




MEMORANDUM

January 9th, 2017

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

FROM: Mike McCord, Acting Mission Director 

SUBJECT: USAID Response to Draft SIGAR Report titled
"Afghanistan's Health Care Sector: USAID's Use of
Unreliable Data to Assess Program Performance Raises
Questions about the Extent of Progress" (SIGAR Report 17-
XX under Code 105A)

REF: SIGAR Transmittal email dated 12/09/2016

USAID thanks SIGAR for the opportunity to comment on this report. In Afghanistan, a war zone with conflict-torn settings, reliable health and population data is scarce and difficult to obtain. USAID strives to use the best available data for programming decisions and invests to improve data quality for measuring progress. USAID requests that a more appropriate title reflective of the report's conclusions be considered by SIGAR: "Afghanistan's Health Care Sector: Data Limitations Present Challenges in Assessing Program Performance and the Extent of Progress."

SIGAR Recommendation No. 1

To ensure that government decision makers and the general public have an accurate understanding of progress in the Afghan health care sector, we recommend that the USAID Mission Director for Afghanistan:

1. Acknowledge in external reporting the limitations associated with surveys and data the agency uses to demonstrate its achievements in the health care sector in Afghanistan.

USAID Comments: USAID concurs with recommendation 1.

Actions Planned: USAID will revise its Performance Monitoring Mission Order to state that all externally reported data should be accompanied with a statement that identifies any known data quality limitations.

Target Closure Date: July 31, 2017

SIGAR Recommendation No. 2

To determine how USAID's efforts have directly contributed to reported gains in Afghanistan's health care system, we recommend that the USAID Mission Director for Afghanistan:

2. Amend mission guidelines for conducting project reviews in Afghanistan to require an explicit discussion of the applicable PMP objectives.

USAID Comments: USAID concurs with Recommendation 2. According to ADS 203 (which was the applicable policy at the time of this audit), "The scope of an evaluation will vary according to available management information needs and resources." Importantly, evaluations are just one analytical tool USAID uses to understand performance. We also use partner performance reporting, strategy-level portfolio reviews, ongoing performance monitoring efforts, partner meetings, assessments, and other means to track performance against higher level strategic objectives. As an evaluation can serve a range of management and decision-making purposes, we do not agree with mandating particular evaluation questions but do agree that, particularly in final performance evaluations, linking interventions with results can be an important area of inquiry.

Actions Planned: USAID agrees to amend the mission order on evaluation to make it explicit that evaluations should consider, as appropriate, questions that examine USAID's contribution to the most important activity and project-level results, in line with the requirements of ADS 201.

Target Closure Date: July 31, 2017

SIGAR Recommendation No. 3

To ensure that USAID has more insight into the accuracy and reliability of implementing partners' final performance reports, we recommend that the USAID Mission Director for Afghanistan:

3. Take action to validate the accuracy of final health care project reports submitted by implementing partners in Afghanistan.

USAID Comments: USAID concurs with Recommendation 3.

Actions Planned: USAID concurs with recommendation 3. Within its updated Performance Monitoring Mission Order, USAID will ensure that it is explicit that CORs/AORs are responsible for validating implementing partner data. USAID will also develop a data quality training to give CORs/AORs further guidance and assistance on how to review and validate data.

Target Closure Date: July 31, 2017

Cc: U.S. Embassy/Kabul