International Assistance to Afghanistan, 2008 – 2018

Part 3: Summary of Selected SIGAR Reports, Afghanistan, 2008 – 2018

March 2020 | Hassina Popal and Christoph Zürcher
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On behalf of
Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Germany
Division for Afghanistan and Pakistan
Contents

1 Executive Summary ................................................................. 5

2 About this Report ................................................................. 7
   2.1 Criteria for Including Evaluations ........................................ 7
   2.2 Methodologies Used by Included Evaluations .......................... 7
   2.3 Evidence Base ............................................................... 7

3 Findings by Sector ............................................................... 8
   3.1 Governance ...................................................................... 8
   3.2 Economic Development .................................................... 11
   3.3 Education ...................................................................... 15
   3.4 Energy ............................................................................. 17
   3.5 Afghan Infrastructure Fund ................................................ 20
   3.6 Gender ............................................................................. 23
   3.7 Health ............................................................................. 25
   3.8 Stabilization ..................................................................... 26
   3.9 Water ............................................................................... 30
   3.10 Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) .......................... 31
   3.11 Cross cutting issue: Corruption ......................................... 33

4 Conclusions ............................................................................ 34

5 References ............................................................................. 36

Imprint ..................................................................................... 39
## Abbreviations and Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARAP</td>
<td>Afghanistan Rural Access Program</td>
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<td>ARTF</td>
<td>Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund</td>
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<td>ASGP</td>
<td>Afghanistan Sub-National Governance Project</td>
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<td>BMZ</td>
<td>Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung/ The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td>CERP</td>
<td>Commanders Emergency Response Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>COIN</td>
<td>Counterinsurgency</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDA</td>
<td>District Development Assemblies</td>
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<tr>
<td>EQUIP</td>
<td>Education Quality Improvement Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>EVAW</td>
<td>Eliminating violence against women</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDLG</td>
<td>Independent Directorate of Local Governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>IEC</td>
<td>Independent Electoral Commission of Afghanistan</td>
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<td>IRDP</td>
<td>Irrigation Restoration and Development Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOTFA</td>
<td>Law and Order Trust Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>MBAW</td>
<td>Making Budgets and Aid Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDPG</td>
<td>National State Governance Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIBP</td>
<td>National Institution Building Project</td>
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<td>NSP</td>
<td>National Solidarity Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIGAR</td>
<td>Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
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<td>TA</td>
<td>Technical Assistance</td>
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Executive Summary

SIGARs lessons learned reports and performance audits vividly document that US aid to Afghanistan was often much less effective and less efficient than expected.

The sheer number of programs and projects overburdened the institutional absorption capacity of the Afghan government and the US government routinely overestimated the institutional, regulatory, and infrastructure capacity of the Afghan government. High-level corruption, high staff turnovers and lack of qualified exacerbated the problems.

Many programs lacked a tailored approach to the context of Afghanistan and aid funds were spent too quickly. Spending capacity often became a metric for success, but the quick spending of large amounts of aid money created opportunities for power brokers to increase their influence in villages, cities, and within the government itself. This cultivated an environment of impunity, weakening the rule of law and corruption.

US agencies also lacked the oversight capacity and robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that would have enabled clear, concise assessments of program performance. Instead, some programs were poorly defined, and most lacked baseline studies. Data collection to assess program performance was poor and further complicated by a lack of coordination between development agencies in sharing information.

The context also was not conducive to effective aid. Most important among the many adverse factors were pervasive corruption, a lack of political will on the part of Afghan partners, and the lack of security.

Between 2002 and 2007, $4.7 billion was spent on stabilization efforts. SIGAR concluded that these efforts mostly failed. Stabilization strategies were not tailored to the context of Afghanistan and the US overestimated the Afghan government’s capacity and performance.

Programs in the governance sectors were poorly planned and managed, lacking performance measurements. Corruption, insecurity, and a lack of political will further reduced effectiveness.

SIGAR criticized the World Bank for its weak monitoring of the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), noting limitations with transparency, accounting for ARTF funding, and the Afghan government’s fiduciary controls.

Programs supporting economic development, macroeconomic policies, and financial management capacities achieved some progress in the early stages of reconstruction. For example, there was initial growth in the telecommunications, transportation, and construction sectors, but results were not sustainable nor was it realistic to expect sustainable economic growth in such an insecure environment as Afghanistan.
Programs in the education sector often lacked defined strategic goals and objectives. Furthermore, program performance and progress were not assessed over time; programs focused more on outputs than outcomes or impacts, making them difficult to identify. SIGAR also identified major problems with student and teacher absenteeism, “ghost teachers,” and the poor quality of some school buildings.

Programs in the energy sector faced technical, financial, and institutional constraints, and were often overly complex and ambitious. SIGAR suggested that smaller, decentralized, off-grid solutions might be more effective.

Gender programs were not adequately monitored and evaluated, which made it impossible to identify any possible impact. Insecurity, limited government capacity, and cultural norms also impeded US efforts to advance women’s rights.
2 About this Report

The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) conducts financial audits, performance audits, inspections, and investigations of US agencies reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Its main mandate is to provide independent and objective oversight of the funding that the U.S. provides to Afghanistan.

SIGAR regularly publishes its quarterly reports to Congress. In addition, SIGAR also publishes financial audits, performance audits, evaluations, inspection reports, and lessons learned reports. SIGARs main function is to audit programs, hence the focus of its reports is on efficiency and effectiveness of programs. In this report, we summarize our findings from an analysis of selected SIGAR reports.

2.1 Criteria for Including Evaluations

We searched all available SIGAR reports for relevant information (primarily: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impacts of programs, contextual factors) relating to the sectors of governance, sustainable economic development, education, energy, water, infrastructure, gender, health, and stabilization.

We found relevant information in the following reports:

- 4 lessons-learned reports on: Corruption; Lessons of the Coalition; Private Sector; Stabilization
- 17 special reports relating to one or more of the above-mentioned sectors
- 21 performance audit reports relating to one of the above-mentioned sectors
- 9 quarterly reports relating to one or more of the above-mentioned sectors

The full list of the 51 SIGAR reports which we used for our analysis is given at the end of this report.

2.2 Methodologies Used by Included Evaluations

SIGAR reports are based on desk review, including analyses of program documentation and secondary literature. Frequently, there are also site visits and extensive stakeholder interviews, both in the US and in Afghanistan. For lessons learned report, there are usually also a large number of expert interviews and comprehensive literature reviews.

2.3 Evidence Base

This report is based on extracting relevant data from 51 SIGAR reports released between 2008 and 2018, belonging to the following categories: Lessons-learned reports, Special Projects reports, Performance Audit reports and Quarterly Reports. We give the full list of used SIGAR reports below in “References”.

3 Findings by Sector

3.1 Governance

Many programs were implemented to revive Afghanistan’s governance sector. The National Solidarity Program (NSP) began in 2002 and received $1.5 billion from international donors, with the largest portion of aid provided by the US. The NSP aimed to strengthen local governance by establishing Community Development Councils (CDCs) and training them to manage small projects. The program had four different streams: 1) governance; 2) capacity building; 3) community block grants; and 4) linkages and service provision. The programs made a positive impact in providing local governance and training thousands of communities.

By January 2011, the programs had mobilized 26,110 communities, funded 53,610 projects, disbursed $793 million in block grants, and enabled communities to gain local ownership. SIGAR noted that, according to one facilitator, the Taliban were less likely to target schools, built by the NSP because local communities supported the program. However, SIGAR also reported one case where NSP funds ($2.8 million) were retained by a hawala dealer because some members of the community expressed difficulty in retrieving block grants from the bank. SIGAR also concluded that the program went through implementation delays, failed to expand its activities comprehensively into insecure areas, and lacked a baseline study and collection of data to conduct performance measurements.

Allegedly, CDCs were to continue working as civil society organizations; however, SIGAR noted that there were no indications of how CDCs would raise funds to sustain their work, making program sustainability difficult to foresee.

