and organizations in three major ways: sub-awards (\$30 million), local project staff (\$4.4 million), and business development centers (\$10.6 million). A minimum of 40 percent, or \$30 million, of the total contract value is required to be made to Afghan sub-awardees (grants and sub-contracts). The 40 percent minimum also balances the priority on local systems and needs against the reality of Afghanistan's limited but developing capacity and challenging operating environment.

- 2. What formal commitments has USAID received from international partners for the additional \$200 million budgeted for Promote? Please identify the international partners and their respective commitments.**

USAID has not received any formal commitments from other donors for the additional \$200 million window under Promote. Currently, there are no project activities attached to that funding. Therefore, this is not a budget shortfall nor would it be considered unsuccessful if other donors do not buy in to the mechanism.

USAID is evaluating potential Promote partnership opportunities with other international donors. The first phase of conversations with international donors focused on outreach

and explanation. USAID worked closely with the USAID Office of Donor Engagement in Washington to message Promote and its goals.

**3. We understand that the baseline data collection and analysis is in the final stages.**

**a. Why did USAID award a task order to Tetra Tech, Inc. for the Women Leadership Development component prior to the completion of the Promote baseline data collection and analysis?**

The Task Order for WLD and the Promote Household Survey (i.e., the ‘baseline’) were awarded concurrently, per the Promote procurement and implementation plan. The WLD mobilization plan presented by Tetra Tech included a staggered approach that allowed collection of survey data ahead of project activities. The WLD proposal from Tetra Tech also included a contingency plan that could address a gap if the survey was not completed in time.

The first survey will be completed ahead of any external activities. Tetra Tech (as well as other component implementers) will be able to use the data to inform project implementation and fine tune the proposed targets for their performance indicators. Additional supplementary surveys may be conducted, depending upon the analysis of the first survey. However, the team does not expect any timing or contamination issues given the slow process at which change is actually achieved.

**b. What was the data collection plan and what are the results?**

The purpose of the data collection plan is to gather and compile detailed information about both the experiences of the targeted population and the change in the population overall. Over time and through additional data collection USAID hopes to be able to track social changes in attitudes, beliefs, and practices. The first data collection focused on 6 key areas related to:

- the status of women in government,
- women-owned businesses and female employees,
- women’s understanding and current leadership skills and knowledge,
- attitudes and practices about women’s rights,
- equality, and
- employment

The Promote Household Survey was conducted in the following areas: Mazar, Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Kabul, Kunduz, Ghazni, and Lashkar Gah.

Data collection methods included:

- Quantitative surveys with 5,600 households;
- 56 qualitative focus groups with women in each area: mothers of target group women, civic leaders, business leaders and government leaders and their staff;
- 32 qualitative focus groups with men in each area: families of target group women, civic leaders, business leaders and government leaders;
- 60 key informant interviews with diverse stakeholders across project and control sites, including with religious leaders, community elders, and leaders from government, civil society, and business community.

**c. Why was the Women Leadership Development component the first task order awarded?**

The WLD was the first Task Order awarded because it is foundational to the success of all the various elements of Promote. The women who undergo critical mentoring and networking training under WLD will be better prepared to participate and take advantage of other Promote programs.

**4. During the briefings, it was stated that USAID is working with Tetra Tech to ensure Promote reaches a wide audience and is not limited to women in major urban areas.**

**a. What is the outreach plan?**

To ensure WLD is successful, the group of women selected to participate must be broad and inclusive. The current outreach plan, designed by Tetra Tech has used innovative measures to achieve this goal. ‘Listening groups’ for potential beneficiaries and their household patriarchs to “meet and greet” Afghan women leaders is one example. The program may also sponsor live mobile community theater performances targeted to families that highlight and advocate for an enhanced women’s role in a prosperous and peaceful society, another mechanism proven effective in the Afghan context. WLD will also focus on TV and print media campaigns to support maximum awareness about getting involved in Promote activities.

