

# A DIFFERENT ONE PERCENT

## QUICK STATS

- ✘ **CONFERENCE:** Spending
- ✘ **TEAM:** Agency for International Development
- **FUMBLE:** \$335 Million of wasted power
- **HOW TO RECOVER THE BALL:** Before beginning an infrastructure project, agencies should conduct a feasibility study and ensure the project can be used for its intended purpose



Photo: SIGAR

Since 2002 the U.S. government has spent \$110 billion in reconstruction projects in Afghanistan, including support for the Afghan National Security Forces; developing roads, hospitals, schools and dams; and cracking down on narcotics and corruption in the country.<sup>242</sup> One of those projects, Tarakhil Power Plant, a diesel-fueled power plant constructed outside of Kabul, Afghanistan, was recently highlighted by SIGAR in a federal audit that deemed the power plant as "severely underutilized" with the intermittent use of the costly facility resulting in damage and premature failure.<sup>243</sup>

From February 2014 to April 2015, the Tarakhil plant produced a mere 0.34 percent (that is 1/3 of one percent) of the total power on the Kabul grid and exported just 8,846 megawatt-hours of power, less than one percent of its production capacity. This output fails to meet the purpose and intent of the power plant. The plant was

designed and constructed in 2007 as the primary provider of electricity in Kabul and to operate on a continual basis, all of which was clearly defined in the contractor's requirements to build the plant.<sup>244</sup>

What is worse, the intermittent use of the plant is actually causing damage to the infrastructure itself, which was highlighted in a 2014 USAID IG report as "operating on an intermittent—rather than a continuous—basis has resulted in more frequent starts and stops, which place greater wear and tear on the engines and electrical components... This practice, according to the evaluation, resulted in the premature failure of equipment, which over time will increase operations and maintenance costs and could result in 'catastrophic failure.'"<sup>245</sup> After almost ten years, millions of dollars, and little power generation to show for it, it is only now clear

what a colossal waste of taxpayer money it turned into.

## **RECOVERY**

Before building a power plant, the U.S. should first determine if the local government can operate it when the U.S. leaves. As the focus transitions to “electrify Africa,” the federal

government must learn the lesson of the Tarakhil Power Plant. There should be sensible requirements for construction and development, reasonable expectations for use, and a demonstrated need for the project. Regular oversight should be conducted during and after development to ensure the project remains viable.

***For more information, please visit:***

[SIGAR: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction Letter](#)

[USAID: Afghanistan Fact Sheet](#)