Another program, the Justice Sector Support Program (JSSP), had three components:

1. **Regional Justice Sector Training** to provide training to officials, including continuing education courses, training, and seminars on trial advocacy, crime scene management, and other selected topics

2. **Case Management System** to track criminal cases across judicial institutions

3. **Institutional and Administrative Capacity** to provide capacity building training and administrative skills development for Afghan ministry officials

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1 SIGAR Audit-11-8 (March 2011), Afghanistan’s national solidarity program has reached thousands of Afghan communities, but faces challenges that could limit outcomes, p. 2.
2 Ibid., p. ii.
3 Ibid., p. 13.
4 A hawala dealer is a local/regional person who delivers funds.
5 Ibid., p. 13.
6 Ibid., p. 23.
7 Ibid., p. 19.
8 SIGAR 14-26-AR (January 2014), Support of Afghan justice sector: State Department programs need better management and stronger oversight, p. 1.
Findings by Sector

When SIGAR published its report in 2014, the US had already spent $205.5 million on the JSSP program. It also indicated that JSSP’s contribution to the Afghan justice system was “unclear,” contract requirements were poorly defined, and the notion of gender mainstreaming was not addressed. In addition, there were monitoring difficulties in measuring progress, tracking costs, and ensuring contract deliverables. As well, there were no lessons-learned analyses. Despite the lack of a baseline study, a performance management report was provided; it simply referred to outputs such as the number of JSSP training courses conducted, number of Afghans attending courses, etc. In the absence of a baseline study, SIGAR could not realistically measure the outcomes of the program.

Rule of law programs cost more than $1 billion between 2003 and 2014, and aimed to build capacity and improve the overall justice sector. SIGAR selected the following programs for review:


2. DOJ Senior Federal Prosecutors Program (SFPP): Aimed to assist the formal criminal justice system to achieve legitimacy by countering narcotics trafficking, corruption, and security threats.

3. Corrections System Support Program (CSSP): Focused on the development of Afghanistan’s national corrections system by building a safe, secure, and humane prison system. Also aimed to assist the Afghanistan Ministry of Interior’s General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Centers with overall correctional training and professional advising.

4. Justice Sector Support Program (JSSP): Aimed to provide training to Afghan justice sector officials and operational management to build capacity.

5. Rule of Law Stabilization Program–Formal Component (RLS-F): Designed to improve the justice sector and reduce corruption by building leadership, capacity, improving court management systems, and raising awareness.

6. Rule of Law Stabilization Program–Informal Component (RLS-I): Aimed to strengthen the informal justice sector by increasing stability and improving access to justice in target districts.

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9 Ibid., p. 6.
10 Ibid., p. 5.
11 Ibid., p. 5.
12 Ibid., pp. 12.
13 Ibid., p. 12.
14 Ibid., p. 6.
15 SIGAR 15-68-AR (July 2015), Rule of law in Afghanistan: US agencies lack a strategy and cannot fully determine the effectiveness of programs costing more than $1 billion, p. 10.
16 Ibid., p. 12.
17 Ibid., p. 13.
19 Ibid., p. 16.
20 Ibid.
Findings by Sector

Three of the six assessed programs in this report did not have a performance management plan until several years after the programs began. There were also no baseline studies conducted for the rule of law activities in ROLFF-A, and once the performance plan was created, the indicators were unclear for measuring ROLFF-A objectives. In addition, there were several inconsistencies in the data collection. As time advanced, data collection decreased: in 2011, eight of the ten provinces had recorded program data; by the end of 2012, only one province recorded program data.

Other challenges, such as frequent staff turnover and lack of information sharing, imperative for transferring institutional knowledge to newly hired staff, weakened program processes. Widespread corruption and a lack of political will did not allow corruption cases to be prosecuted. Contractors did not conduct robust monitoring and program evaluation; the data they provided mostly concerned outputs instead of impacts and objectives (e.g., the number of trained judges or legal clinics). The contractors also lacked the competency to understand the purpose of legal clinics; overall, there were uncertainties about program sustainability.

Although the program did help the Afghan government draft two laws on improving urban planning, a more comprehensive performance management plan with indicators would have been useful. The lack of these components made it difficult to measure the impact of the programs. Furthermore, uncertainty around the notion of sustainability raised questions for US agencies on whether the Afghan government would be capable of taking responsibility for these programs. USAID did not follow its own internal requirements to assess the sustainability of the programs. Corruption also played a significant role in impeding land reform because members of the Afghan government stole public and private lands. It is reported that 60% of corruption in the Afghan judicial system involves land ownership.

These conclusions signify that governance programs were poorly planned and managed, and the shortcomings prevented measuring performance to judge if any progress had been made. Corruption, insecurity, and a lack of political will impeded the development and expansion of governance programs. The sustainability of the programs could also not be measured. The success of future investments in this sector will be difficult, as corruption challenges will undermine reconstruction efforts. However, if development agencies design programs with these challenges in mind — and build in efficient monitoring and evaluation mechanisms — then this sector might improve.

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21 Ibid., p. 10.
22 Ibid., p. 11.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., p. 12.
26 Ibid., p. 16.
27 Ibid., p. 17.
28 Ibid., p. 20.
29 Ibid., p. 12.
31 Ibid., p. 12.
32 Ibid.
3.2 Economic Development

Establishing macroeconomic policies and financial management capacities enabled programs in this area to attain success in the early stages of reconstruction.\(^{33}\) However, it was not realistic to expect sustainable economic growth in such an insecure environment as Afghanistan.\(^{34}\)

A large percentage of the Afghan population relies on agriculture as a source of income (65–80%), and from 2002 until 2010, the US invested more than $1 billion to help develop this sector.

The following programs were implemented to build the capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL):

1. **Agriculture Credit Enhancement** to support MAIL in better coordinating and rationalizing donor-funded rural and agricultural activities

2. **Advancing Afghan Agriculture Alliance** to link the development of university agriculture faculties more closely with MAIL

3. **Accelerating Sustainable Agriculture Program** to improve the Afghan government’s capacity to formulate agriculture sector policies and strategies and carry out administrative and financial coordination for competitive, market-led production and agribusinesses

4. **Afghanistan Vouchers for Increased Production in Agriculture–Plus (AVIPA-Plus)** to include Afghan authorities, civilian, and military counterparts in program implementation as well as strengthen MAIL and the Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (DAIL) capacity to address farmer needs

5. **Afghanistan Water, Agriculture, and Technology Transfer** to provide technical assistance to improve MAIL’s irrigation and watershed management decision-making strategies and outreach capabilities

6. **Commercial Horticulture and Agriculture Marketing Program** to increase support to MAIL for the development of market-led agriculture production and marketing

7. **Incentives Driving Economic Alternatives for the North, East, and West** to enable local government to fulfill its role in driving long-term adoption and sustainability of projects

8. **Improving Livelihoods and Governance through Natural Resource Management** to create and strengthen community governance institutions

9. **Pastoral Engagement Adaptation, and Capacity Enhancement** to help build capacity of government personnel for planning and implementing livestock development and rangeland resource management\(^{35}\)

\(^{33}\) SIGAR Quarterly Report (30 April 2018), Private sector, pp. 11–12.

\(^{34}\) Ibid., pp. 12–13.

\(^{35}\) SIGAR Audit-12-1 (October 2011), Actions needed to better assess and coordinate capacity-building efforts at the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, pp. 17–18.
SIGAR was provided with performance reports that focused on quantitative results such as the number of farmers accessing agricultural extension services, number of farmers trained in new techniques, number of national research stations, etc. These findings were insufficient to conclude the outcome of the programs; therefore, the impact is unclear. The reports also lacked data collection mechanisms to measure progress and had no performance baselines or targets. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture had coordination and integration issues with the district, provincial, and national levels that limited the effectiveness of the investments. SIGAR noted that the reports did not provide a reliable evaluation of the overall impact. Therefore, it was difficult to identify how to improve the effectiveness of the programs and ensure their sustainability.

Programs such as the Regional Agriculture Development Program (RADP) were established in four regions of Afghanistan: South, North, East, and West. These programs aimed to improve food and economic security for rural Afghans by connecting several agribusinesses to each other. Their specific goals included the following: 1) developing the agriculture sector; 2) increasing productivity and production; 3) increasing profitability for small and medium agribusinesses; 4) increasing women’s participation in agricultural activities; 5) improving the environment for agricultural growth; and 6) increasing and sustaining the adoption of licit crops.

Because SIGAR had previously published audit reports on agriculture, it analyzed whether prior lessons were implemented into RADP’s design, performance, sustainability, and oversight capabilities. The findings indicated that USAID had incorporated lessons learned from 15 prior programs to design RADP. However, it lacked performance evaluations to measure progress. In the absence of a performance evaluation, the overall impact of the programs remained unclear. Furthermore, RADP-South was terminated in 2017 because it did not achieve its goals and objectives, whereas RADP-West ended due to delays in contract deliverables and its inability to achieve program results. SIGAR also indicated that USAID did not conduct a sustainability analysis, making it difficult to determine whether the Afghan government would be able to continue the programs once USAID ceases its funding.