The larger Promote (beyond WLD) outreach plan includes:

- Holding regular (and as otherwise may be appropriate) feedback meetings with key government personnel (e.g., the Office of the President, the Office of the First Lady and other appropriate personnel and ministries within the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA));
- Establishing a Promote Ambassador program in which nominated local staff are trained on Promote;

- Managing a dedicated Promote website (to be operational by mid-2015) as well as the posting of informational resources and “success stories” via the USAID and Embassy websites;
- Targeting programs, advertising campaigns, and announcements via radio (particularly useful in reaching women outside the municipal areas) and television;
- Creating a range of information resources including FAQ sheets, one pagers, “success stories,” articles, poetry, and essays that will be disseminated via websites and social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn);
- Coordinating presentations, round table meetings and listening circles with the whole range of target audience groups: women in rural areas, women Parliamentarians, the parliamentary Working Group on Women’s Affairs, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, men’s groups, identified male champions, and identified potentially supportive religious leaders.

That said, Promote was designed to focus and concentrate primarily on women in key urban areas, where the programs impacts were likely to be greatest, rather than diluting its effectiveness by trying to reach too large and/or diverse an audience. Its focus on women in urban areas is in keeping with best practices in development.

- b. Will USAID, through its contractors, provide transportation and/or housing to women outside of the major cities who are eligible to become beneficiaries of Promote, but who are unable to access the cities where the program is implemented?**

Stipends for transport and lodging for those participants who live too far from Promote project activities were built into the project’s implementation plan from the beginning. Additional measures to ensure participation, like child care, were integrated during the procurement and work plan phases.

- 5. USAID officials reported that they consulted with the Afghan government during the design phase of Promote, and that they will continue to work with the Afghan government on implementation of the program.**

- a. Which ministries and government personnel were consulted?**

Afghan government entities consulted during the design of Promote include the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA), the Independent Reform and Civil

Service Commission, the Independent Directorate of Local Government, and the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled. One outcome of the Government involvement was that based on their feedback, the name of the project was changed (in 2013) from “Women in Transition” to “Promoting Gender Equity in National Priority Programs.”

In addition to being actively involved throughout the design, the government was also involved in Promote procurement. For example, the Director of Planning and Policy from MoWA was a non-voting member on the Women in Government (WIG) Technical Evaluation Committee. Her technical expertise was key to evaluating the most effective approach concerning the WIG component of Promote.

- b. What formal agreement, if any, does USAID have with the Afghan government to document the government’s roles and responsibilities for implementing and sustaining the program?**

USAID has shared a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), specifically on the Promote high-level advisory group, with MoWA. However, the absence of a Minister in MoWA has slowed the approval of this document.

On July 23, 2012, Minister of Women’s Affairs, Dr. Husn Banu Ghazanfar, formally approved the Women in Transition (now Promote) project concept note (Attachment 2). The concept note is the guiding document for the project and later became Section C of the Solicitation.

- c. What types of higher level positions will be available to Promote beneficiaries?**

While the Promote project does not aim to create jobs, Promote aims to support women in up to 3,000 civil service internships for professional positions, from which they can eventually rise into more senior level civil service posts. Currently, most women working in the government encumber administrative jobs with limited career growth opportunities. As previously mentioned, we are encouraged by President Ghani’s enthusiasm for placing qualified women in responsible positions of leadership in government.

- 6. USAID officials reported that part of the goal of Promote is to provide women with opportunities to gain higher level positions in the private sector and civil society.**



**a. With which private sector and civil society entities has USAID secured buy-in and participation in the Promote program?**

During the design and procurement phases (2012-2013) Promote buy-in was gathered through extensive consultations with civil society and government representatives (Attachment 3). Additionally, during the design of each component, USAID engaged with groups relevant to that component.

