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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

MEMORANDUM

November 2, 2016

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

FROM: Herbert Smith, Mission Director 

SUBJECT: Mission Response to Draft SIGAR Review titled: "Schools in Herat Province: Observations from Site Visits at 25 Schools" (SIGAR SP-115B/SIGAR-17-XX-SP)

REF: SIGAR Transmittal email dated 10/08/2016

USAID thanks SIGAR for the opportunity to comment on this Draft Review.

We note that of the 25 schools visited by SIGAR, four were constructed by USAID and 21 were rehabilitated by USAID. Following handover, the Ministry of Education (MoE) became the responsible party to operate and maintain these facilities. Each facility was provided a one year warranty period to ensure latent defects and/or poor workmanship issues would be identified prior to closing out the contract. USAID had no other ongoing commitments to operate or maintain these schools after handover.

USAID completed the transition of these schools to MoE by 2006 and is no longer building new schools in Afghanistan. We continue working with the Afghan government to build a comprehensive, nationwide education system by training teachers, expanding community-based education, supporting institutions of higher learning, and strengthening the ability of the Ministry of Education to deliver high-quality education throughout Afghanistan.

USAID refers to Afghan Ministry of Education statistics like levels of enrollment to gauge overall progress in the education sector, not to directly measure USAID's achievements. This is a standard practice across the Agency.

As SIGAR states in the review, a single 1-2 hour site visit during only one of two or potentially three shifts during a school day cannot substantiate claims of low attendance. It only provides a snapshot of the school's performance and does not give the full picture on attendance.

Many of the schools are used for multiple grade levels and are multishift in nature, which likely contributed to the disparities between the data SIGAR collected and the official school records. For example, many schools serve large numbers of students by sharing the building at different times of day. Therefore, one would not expect to find the full number of students present during a single visit at a specific time. It is imperative that reviewers ascertain certain baseline information before conducting research or analysis, including the number of students segregated by age and curriculum, class schedules and teacher assignment. This information would provide a better reference point for scientific analysis.

USAID will ensure that the MoE is notified of the data issues identified by SIGAR for further analysis, and follow-up as well on the other issues raised in the SIGAR review.

cc: Robert Clark, Controller, USAID/Afghanistan
Daniel Wartko, U.S. Embassy/Kabul
OAPA Audit