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36 Ibid., p. 10.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., p. ii.
39 Ibid., p. 10.
40 SIGAR 18-65-AR (July 2018), Regional agriculture development program, p. 4.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid., p. 7.
43 Ibid., p. 20.
44 Ibid., p. 5.
Sigar also analyzed the main lessons learned of the reconstruction efforts in private sector development from 2011 to 2017, focused on five major economic sectors: 46

1. Creating an enabling environment focused on building capacity in the fiscal sector, such as revenue collection, budget construction, and tax reform, as well as establishing monetary policies

2. Providing access to finance aimed to support the commercial banking sector and the provision of direct loans and loan guarantees

3. Promoting investment ensured property rights, building and supporting institutions, developing industrial parks, and sector-focused investment promotion

4. Promoting regional and international trade

5. Providing direct support to enterprises

Sigar concluded that growth in the sectors of telecommunications, transportation, and construction were successful initially, but not sustainable. 47 Taliban insurgency impeded private sector growth and the development of stable government institutions. 48 Weak institutional infrastructures and procedures, as well as unfair practices — such as border closures and dumping — by neighbouring economies have limited trade markets. 49 Widespread corruption within the Afghan government, political instability, and insecurity hindered economic growth. 50 Afghan government and society were not prepared for the introduction of a Western-style market economy. 51 The US government spent development funding too quickly with funds often regarded as “free money” by businesses. Once funding ceased, businesses stopped operating. 52 The “Western model of professional services” did not align with small Afghan enterprise needs and ways of operating. 53 Performance evaluations were difficult due to a poor data environment. 54 Capacity building brought some results to the young, mostly urban entrepreneurs who went to the US or elsewhere for further studies and used their skills in private enterprise. 55 The US underestimated the threats of corruption, poor governance, and Taliban insurgency at the early stages of reconstruction. Though there were early successes due to foreign spending, the improvements were not sustainable.

47 Ibid., p. 163.
48 Ibid., p. 164.
49 Ibid., p. 165.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., p. 167.
52 Ibid., p. 175.
53 Ibid., p. 177.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid., p. 178.
56 Ibid., p. 179.
Findings by Sector

Specific programs to develop Afghanistan's extractives industries included the following:

1. **Mining Investment and Development for Afghan Sustainability** (MIDAS), designed to build institutional and technical capacity at the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum (MoMP), and to procure, implement, and monitor the completion of prioritized mining tender packages under direct contract with international consulting firms.

2. **Sheberghan Gas Generation Activity** (SGGA) and **Sheberghan Gas Development Project** (SGDP), both focused on building capacity throughout various Afghan government entities, including MoMP, the Afghan Gas Enterprise, the Ministry of Energy and Water, and electricity company Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat.\(^{57}\)

While SIGAR did not report on the specific outcomes of the extractive programs, it critiqued the lack of a unified US strategy for the development of Afghanistan’s extractive industries.\(^{58}\) The involved agencies pursued different approaches to implement their initiatives; as a result, the projects did not follow a “clear and cohesive strategy.”\(^{59}\) Furthermore, the US embassy in Kabul failed to coordinate interagency activities due to lack of policymaking authority and influence on the agencies, diminishing any chances of coordination between them. The sale of minerals in the domestic and international markets was deemed to bring funds to Afghanistan, but the programs were neither monitored nor sustained.\(^{60}\) The MoMP lacked the capacity to research, award, and manage new contracts without foreign support.\(^{61}\) SIGAR also reported fundamental impediments such as corruption, lack of infrastructure, insecurity, and poorly drafted mineral law.\(^{62}\)

In a separate report, SIGAR listed economic challenges such as insurgency, emigration (brain drain), and a slowing global economy that did not help Afghanistan’s economic prospects.\(^{63}\) Other obstacles included the lack of rule of law, poor regulatory frameworks and enforcement mechanisms, and widespread corruption, with Afghan elites competing to obtain political rents provided by international assistance to reinforce their own influence and power.\(^{64}\) There were also challenges in monitoring programs and projects, with added difficulties in gathering information needed to make decisions to expand, change, realign, or terminate a program.\(^{65}\)

International aid is not sufficient by itself to improve the economic development of Afghanistan. Attention must be given to growth-enabling fundamentals such as security and honest governance.\(^{66}\) Without these challenges in mind while designing the programs, future investments will be lost to corruption.

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\(^{57}\) SIGAR 15-55-AR (April 2015), Afghanistan’s mineral, oil, and gas industries: Unless US agencies act soon to sustain investments made, $488 million in funding is at risk, p. 8.

\(^{58}\) Ibid.

\(^{59}\) Ibid.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., p. 16.

\(^{61}\) Ibid.

\(^{62}\) SIGAR 16-11-AR (January 2016), Afghanistan’s extractive industries, p. 16.

\(^{63}\) SIGAR Quarterly Report (30 January 2016), Economic challenges, p. 3.

\(^{64}\) Ibid., p. 5.

\(^{65}\) Ibid., p. 9.

\(^{66}\) Ibid., p. 13.
3.3 Education

Both the Afghan government and US agencies claim improvements in the education sector. An investment of $759.6 million was spent on 39 programs from 2002 to 2014. The programs focused on: 1) textbook printing and supplies; 2) tuition payments and scholarships; 3) community empowerment; 4) youth capacity building; 5) English-language instruction; 6) financial management for universities; 7) teacher training; and 8) construction of health and education facilities. There were limitations in the tracking of certain projects that prevented SIGAR from determining exactly how much was spent on projects supporting or benefiting primary and secondary education.

The programs did not have defined strategic goals and objectives for their education activities, causing a weak coordination. A detailed strategy would have enhanced implementation and achievement of goals. Furthermore, performance and progress were not assessed over time, and the programs focused more on outputs rather than outcomes or impacts, making it difficult to determine whether there had been improvements in the education sector.

SIGAR asserted that accurate and reliable data is necessary to ensure full accountability over US funds and inform decision making on programming and funding. However, data provided by the Afghan government was unverified, risking inaccuracy because it was not clearly linked to USAID’s development efforts. The misconception that funds spent to improve the Afghan education sector would result in greater stability within Afghanistan was widespread; however, agencies could not determine the improvements they had made.

Though agencies still reported significant improvements, they particularly focused on generated output data to measure their overall performance. They did not establish a causal link between their efforts and the improvements in education. SIGAR recommended providing clear descriptions of how US agencies would implement their strategies. It also advised giving specific attention to the source and quality of data, as well as the outcomes and impacts by using program evaluation and performance reports. Establishing whether there is a causal link between program efforts and progress is also vital to ensuring an accurate understanding of the education sector for decision makers and the public.

In May 2015, Afghan Minister of Education Dr. Asadullah Hanif Balkhi told parliament “that more than half of all teachers lacked necessary skill sets, the general-education curriculum was not sufficient, students did not have timely access to textbooks, and that educational services were unbalanced.” He allegedly added that the Ministry of Education lacked a system to track schools because non-existent schools continued to receive funding.
Corruption continued to be an obstacle to improving teaching quality. The Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC) reported that the recruitment system was highly vulnerable to corruption and that the “education of Afghan students was being significantly undermined by bribery and nepotism.”

Between November 2016 and November 2018, SIGAR also conducted site visits of schools that had been constructed or rehabilitated using USAID funds: Herat, 25 visits; Balkh, 26 visits; Faryab, 17 visits; Kabul, 24 visits; Kunduz, 6 visits; and Parwan, 14 visits. The specific findings are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Observations from SIGAR Site Visits of Schools, Nov. 2016 to Nov. 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Student enrollment reported</th>
<th>SIGAR observations by site visits of students enrollment</th>
<th>Numbers of assigned teachers reported</th>
<th>SIGAR observations by site visits of teachers on ground</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Herat</td>
<td>2639</td>
<td>561 (23% of reported enrollment)</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balkh</td>
<td>2561</td>
<td>734 (30% of reported enrollment)</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faryab</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>400 (80% of reported enrollment)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabul</td>
<td>1120</td>
<td>1000 (87% of reported enrollment)</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunduz</td>
<td>1250</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parwan</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>325 (83% of reported enrollment)</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>13</td>
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</table>

SIGAR conducted interviews with school officials and staff to collect school attendance results. The reported student enrollment represents the average number of enrolled students per school in each province. As the results in the table demonstrate, there were major problems with both student and teacher absenteeism. Student absenteeism was prevalent in Herat, Balkh, and Kunduz, whereas teacher absenteeism was reported in all provinces except Kabul. The notion of “ghost” teachers — where teachers did not fill out the attendance sheets or forged them — also appeared in the MEC report.83

86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
88 SIGAR 17-32-SP (March 2017), Schools in Balkh Province: Observations from site visits at 26 schools.
89 SIGAR 18-17-SP (December 2017), Schools in Faryab Province, Afghanistan: Observations from site visits at 17 schools.
90 SIGAR 18-31-SP (February 2018), Schools in Kabul Province, Afghanistan: Observations from site visits at 24 schools.
91 SIGAR 18-40-SP (April 2018), Schools in Kunduz Province, Afghanistan: Observations from site visits at 6 schools.
92 SIGAR 18-67-SP (August 2018), Schools in Parwan Province, Afghanistan: Observations from site visits at 14 schools.
93 SIGAR 17-12-SP (November 2016), Schools in Herat Province, p. 4.
While schools were in usable condition in some provinces (Faryab, Kabul, Parwan, and Kunduz), several schools lacked basic needs (e.g., electricity, clean water, toilets, and handwashing stations), and had structural damage and other safety hazards.