During implementation, buy-in for Promote writ large (beyond WLD) will be increased substantially through the new High-Level Advisory Committee. Co-chaired by USAID and MoWA, the committee will include representatives from all areas of civil society and the private sector in Afghanistan. Civil society groups may include, for example, representatives from the influential Afghanistan 1400, Equality for Peace and Democracy, and the Afghan Women's Network. Private sector representatives may include Roshan or Turquoise Mountain. This Committee, once established, will be a forum for feedback and advice on program implementation; provide a venue for champions of women's rights in Afghanistan; ensure cooperation and partnership with national, provincial, and district stakeholders; and engender advocacy for Promote.

**b. What types of higher level opportunities will be available to Promote beneficiaries?**

Promote seeks to strengthen existing civil society organizations to be more effective advocates for protecting women's rights and increasing women's opportunities in both the public and private sectors.

USAID's other investments in expanding the market will continue to create employment opportunities, while Promote prepares young women for those opportunities.

It is important to mention that even with the current number of professional opportunities in Afghanistan; women are disproportionately excluded from participation. For example, the total Afghan female labor participation is 18.5 percent compared to 80 percent for men, and Afghan female unemployment is almost three times higher than male unemployment. Therefore, even if opportunities were to remain stagnant, with few opportunities created during the five years of Promote, women would still have a tremendous amount to gain by improving their access to the opportunities that exist today.

**7. Once the Promote program concludes, how will USAID ensure that women maintain their positions or find new leadership roles?**

The goal of the Promote project is to give women the tools to find and maintain meaningful positions and to impact society. Afghan women are – and will continue to be – their own best advocates. Promote builds their capacity and their confidence; it does not guarantee them continued employment.

**a. How will USAID and the implementing partners ensure that women continue to have the tools and capability to impact change and be instrumental in their new roles?**

Each of the Promote components includes sustaining measures and targets. For example in the WLD activity, it is estimated 90 percent of the organizations hosting mentor and networking activities (such as existing universities) will integrate some of the curriculum into their mainstream courses after the project ends. This will sustain the learning around Promote and women’s leadership more generally. The WIG component requires implementers to create processes and procedures that allow GIRoA to take on the internship for women as an independent effort following the life of the project. It also suggests substantial activities to increase recognition and buy-in for reforms and to build broad-based public support for women working within the public sector.

**b. What is the sustainability plan?**

The context in which Promote is being implemented is not an easy one. There are still many challenges that women face in Afghan society that will impact the project’s sustainability. The situation is far from perfect. However, USAID has worked alongside GIRoA to ensure gender equality and female empowerment are strongly supported through the National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan and Afghan National Development Strategy, underscoring the public sector’s commitment to Promote’s success. Additionally, USAID/Afghanistan and the implementers have built sustainability into Promote by prioritizing local ownership of activities and employing Afghan organizations to undertake Promote activities. Promote will encourage cultural changes through public-outreach messaging on the importance of women’s advancement and the engagement of men and women alike in training programs, as a means of bridging differences in perspectives. Additionally, implementers have put forward strong mentorship and “give back” programs, so beneficiaries inspire young girls and women to follow in their footsteps and further ingrain social change over generations.

Sustainability is also promoted by the complementary flagship scholarship program and a women's living and learning University space. This program seeks to broaden the number of women available for high-growth, high-need sectors in Afghanistan.

**8. What is USAID's monitoring and evaluation plan for Promote?**

**a. Who will be responsible for monitoring and evaluation? For example, will it be a contractor, USAID, or a combination?**

As for all of our programs, USAID will be responsible for ensuring that all monitoring and evaluation requirements are fulfilled and that the multi-tiered monitoring approach is applied. Additionally, each implementing contractor is responsible for their own internal monitoring activities. The Monitoring Support Project (MSP), which is described in greater detail in 8d, will provide additional independent monitoring data so that USAID officers can cross-correlate the data they gather to ensure accuracy. Data gathered from MSP, implementing partners, and other sources will ensure sufficient, accurate, and verifiable information to inform project success and strategic/policy-level decision-making.

