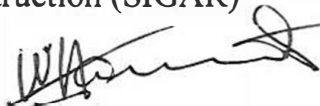




MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 20, 2016

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

FROM: William Hammink 
Assistant to the Administrator
Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs

SUBJECT: Mission Response to Draft SIGAR Report titled
“USAID’s Measuring Impacts of Stabilization
Initiatives: Program Generally Achieved Its
Objectives, but USAID’s Lack of a Geospatial Data
Policy and Standards Affected Its Implementation”
(SIGAR Report 16-XX under Code 103A)

REF: SIGAR Transmittal email dated 09/19/2016

USAID thanks SIGAR for the opportunity to comment on this report.

USAID welcomes the feedback that Management Systems International Inc. (MSI) met its contract requirements and that USAID generally performed contract oversight in accordance with agency regulations.

USAID has benefitted from the monitoring and evaluation that was contracted with MSI. We are using the data and findings from MISTI deliverables to account for the funding spent on USAID stabilization programming in Afghanistan and to generate lessons that will inform current and future development projects in Afghanistan and could also be utilized in other conflict areas across the world.

However, we disagree with the summary provided in SIGAR’s draft audit report on the conclusions of the impact evaluation research. In particular, we are concerned that the summary states as facts conclusions that are not in the MISTI reports, and that draw conclusions based on the results of MSI’s fifth survey, without considering the results MSI reported in the first four surveys. For example, we have not been able to identify any

reference in the MSI impact evaluation reports suggesting a correlation between the effectiveness of stabilization programs and the gender or literacy of a population, nor any suggestion that men and illiterate populations have not also benefitted from stabilization programming. Additional specific responses to SIGAR's summary are provided in Appendix 1.

The USAID/Afghanistan mission has finalized guidance for Mission project managers and implementing partners on geospatial data collection, making the Mission a leader in this area. This guidance is currently being circulated to USAID staff and implementing partners to standardize consistent collection and use of geospatial data to help manage the Mission's portfolio. The guidance also facilitates sharing and maintenance of geospatial information by providing details on how to most efficiently incorporate GPS data in USAID/Afghanistan reporting systems, such as Afghan Info, for proper monitoring and oversight.

RESPONSE TO SIGAR'S RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance USAID/Afghanistan's ability to monitor, evaluate, and oversee its development efforts, SIGAR recommends that the USAID Administrator, as soon as possible:

1. Establish an agency policy implementing OMB Circular A-16 requirements that institute agency-wide standards for collecting, using, and sharing geospatial data both within USAID and with other U.S. government agencies and nongovernmental entities, including those conducting reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan.

USAID Comments: USAID concurs in principle with the SIGAR recommendation to establish agency specific practices for the collection, use and sharing, of geospatial data in accordance with OMB Circular A-16.

Actions Taken/Planned: Two existing agency policies, ADS 579 and ADS 201, cover the use of geospatial data at USAID as part of the broader use of data for the Agency's development programming. USAID is working to strengthen both of these policies through the inclusion of mandatory references that further define how the Agency collects, uses and shares geospatial data. In addition, the agency has undertaken a number of technological and organizational steps that institutionalize the use of geospatial data inside USAID and across its U.S. Government and nongovernmental partners.

Mandatory Reference to ADS 579: ADS 579 defines the Agency's policy for ensuring that data associated with USAID-funded work is open and machine readable by default. In response to the recommendation made by the SIGAR, The Agency's GeoCenter, which provides technical leadership to USAID in the application of geospatial data for development, will cooperate with PPL and the M-Bureau to establish a new mandatory reference defining field data collection and submission requirements for geographic content. While ADS 579 covers all data, including geospatial content, the proposed new mandatory reference will specifically address the unique aspects of geographic information data collection and data management procedures.

Implementation of the mandatory reference will take place through the Agency's Development Data Library (DDL). USAID awards since October 1, 2014 include contract language requiring the submission of data to the DDL and the Agency will continue investing in the DDL to ensure a constant flow of data from partners back to USAID and the general public. The geospatial focused mandatory reference will provide the guidance needed by the Agency's partners to direct their geospatial data collection practices at the onset of their work. The proposed mandatory reference will be completed by March 1, 2017.

ADS 201 Official Additional Help Supplemental Guidance: ADS 201 defines the Program Cycle which is USAID's operational model for planning, implementing and assessing development programming in a given country or region. To accompany ADS 201, new guidance is being included to provide standards and best practices for disaggregating performance indicator data by geography. The guidance includes: considerations for setting a minimum geographic scale for an entire Mission or Washington OU; methods to collect geospatial data when collecting monitoring data; and how to analyze geographic data to support management decision making. This guidance is expected to be published alongside the revised ADS 201 by November, 2016.

Institutionalizing the Collection and Use of Geospatial Data at USAID:

The collection and use of geospatial data has existed in many parts of the Agency well before the SIGAR reporting period. While the application of geographic information systems (GIS) has proven effective for many programs, there was not a centralized office guiding its use across the Agency or among its partners. In 2011, the Agency established the GeoCenter to provide leadership, best practices, and technical expertise

for using geospatial data at USAID. While still a relatively new team, the GeoCenter is building the Agency's capacity to integrate geospatial data into its planning, design and M&E functions. The head of the GeoCenter serves as the Agency Geographer, which is a new position that represents the Agency's interest before Interagency and International governing bodies serving geospatial data and technology. The GeoCenter has established procurement language covering the collection and submission of geospatial data, co-authored the ADS 201 mandatory reference on the collection and use of geospatial data for performance monitoring, and continues to build the Agency's literacy for the collection and use of geospatial data through its capacity building and training program. The efforts of the GeoCenter will complement and strengthen the implementation of ADS 579 as part of its core mission to integrate geographic approaches into USAID's work.

Target Closure Date for Recommendation 1: March 31, 2017

Appendix:

1 - Technical Comments

cc: U.S. Embassy/Kabul