3.4 Energy

Between 2013 and 2018, $5 billion was spent to develop the energy sector in Afghanistan, including the construction, rehabilitation, and development of electrical infrastructure. The US alone spent $3 billion since 2002. When the US overthrew the Taliban, only 6% of Afghans had access to electricity. By 2006, that number had roughly doubled to 10%; by 2016, the number had tripled again to 30% of Afghans with access to electricity.

According to SIGAR’s January 2010 report, $732 million was spent on generation, transmission, and distribution of energy. In August 2006, Afghanistan produced approximately 88,804 MWH of electrical power; by August 2009, electrical production had more than doubled to 180,415 MWH.

SIGAR listed several energy projects that commenced after the US intervention in Afghanistan:

1. **Salma Dam** construction was interrupted in the 1970s due to the Soviet invasion, and resumed by India in 2004. It was estimated that it would take 4 years and $79 million for the completion of the dam. The project included providing power equipment, building irrigation systems and infrastructure, and 100 miles road from Salma to Herat city west. However, the official inauguration of the dam took place in June 2016 at a total cost of $260 million (triple the initial estimate). The dam will irrigate 80,000 hectares of land and generate power.

2. **Kajaki Dam** construction in Helmand Province was led by the US in 2004 and worth $357 million to increase the power output. Insecurity caused many delays. In 2008, American, British, and Afghan troops escorted the delivery of a third turbine for the dam, but several were killed and many were injured in the attempt due to insurgent attacks. Despite a successful delivery, the turbine was not installed. USAID stated that 60% of the work was complete at the time of report.

3. **Kandahar Bridging Solutions** was led by the US. At an estimated project cost of $120 million, the project was intended to install diesel generation in the city of Kandahar. However, the costs of operation and maintenance reached $270 million (over double the initial estimate).

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84 SIGAR Quarterly Report (30 July 2016), Electrification, p. 3.
85 Ibid., p. 10.
86 SIGAR Audit-10-4 (January 2010), Afghanistan energy supply has increased but an updated master plan is needed and delays and sustainability concerns remain.
87 Ibid., p. 3.
89 Ibid.
90 Ibid., p. 8.
91 Ibid., p. 5.
92 Ibid., p. 6.
93 Ibid., p. 5.
94 Ibid., p. 6.
Findings by Sector

4. **Tarakhil Power Plant** (diesel-fired) was led by the US in 2007. Construction ended in 2010, but the power plant was operating at under 1% of its capacity between 2014 and 2015. This power plant became less useful because other sources of energy were less costly or were imported from neighbouring countries.  

5. **NEPS and SEPS (Northeast and Southeast Power Systems)** were led by the US to provide access to power imported from neighbouring countries.  

6. **Sheberghan Oil Field Development and Power Plant** was led by the US to develop gas fields and a 200-megawatt natural gas power plant.  

7. **Central Asia–South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project** was funded by the World Bank to import power from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Afghanistan's power demand reaches its highest in the winter, however, whereas the exporters' hydro resources are at their lowest during this period. This transmission project did not respond to Afghanistan's power needs in winter; during the summer, the country can find cheaper options.  

8. **Turkmenistan–Uzbekistan–Tajikistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan (TUTAP) Interconnection Project** was funded by the Asian Development Bank to establish interconnection in Afghanistan to link power grids and enable power import.  

The reports also found difficulties in the energy sector, such as a lack of planning to establish priorities, timeframes, costs, as well as information to conduct baseline studies. There were also difficulties in obtaining reliable data to analyze progress and challenges to make programs sustainable. In addition, corruption plagued the energy sector, including collecting “extra fees for connections, bribes to meter readers, bypassing of meters, and incomplete revenue returns to the Central Ministry of Energy and Water.” This sector also lacked an experienced workforce, projects were delayed, and there was limited monitoring and oversight of the projects, which left the funds to be wasted or used fraudulently.  

95. Ibid., p. 8.  
96. Ibid.  
97. Ibid.  
98. Ibid.  
99. Ibid., p. 15.  
100. Ibid., p. 8.  
101. SIGAR Audit-10-4 (January 2010), Afghanistan energy supply has increased..., p. ii.  
102. Ibid., p. 3.  
103. Ibid., p. 8.  
104. Ibid., pp. 9–11.
Furthermore, the quality of the power distributed was poor, connectivity was lacking, and at times power blackouts lasted up to 15 hours. On projects to import energy, Afghanistan and its neighbours could not agree on power-supply arrangements. Drought and seasonal conditions affected rivers and raised questions about the use of power and rural areas lacked the needed infrastructure to implement energy projects. Insurgents prevented the delivery of supplies crucial to complete projects, sometimes actively targeting energy infrastructure, as they did in 2016 when explosive attacks on Kabul’s transmission stopped the power supply for days.

SIGAR also referred to the Asian Development Bank’s findings in this sector, which include the following:

1. **Technical obstacles**: “insufficient transmission and distribution networks, multiple ‘island’ grids not connected with one another, limited renewable-resource development in areas not connected to the grid, summer-peaking hydroelectric capacity, costly diesel fuel”

2. **Financial constraints**: “high costs for investment, operations, and maintenance, high ‘commercial losses’ (nonpayment, power theft, etc.), poor metering and billing, weak regulation, and rates that don’t cover costs of service”

3. **Institutional challenges**: “inadequate investment, poor organizational structure, and weak human-resource, planning, and forecasting capability”

Increasing insecurity and weak rule of law contributed to these challenges, aggravating the technical, financial, and institutional impediments to providing electricity to the Afghan population. In parallel to these conclusions, SIGAR also referenced a 2015 Cambridge article citing that “traditional methods of energy planning are likely to provide results that may be inappropriate in fragile and conflict-prone countries... The risks of violence and damage, or significant delays and cancellations in infrastructure development, are rife in these states.” Allegedly, smaller programs and projects that are flexible, less costly, and easier and faster to establish and manage are preferable alternatives for fragile states.

Bigger projects bring potentially bigger risks and challenges. For example, 18 micro-hydro power plants, funded by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in the province of Bamyan, have no connection to the national-utility grid. These small power plants provide power to 2,163 households (15,000 people).
SIGAR recommends that new programs and projects consider previous delayed, interrupted, and failed projects and the contractors must consider the three constraints (technical, financial, and institutional), political and environmental settings, and local capacities before designing programs. SIGAR also referred to the Asian Development Bank’s *Power Sector Master Plan* for Afghanistan, which foresees that the electric-connection rate could potentially rise to 65% in rural areas and 100% in urban zones if barriers are recognized and considered in the planning process.

### 3.5 Afghan Infrastructure Fund

In 2011, the US congress created the Afghan Infrastructure Fund (AIF) to allow US agencies to combine funds and conduct infrastructure projects. In its July 2012 report, SIGAR indicated that the AIF projects were behind schedule for implementation due to security challenges, contractor fraud, funding delays, and land acquisition issues. Some of these projects were mentioned above in the energy sector, including the following: 1) a 25-mile road from Nawa to Lashkar Gah; 2) provincial justice centres in Balkh, Heart, Kandahar, Khost, and Nangarhar; 3) Kandahar Bridging Solution; 4) Southeast Power Systems; 5) Northeast Power System from Chimtal to Ghazni; 6) Northeast Power System from Chimtal to Gardez.

Because the projects were in their early stages of construction, SIGAR reported that the agencies who shared responsibility for implementing the projects lacked coordination in sharing project information, not having a clear understanding of their roles. The agencies also could not ensure the sustainability of these projects due to lack of government capacity.