**b. How much of the \$416 million will be dedicated to monitoring and evaluation?**

There is currently \$216 million of Promote funds and corresponding planned activities. Each Task Order will have specific M&E funding - approximately five to ten percent of the contract value as per USAID ADS 203.3.2.3 and 203.3.1.4. There are also separate funding streams for M&E, including the Promote Household Survey (\$796,627.00) the MSP, funded through a separate IQC, and the Mission's centralized evaluation mechanism (SUPPORT II).

**c. How will the agency ensure that the evaluators have full access to Promote contractor activities and data? For example, will there be one common database?**

All USAID/Afghanistan projects are required to provide timely submissions of all necessary data for oversight purposes. As is the case in every evaluation, Promote evaluation contractors will be given access to all appropriate information, including AFGHAN INFO, a database contains projects and activities progress reports and performance indicators information.

**d. How will USAID monitor the program in an environment where security concerns are increasing and oversight options are decreasing?**

The multi-tiered monitoring approach is applied to all of USAID/Afghanistan's technical projects, including PROMOTE. The main objective of this approach is to insure that contracting officer representatives can make properly informed decisions from the available data. As part of this USAID is contracting a dedicated third-party monitoring contract call the Monitoring Support Project (MSP). MSP will supplement implementer-driven Promote monitoring with additional sources of monitoring data. This will enhance USAID's ability to compare information from their own monitoring efforts with additional sources of independent monitoring data, and making evidence-based management decisions on the performance of their projects. Additionally because most Promote activities are located in urban areas, the access for monitoring is increased.

**9. How will USAID measure the success and assess the impact of Promote beyond output indicators, such as the number of women trained or a change in the United Nations Development Programme Gender Inequality Index? For example, how will USAID determine the impact of training these women over time?**

The USAID/Afghanistan Mission Strategic Framework includes the following sub-intermediate results relevant to gender: Women's Contribution to Afghanistan's Economy, Government, and Civil Society Increased; Gender Policy Implementation Strengthened; and Afghan Perceptions toward Women's Inclusiveness Improved. Because it must evaluate these objectives, data collection for Promote goes far beyond activity indicators and includes outcome and output indicators such as:

- i. Proportion of female participation in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources (assets, credits, income or employment);
- ii. Proportion of target population reporting increased/decreased decision-making ability as a result of Promote intervention;
- iii. Proportion of target population reporting increased agreement with the concept that males and females should have equal access to social, economic, and political opportunities;
- iv. Percent change in the knowledge, attitude, and practices of the target population about women in leadership positions ;
- v. Percentage of population that views Gender-Based Violence as less acceptable after participating in or being exposed to USG programming;
- vi. Proportion of target population reporting increased/decreased "feelings of safety" in the Promote target areas;

- vii. Proportion of target population reporting increased/decreased “freedom of movement” in the Promote target areas;
- viii. Proportion of females who report increased self-efficacy at the conclusion of USG-supported training/programming;
- ix. Number of laws, policies, or procedures drafted, proposed or adopted to promote gender equality at the regional, national or local level.

These outcome indicators, collected over the life of the project, feed into the Mission’s overarching Results Framework. Several of these are “F Standard Indicators,” which means they will ‘roll up’ to inform all agency reporting by USAID. USAID is also planning to conduct an impact evaluation and is taking the steps necessary to ensure that it is feasible to do so at the conclusion of the project.

**10. We understand from our February 25, 2015, briefing that in January 2015, USAID released a request for proposals for the Promote Scholarship Activity, a scholarship program for Afghan women that is separate from, but intended to complement, the Promote program. In addition to the Promote Scholarship Activity, what other programs does USAID intend to implement that will complement Promote?**

In addition to the Promote Scholarship, USAID is considering supporting a university-based living and learning complex for women, as part of the Promote legacy.

Attachments:

- 1 – Overall FY Budget
- 2 – MoWA Promote Endorsement Letter
- 3- Consultations List

cc:

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Mission Director, U.S. Agency for International Development/Afghanistan

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