Several years later, in 2017, SIGAR published another review of these six AIF projects mentioned above. Three of the six projects — the two Northeast Power System projects and the Southeast Power System project — were still incomplete due to land acquisition issues, increased insecurity, funding delays, and the contractor extending the schedule. SIGAR also indicated that US agencies could not assess the performance of these infrastructure projects, that they failed to develop a sustainability plan to transfer responsibility for them to the Afghan government, which lacked capacity and funding to ensure their maintenance, and that it was unclear whether the six AIF projects were achieving...

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116 Ibid., p. 21.
117 Ibid., p. 12.
118 SIGAR Audit-12-12 (July 2012), Fiscal year 2011 Afghanistan infrastructure fund projects are behind schedule and lack adequate sustainment plans.
119 SIGAR 18-10-AR (October 2017), 2011 AIF projects, p. 11.
120 SIGAR Audit-12-12 (July 2012), Fiscal year 2011 Afghanistan infrastructure fund projects..., p. 5.
121 Ibid., p. ii.
122 Ibid.
123 SIGAR 18-10-AR (October 2017), 2011 AIF projects.
124 Ibid., p. 11.
125 Ibid., p. 20.
126 Ibid., p. 16.
127 Ibid., p. 18.
these goals. These statements render the impacts of the AIF projects unclear and demonstrate that project sustainability may be difficult to achieve as the Afghan government faces self-sufficiency challenges.

SIGAR also inspected 22% of all paved roads in Afghanistan in 2015, given the $2.8 billion in US investment in road construction since 2002.  

The following roads were inspected:

1. Kandahar–Tarin Kowt (173 km)
2. Charikar–Doshi (120 km)
3. Chorah–Gizab (120 km)
4. Maidan Shahr–Ghazni (104 km)
5. Ghazni–Moqur (104 km)
6. Feyzabad–Kishim (101 km)
7. Gardez–Khowst (101 km)
8. Sherzad–Azrah (100 km)
9. Qala-e Gelzai-Duro (97 km)
10. Ghazni–Paktiya (90 km)
11. Jaghuri–Malistan (70 km)
12. Kabul–Logar (65 km)
13. Herat–Adraskan (64 km)
14. Logar–Qasemkhel (60 km)
15. Ghazni–Sharana (60 km)
16. Logar–Gardez (55 km)
17. Sheberghan–Sar-e Pul (54 km)
18. Duro–Kandahar (40 km)
19. Shinwar–Dur Baba (40 km)
20. Kabul–Maidan Shahr (22 km)

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128 Ibid., p. 20.
129 SIGAR 17-11-AR (October 2016), U.S. efforts to support Afghanistan’s road infrastructure.
130 Ibid., p. 8.
SIGAR reported that most US-funded roads needed maintenance and repair due to weather, insurgency, and neglect.\footnote{Ibid., p. 6.} This signified that the Ministry of Public Works (MoPW) lacked capacity to conduct infrastructure maintenance.\footnote{Ibid., p. 18.} Weakened roads limited the government’s movement throughout its regions to enable and sustain development.\footnote{Ibid., p. 15.} SIGAR suggested that the MoPW needed internal reform because of its poorly skilled staff — largely hired based on nepotism — as well as its lack of communication and processes, and lack of will to implement such reforms.\footnote{Ibid.} Without government action, including the establishment of an independent road authority, road fund, and transportation institute, Afghanistan’s road infrastructure will not be adequately managed nor sustained.

Other site inspections included reviews of bridges in the Province of Baghlan\footnote{SIGAR 18-70-SP (September 2018), Bridges in Baghlan Province, Afghanistan: Six of eight bridges constructed or rehabilitated by DOD remain in generally good, usable condition; two appeared to have structural issues needing attention.} and Kabul in 2018.\footnote{SIGAR 19-08-SP (December 2018), Bridges in Kabul Province, Afghanistan: Six bridges are generally in good condition, but Afghan government lacks budget for sustained maintenance.} The findings in Baghlan indicated that six of the eight bridges were in good condition and communities were benefitting from them. In particular, the bridges facilitated local commerce, connecting villages to urban areas, by crossing rivers. The other two bridges in Baghlan suffered from inadequate maintenance and posed potential safety hazards.

The six inspected bridges in Kabul were all in good condition and benefitted the communities. These cross-river bridges connected communities to workplaces, schools, clinics, and markets.\footnote{Ibid., p. 2.} SIGAR also reported, however, that without sustained maintenance by the Afghan government, the bridges would reach a state beyond repair, raising concerns about the capacity of the Afghan government to sustain infrastructure programs.\footnote{SIGAR 18-70-SP (September 2018), Bridges in Baghlan Province, Afghanistan, p. 6.}
Findings by Sector

3.6 Gender

SIGAR reported that 635 projects, worth $64.8 million, were funded to support Afghan women from 2011 to 2013.\textsuperscript{139} Programs included the following:

1. Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) projects
2. Construction of girls’ schools
3. Advertising campaign to recruit women for the Afghan National Army and as gender advisors to the Afghan Ministry of Interior
4. Community midwifery education
5. Educational, vocational, legal, and social work services for incarcerated women and juvenile girls
6. Participation of 10 Afghan women in a leadership training program at the Asian University for Women in Chittagong, Bangladesh
7. Support for an Internet café for women in Herat\textsuperscript{140}

SIGAR concluded that any program achievements could not be directly linked to US efforts,\textsuperscript{141} and that the US agencies did not take concrete steps to monitor and evaluate the performance of the programs or track their funding.\textsuperscript{142} Challenges such as insecurity, limited government capacity, and cultural norms impeded US efforts to advance women’s rights.\textsuperscript{143}

In addition, Promoting Gender Equity in National Priority Programs (Promote) to advance the status of 75,000 young Afghan women in society was launched in September 2014; as of April 2018, USAID had disbursed $89.7 million for the programs, which included the following:\textsuperscript{144}

1. Women’s Leadership Development (WLD), geared towards 25,000 women applying advanced management and leadership skills in the public, private, and civil society sectors
2. Women in Government (WIG), aimed at placing at least 3,000 university graduates into full-time jobs in the Afghan government
3. Women in the Economy (WIE), sought to help at least 40,000 Afghan women increase their participation in the private sector through employment, income growth, and entrepreneurship
4. Women’s Rights Groups and Coalitions (\textit{Musharikat}), targeted to advocate for women’s equality and empowerment by building a coalition of more than 5,000 national, provincial, and local activists and civil society organizations\textsuperscript{145}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{139} SIGAR 15-24-AR (December 2014), Afghan women: Comprehensive assessments needed to determine and measure DOD, state, and USAID progress.
\item \textsuperscript{140} Ibid., p. 6.
\item \textsuperscript{141} Ibid., p. 12.
\item \textsuperscript{142} Ibid., p. 13.
\item \textsuperscript{143} Ibid., p. 12.
\item \textsuperscript{144} SIGAR 18-69-AR (September 2018), USAID’s promoting gender equity in national priority programs.
\item \textsuperscript{145} Ibid., pp. 2–3.
\end{itemize}
SIGAR reported that US contractors failed to conduct baseline studies and did not set goals for or measure progress in the programs.\textsuperscript{146} In particular, programs lacked mechanisms to prevent corruption — some workers received stipends without confirmation that they were actually working.\textsuperscript{147} Other challenges included high staff turnover as well as lack of qualified instructors, oversight, and analysis to assess the sustainability of Promote.\textsuperscript{148} Security challenges, such as the 2016 bombing of the American University of Afghanistan in Kabul, caused participants to drop out of WLD. However, participation was still higher in Kabul, Herat, and Mazar-e-Sharif in contrast to Jalalabad and Kandahar due to higher security risks there.\textsuperscript{149}

When SIGAR asked for data on Promote’s progress in February 2018, USAID provided “enrollment information, instead of programming results.”\textsuperscript{150} Specifically, SIGAR received “the number of women who received a certificate of completion for WLD instead of how many women obtained positions that allowed them to apply management and leadership skills.”\textsuperscript{151} As for WIE and WIG, SIGAR received the “number of participants enrolled, instead of how many participants had received new or better employment.”\textsuperscript{152} These numbers only informed on program outputs, and did not demonstrate program impact. SIGAR also concluded that in the absence of a clear and sound analysis, Promote would not be sustainable.\textsuperscript{153}

On a political level, SIGAR reported barriers to women’s participation in the political sphere.\textsuperscript{154} In 2009, insecurity as well as cultural and structural challenges limited women’s political participation (e.g., registering, campaigning, and voting). The Afghan government failed to provide adequate protection for its female candidates, who received threats via letters, phone calls, and harassment from family members to withdraw their candidacies.\textsuperscript{155}

Investments in this sector are necessary, but without baselines studies, data collection, and performance indicators, there will be very little impact.
3.7 Health

SIGAR concluded that the investment of $18.5 million in the health sector in constructing hospitals in Gardez and Khair Khost could have been more effectively used had USAID coordinated with the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) as the hospitals were too large for the MoPH to assume maintenance costs.\(^\text{156}\) There were also staff shortages with some hospitals lacking key professionals such as anesthesiologists, obstetricians, gynecologists, and pediatricians.\(^\text{157}\) Hospitals in Afghanistan needed effective operations and staffing to provide adequate health care to Afghan citizens, but USAID failed to coordinate with the MoPH and constructed hospitals too large for the government to sustain.

Furthermore, SIGAR conducted inspections to verify the locations and operating conditions of 159 health facilities across Afghanistan in the provinces of Kabul,\(^\text{158}\) Badakhshan,\(^\text{159}\) Ghazni,\(^\text{160}\) Takhar,\(^\text{161}\) Nangarhar,\(^\text{162}\) Khost,\(^\text{163}\) and Kandahar.\(^\text{164}\) When interviewed, communities responded that the facilities were useful for seeking treatment; therefore, the facilities made a positive impact. However, the majority of the facilities were built inaccurately in terms of geospatial coordinates provided by USAID. Furthermore, due to poor maintenance, most of the facilities had structural problems and operational challenges, such as a lack of reliable power or water. The facilities also disposed of medical waste in an insecure manner, leaving it accessible the public, which does not adhere to best medical waste practices.

SIGAR also assessed the financial management capability of MoPH\(^\text{165}\) for Partnership Contracts for Health (PCH), a program funded by USAID for 600 health facilities in 13 provinces, totalling grants of $259.6 million over eight years (2008–2015). SIGAR concluded that funding to MoPH must cease because the PCH program was at “high risk of waste, fraud, and abuse,”\(^\text{166}\) suggesting that MoPH conduct “vigorous assessments of its internal controls.”\(^\text{167}\)

\(^\text{156}\) SIGAR Audit-13-9 (April 2013), Health services in Afghanistan: Two new USAID-funded hospitals may not be sustainable and existing hospitals are facing shortages in some key medical positions, p. 8.

\(^\text{157}\) Ibid.

\(^\text{158}\) SIGAR 16-09-SP (January 2016), Review letter: USAID-supported health facilities in Kabul.

\(^\text{159}\) SIGAR 16-40-SP (June 2016), Review letter: USAID-supported health facilities in Badakhshan.

\(^\text{160}\) SIGAR 17-34-SP (March 2017), USAID-supported health facilities in Ghazni Province: Observations from site visits to 30 locations.

\(^\text{161}\) SIGAR 17-51-SP (July 2017), USAID-supported health facilities in Takhar Province: Observations from sites visits to 35 locations.

\(^\text{162}\) SIGAR 17-67-SP (September 2017), Health facilities in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan: Observations from visits at four facilities.

\(^\text{163}\) SIGAR 18-13-SP (November 2017), USAID-supported health facilities in Khost Province, Afghanistan: Observations from 20 site visits.

\(^\text{164}\) SIGAR 18-55-SP (June 2018), Review: USAID-supported health facilities in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan: Observations from 9 site visits.

\(^\text{165}\) SIGAR Audit-13-17 (September 2013), Health services in Afghanistan: USAID continues providing millions of dollars to the ministry of public health despite the risk of misuse of funds.

\(^\text{166}\) Ibid., p. 8.

\(^\text{167}\) Ibid.
Findings by Sector

Other challenges in the health sector included the lack of trained healthcare staff, lack of data to conduct performance assessments, and lack of transparency in reports.\textsuperscript{168} Future investments, therefore, must focus on smaller facilities because communities benefit more from them. The lack of capacity to sustain these facilities, however, raises questions about the government itself, since large investments inevitably succumbed to corruption.

3.8 Stabilization

Stabilization efforts for Afghanistan’s reconstruction, worth $4.7 billion, took place between 2002 and 2017 and included the following:

1. Deploying more than 50,000 military forces in the most dangerous zones (south and east) to clear insurgents
2. Sending hundreds of civilians to implement stabilization programs\textsuperscript{169}
3. Implementing the Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) to provide urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction projects\textsuperscript{170}

Specifically, SIGAR reviewed the following stabilization programs, funded by the US, other donors, and international organizations:\textsuperscript{171}

1. **Afghan Civilian Assistance Program (ACAP):** operated from 2007–2011 ($71.3 million), provided humanitarian aid packages to families, and implemented in 30 provinces (7,400 families). ACAP faced multiple challenges, including implementation, timely and expensive delivery of medical aid, and corruption that saw ineligible families receive aid through connections.\textsuperscript{172}
2. **Afghan Civilian Assistance Program II (ACAP II):** operated from 2011–2015 ($52.4 million) and provided relief to victims of ISAF and insurgents, supported women’s economic and social participation, and operated in 29 provinces (7,444 families).\textsuperscript{173}
3. **Afghanistan Social Outreach Program (ASOP):** operated from 2009–2012 ($34.5 million) and established District Community Councils to act as “interim governing bodies” to strengthen local governance and address local problems. ASOP worked in the most remote areas of Afghanistan, but success diminished when troops could not provide support.\textsuperscript{174}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{168} SIGAR 17-22-AR (January 2017), USAID support for Afghanistan’s health care, pp. 13–15.
\item \textsuperscript{169} SIGAR 18-48-LL (April 2018), Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. experience in Afghanistan, p. vii.
\item \textsuperscript{170} Ibid., p. ix.
\item \textsuperscript{171} Ibid., p. 9.
\item \textsuperscript{172} Ibid., p. 227.
\item \textsuperscript{173} Ibid., p. 218.
\item \textsuperscript{174} Ibid., p. 219.
\end{itemize}
4. **Afghanistan Stabilization Initiative (ASI):** operated from 2009–2012 ($45.5 million) and aimed to “improve perceptions of the legitimacy of the Afghan government.” The program was implemented in two regions, ASI East (Nangarhar, Kunar, Paktika, Wardak, Uruzgan, Ghazni, and Khost) and ASI South (Helmand and Kandahar).\(^{175}\)

5. **Afghanistan Stabilization Program (ASP):** operated from 2004–2008 ($14.2 million) and aimed to “extend the Afghan government’s reach at the district and provincial levels” by building infrastructure and enhancing local capacity, to reverse the effects of security challenges, and to improve the perception of the government’s legitimacy. The program was regarded as “ambitious in scope” and lost its funding.\(^{176}\)

6. **Afghanistan Transition Initiative (ATI):** operated from 2002–2005 ($20.5 million) and provided support to the Loya Jirga and the Bonn political process. It also funded 700 activities in all 34 provinces (mainly infrastructure). Communication challenges between the local and central government impeded program implementation because the central government often rejected activities approved by local government.\(^{177}\)

7. **Afghanistan Vouchers for Increased Production in Agriculture (AVIPA and AVIPA Plus):** operated from 2008–2011 ($469.5 million) and aimed to provide food security and agriculture assistance. The program “distributed 10,374 metric tons of wheat seed and 32,813 metric tons of fertilizer across 32 provinces,” later expanding its scope and scale to continue operations across the country.\(^{178}\)

8. **Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI):** operated from 2012–2015 ($40.7 million) and sought to “increase resilience in areas vulnerable to insurgent exploitation” and strengthen customary governance. The program expanded in 2013 and included communications support to the Afghan government, rehabilitating schools, and conducting a nationwide campaign to encourage voter turnout for the 2014 elections.\(^{179}\)

9. **Community Development Program (CDP; formerly the Food Insecurity Response for Urban Populations Program):** operated from 2009–2013 ($404.8 million) and aimed to engage combat-age men in small infrastructure work to prevent them from joining the insurgent forces. The program covered 19 provinces in the south, 9 provinces in the north, and several districts in Kabul. It worked in mostly insecure areas, “implemented 3,550 projects, with typical projects lasting 30–90 days, and generated 13.3 million days of employment.”\(^{180}\)

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\(^{175}\) Ibid., pp. 219–220.
\(^{176}\) Ibid., pp. 220–221.
\(^{177}\) Ibid., p. 221.
\(^{178}\) Ibid., p. 222.
\(^{179}\) Ibid., p. 223.
\(^{180}\) Ibid., p. 224.
10. **Community Based Stabilization Grants (CBSG):** operated from 2010–2012 ($35.2 million) and provided small grants to communities in “underserved and insecure areas” to combat insurgent recruitment. Communities implemented their own projects such as building roads, school walls, embroidery training for women, and women’s hygiene awareness clinics.\(^{181}\)

11. **District Delivery Program (DDP):** operated from 2010–2013 ($2.3 million) and deployed civilian Afghan personnel to recently cleared insurgent areas.\(^{182}\)

12. **Kandahar Food Zone (KFZ):** began in 2013 and still ongoing at the time SIGAR published its report ($40.3 million). The program aimed to respond to economic challenges, address the “root causes of poppy cultivation,” and encourage the communities to produce licit crops.\(^{183}\)

13. **Local Governance and Community Development (LGCD):** operated from 2006–2011 ($376.1 million), aimed to strengthen local governance and promote community development. “LGCD was hindered because programming started late, stabilization was poorly defined, and the program’s goals were unrealistic.”\(^{184}\)

14. **Measuring Impact of Stabilization Initiatives (MISTI):** operated from 2012–2015 ($19.3 million) as a monitoring and evaluation program. It conducted 190,264 interviews in more than 50,000 villages across 23 provinces. The program faced many challenges, including lack of accurate data and assessment of outcomes.\(^{185}\)

15. **Provincial Reconstruction Team Quick Impact Projects (PRT-QIP):** operated from 2003–2007 ($86.9 million) and provided USAID officers with the resources to implement projects. The program also intended to increase confidence between the district, provincial, and central governments.\(^{186}\)

16. **Rule of Law Stabilization–Informal Component (RLS–I):** operated from 2010–2014 ($39.9 million) and “aimed to strengthen traditional forms of conflict resolution, support the linkages between the informal and formal justice sectors, and facilitate the resolution of long-term destabilizing conflicts.” The program also focused on gender mainstreaming to encourage female participation in conflict resolution, training 20,000 people, 40% of whom were women.\(^{187}\)

17. **Stability in Key Areas (SIKA):** operated from 2011–2015 ($308.7 million), aimed to strengthen governance and address poor development. SIKA implemented infrastructure projects (irrigation systems, potable water systems, schools, and clinics) and operated across 17 provinces.\(^{188}\)

18. **Strategic Provincial Roads–Southern and Eastern Afghanistan (SPR–SEA):** operated from 2007–2012 ($313.5 million) and “had three main objectives: (1) rehabilitate roads in key areas, (2) contribute to stabilization by connecting communities and engaging them in the rehabilitation process, and (3) increase the capacity for Afghan firms to build and maintain roads.” The program operated in eight provinces and provided grants to encourage new businesses and new jobs to reduce opposition to building roads. Insurgent attacks frequently impeded construction, “causing the deaths of over 100 Afghan contractors and the injury of 200 more.”\(^{189}\)
19. Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP): a large-scale project operating from 2003–2017 ($2.3 billion). The program aimed to enable military commanders to provide urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction projects. However, it turned into a counterinsurgency mission during the 2009–2012 period, facing many challenges such as lack of priorities and consistent strategy. There were also shortages of qualified civil affairs personnel, data limitations, and poor monitoring and evaluation of the projects.\textsuperscript{190}

20. Village Stability Operations (VSO): operated from 2010–2014 (costs are unclear) and attempted to 1) stabilize strategically localized villages to create an environment “inhospitable to insurgents,” and 2) establish security, governance, and development. The program faced many challenges such as unrealistic timelines, community disengagement, communities not suitable for engagement, corruption, and militia attacks.\textsuperscript{191}

According to SIGAR, “between 2001 and 2017, US government efforts to stabilize insecure and contested areas in Afghanistan mostly failed.”\textsuperscript{192} Despite serious efforts, stabilization strategies were not tailored to the context of Afghanistan and the US overestimated the Afghan government’s capacity and performance.\textsuperscript{193} SIGAR also asserted that the Taliban retained legitimacy because they offered security and dispute resolution in contrast to the stabilization programs that focused on clinics, schools, retainer and floodwalls, agriculture training, and seed distribution. Security should have been the foundation of stabilization models, yet the number of programs and projects overburdened the Afghan government and failed to bring results, except in areas under the physical control of the Afghan government.\textsuperscript{194}

Furthermore, the stabilization coalition prioritized the most insecure and dangerous zones first, struggling to clear them of insurgents. As a result, “the coalition couldn’t make sufficient progress to convince Afghans in those or other districts that the government could protect them if they openly turned against the insurgents.”\textsuperscript{195} In parallel, instead of curbing corruption, stabilization funds — spent too quickly — fuelled corruption and conflict even further. The amount of funds spent symbolized success,\textsuperscript{196} and many programs that aimed to improve local governance were implemented prematurely; in reality, local communities were often not well suited to adopt them.\textsuperscript{197} Monitoring and evaluation programs were also poor and began almost a decade later to assess stabilization.\textsuperscript{198}

\textsuperscript{190} Ibid., pp. 95–107.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid., p. 123.
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., p. 191.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., p. 179.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., pp. 180, 182–183.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., p. 181.
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., p. 191.
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid., p. 180.
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid., p. 181.
Pouring money onto a problem cannot drown out the challenges since programs require 1) a tailored approach, 2) local knowledge, 3) time to be well implemented, 4) political will, 5) qualified and experienced personnel, 6) strong local governance, and 7) rigorous monitoring and evaluation. More importantly, “winning hearts and minds requires a close examination of what has won and lost the hearts and minds of that particular population in the recent past.” Hence, future investments would only succeed if they meet the abovementioned criteria.

3.9 Water

SIGAR reported on the Sustainable Water Supply and Sanitation (SWSS) program, worth $43.3 million, which aimed to 1) increase access to clean water for domestic use in rural areas; 2) improve hygiene behaviours for poor and vulnerable populations; and 3) improve the long-term technical, financial, and environmental sustainability of potable water supply and sanitation services.

Although the program had several positive outcomes — such as installing water systems, building sanitation facilities, and providing access to improved water supply — SIGAR concluded that performance indicators were not met due to unrealistic timelines, incorrect cost estimates, and security concerns. USAID also made budget cuts that prevented conducting surveys to collect data and evaluate program performance to assess the sustainability of the program. Therefore, the programs were relevant, but they were not effective because they did not meet their objectives. The overall impact and sustainability of this sector remain unclear.

199 Ibid., p. xii.
200 Ibid.
201 SIGAR 14-52-AR (April 2014), Afghanistan’s water sector: USAID’s strategy needs to be updated to ensure appropriate oversight and accountability, p. 17.
202 Ibid., pp. 17–18.
203 Ibid., p. 20.
3.10 Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF)

The Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), established in 2002, is a multi-donor trust fund that contributes to the Afghan government’s budget. The US is its largest donor, along with the UK, EU, Germany, Canada, and 29 other countries. A total of $10 billion has been provided to Afghanistan through the ARTF, with $3 billion solely funded by the US. The ARTF was intended to be a short-term source of funding, but it has been extended three times, with its current deadline set for 31 December 2025.

ARTF funds are allocated into two streams: 1) the Investment Window (IW), which funds development projects; and 2) the Recurrent Cost Window (RCW), which funds the Afghan government’s predictable expenses (e.g., government operations and maintenance, employees and teachers’ salaries). The World Bank is responsible for the administration and oversight of the ARTF to ensure budget allocation and program evaluation and oversight.

SIGAR published the World Bank’s administration and oversight review in its April 2018 report and “found limitations with (1) the World Bank’s monitoring of the ARTF, (2) transparency regarding the monitoring and accounting of ARTF funding, and (3) the Afghan government’s fiduciary controls.” In particular, the World Bank restricts access to donors and the public to how it monitors ARTF funding. Furthermore, the Afghan government, also responsible for documenting its expenditures and conducting fiduciary controls on ARTF funding, is unable to conduct oversight.

The World Bank reported improvements in its monitoring mechanisms as it included the physical verification of government employees to ensure that the ARTF is “not reimbursing ghost employee salaries.” It also hired a third-party agent (the Supervisory Agent) to monitor the fund. However, SIGAR found that this agent only monitored six out of the 25 active IW projects because the World Bank staff did not have access to the areas where they were implemented, or had limited visibility. SIGAR also reported that the Supervisory Agent did not evaluate project performance and focused on whether the projects were following World Bank agreements. Despite reported improvement, SIGAR concluded that the World Bank still faces limitations in monitoring its work.

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204 SIGAR 18-42-AR (April 2018), Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, p. 4.
205 Ibid., p. 22.
206 Ibid., p. 2.
207 Ibid., p. 6.
208 Ibid.
209 Ibid., p. 9.
210 Ibid., pp. 9–10.
Furthermore, SIGAR conducted its own review of the following six ARTF IW projects ($2.25 billion) between January and December 2017: 211

1. Afghanistan Agriculture Inputs Project to strengthen institutional capacity in the agriculture sector
2. Education Quality Improvement Program II to increase equitable access to quality basic education (school grants, teacher training, and strengthened institutional capacity)
3. Kabul Municipal Development Program to increase access to basic municipal services and redesign Kabul’s municipal financial management system
4. Public Financial Management Reform Project II to strengthen public financial management through effective procurement
5. National Solidarity Program II to strengthen community-level governance and support community-managed sub-projects
6. National Solidarity Program III to build, strengthen, and maintain community development councils (effective institutions for local governance and socioeconomic development)

SIGAR could not fully evaluate how the World Bank measured ARTF performance to determine whether it was meeting its objectives due to lack of transparency and records. 212 The World Bank lacked systems to measure performance, as it did not “(1) develop performance indicators; (2) provide specific quantitative or qualitative status information for performance indicators; or (3) provide clear support or justification for the performance and progress ratings it gave projects.” 213

SIGAR also stated that the ARTF enables the Afghan government to exercise flexibility in how it uses donor funds to develop its activities and finance the government’s needs. However, this degree of flexibility does not allow the World Bank and donors to “adjust the scope of ongoing projects without the Afghan government’s agreement, to withhold funding from the ARTF altogether or recover ARTF money based on ARTF performance, and to use or enforce conditionality on ARTF funds.” 214 USAID reported to SIGAR that future contributions may be reduced if the World Bank and the Afghan government “do not take concrete steps to implement reforms” to ensure transparency and accountability. 215

212 Ibid., p. 13.
215 Ibid., p. 21.
3.11 Cross cutting issue: Corruption

As noticed in earlier sections of this report, reconstruction strategies bolstered corruption through large inflows of aid; the lack ability to tackle this challenge created further opportunities for power brokers. The Afghan government and international actors lacked the political will to address the issue of corruption, thus creating impunity and enabling warlords to increase their influence and economic positions. Imposing effective and efficient conditionality could have helped the Afghan government to reach performance targets, but security challenges, political uncertainty, poor governance, and weak rule of law — all inherent weaknesses of Afghanistan — impeded the very effectiveness of conditionality.

A 2018 SIGAR report evaluates Afghan government efforts to implement anti-corruption strategies. In drafting the strategies, many stakeholders — ministries, provincial governments, and civil society organizations — were excluded from participation. Although, there has been progress in creating transparency laws and advertising public service positions, there are still several challenges to implementing anti-corruption reforms due to lack of resources and qualified, trained staff.

Afghanistan also has self-sufficiency concerns. Lack of revenue, attributable to poor taxation, weak government, and limited capacity all impose restrictions on operating and sustaining basic services such as infrastructure, education, and healthcare. Reductions in international aid would recede progress in the areas of poverty reduction, job creation, and service delivery. According to SIGAR, Afghanistan’s fiscal sustainability will be affected by such variables as 1) economic growth, 2) legal and regulatory frameworks, 3) duration and outcomes of the insurgency, 4) aid decisions by international actors, 5) ministerial capacity, 6) progress against the illicit economy, and 7) citizens’ compliance with tax laws.

According to SIGAR, corruption can be curbed by these six measures:

1. Holding contractors and government employees accountable
2. Insisting that the Afghan government maintain adequate oversight
3. Continuing to support anti-corruption strategies
4. Caring about how funds are spent
5. Recognizing that funds must not be spent too quickly
6. Providing support to Afghan civil society groups combatting corruption

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218 SIGAR 18-51-AR (May 2018), Afghanistan’s Anti-Corruption Efforts.
219 Ibid., p. 40.
220 Ibid., p. 41.
221 SIGAR Quarterly Report (30 July 2013), Sustainability, p. 3.
222 Ibid., p. 5.
223 Ibid., p. 6.
224 Ibid., p. 13.
4 Conclusions

In this section we provide some conclusions from our analysis of 51 SIGAR reports. SIGAR audits only US programs, but we think that the lessons apply to all donors. SIGARs mandate is to provide independent and objective oversight of US reconstruction projects and activities in Afghanistan. SIGAR conducts audits and investigations to promote efficiency and effectiveness of reconstruction programs and to detect and prevent waste, fraud, and abuse. SIGAR reports are therefore different from evaluation reports, and they are not necessarily committed to assessing all five OECD DAC evaluation criteria. However, they always focus on two of them - efficiency and effectiveness. SIGAR is by default not a harbinger of good news – SIGAR writes about things which do not work well.

We can therefore not expect lessons on “best practices” and successes, but we can learn from SIGAR about past mistakes.

1. A recurring theme of SIGAR reports is that many US programs were not adequate for the context of Afghanistan. The sheer number of programs overburdened the Afghan government, and the US constantly overestimated the capacity of the government. Many programs were donor driven, designed with little local knowledge, and not responding to the conditions of the environment where they were being implemented.

2. Worse, too much aid was spent too quickly. Government partners did not have the absorption capacities, yet programs spent aid money quickly because the speed of spending was seen as a metric for success. However, the windfall from aid created opportunities for power brokers to increase their influence in villages, cities, and within the government itself. This fuelled corruption, cultivated an environment of impunity, and weakened the rule of law.

3. Still worse, US agencies also lacked the oversight capacity and robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that would have enabled clear, concise assessments of program performance. The 51 SIGAR reports which we read for this analysis found that programs across all sectors lacked proper performance assessments and monitoring.

For example, SIGAR noted that

a. A massive $200 million justice sector support program lacked baselines and had difficulties monitoring progress and tracking costs. In the absence of a baseline study, SIGAR could not realistically measure the progress of the program.

b. Some programs in the rule of law sector (with a volume of $1 billion for the whole sector) did not have performance management plans and there were also no baseline studies.

c. Programs in the education sector often lacked defined strategic goals and objectives. Furthermore, program performance and progress were not assessed over time; programs focused more on outputs than outcomes or impacts

d. Gender programs were not adequately monitored and evaluated, which made it impossible to identify any possible impacts.
4. Another recurring theme is that **US agencies constantly overestimated the capacity of their partners within Afghan government institutions**. The lack of institutional capacity was furthermore exacerbated by corruption, insecurity, and a lack of political will on the part of Afghan partners. All of this reduced the effectiveness and efficiency of development programs in Afghanistan.

5. According to SIGAR, **stabilization proved to be an immensely costly failure**. Between 2002 and 2007, $4.7 billion was spent on stabilization efforts. SIGAR concluded that these efforts mostly failed. Stabilization strategies were not tailored to the context of Afghanistan and the US overestimated the Afghan government’s capacity and performance. Also, stabilization projects prioritized the most insecure and dangerous zones first. There is by now ample academic work that shows that stabilization aid injected in insecure zones where insurgents still have capabilities tends to exacerbate conflict.\(^\text{226}\) The quick money spent on stabilization fuelled corruption and increased intercommunal tensions.

6. Programs supporting **economic development**, macroeconomic policies, and financial management capacities achieved some progress in the early stages of reconstruction. For example, there was initial growth in the telecommunications, transportation, and construction sectors, but **results were not sustainable** nor was it realistic to expect sustainable economic growth in such an insecure environment as Afghanistan.

7. SIGAR also found that interventions for supporting the **private sector were not effective**, because of weak institutional infrastructures and procedures, widespread corruption within the Afghan government, political instability, and insecurity.

8. SIGAR alerted the international community that there were serious issues in the **education sector** – the one sector which was often seen as successful. SIGARs field visits showed that there were major problems with both **student and teacher absenteeism** and that there was a problem with “**ghost**” teachers.

9. Finally, SIGAR noted that the **ARTF**, arguably the most popular instrument for many donors, was **weakly monitored** and showed some imitations with transparency regarding the monitoring and accounting of ARTF funding. In particular, SIGAR criticized that ARTF did not adequately track project performance. The World Bank then reported improvements in its monitoring mechanisms, including hiring a third-party agent (the Supervisory Agent) to monitor the fund. However, as recent as 2018 SIGAR noted that the World Bank still faces limitations in monitoring ARTF.

10. In our view, the big lesson that emerges from a close reading of SIGAR reports is that aid only has a fair chance of being effective in Afghanistan when programs are modest, rather small than large, do not assume unrealistic partner capacities, are aware of the cultural context, do not spend aid money too fast, do not spend aid money in insecure regions, and are equipped with solid performance measurements and the means to track these with baselines and follow-up data.

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