



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2025/044

Audit of procurement activities and contract management in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

UNAMA needed to further strengthen its procurement and contract management processes

24 September 2025
Assignment No. AP2024-630-04

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of procurement activities and contract management in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The objective of the audit was to assess how efficiently and effectively UNAMA managed its procurement and contract management activities. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2024 and included: (a) oversight and accountability mechanisms; (b) procurement planning; (c) solicitation and contract award process; and (d) contract management.

UNAMA implemented appropriate delegation of authority and functional review mechanisms, including the Local Committee on Contracts. However, OIOS noted weaknesses in certain aspects of the procurement process, including procurement planning and the technical evaluation process. Additionally, the vendor performance evaluation was inconsistent and inadequate.

OIOS made five recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, UNAMA needed to:

- Ensure compliance with mandatory procurement certification requirements, with any exceptions formally approved through the appropriate waiver process.
- Strengthen the procurement planning process by ensuring that source selection plans are prepared for all applicable cases and that procurement risks are systematically identified, assessed, and mitigated.
- Improve the reliability of solicitation value estimates through enhanced market research and regular review of estimation methodologies.
- Strengthen technical evaluation practices by requiring all Technical Evaluations Committee members to complete and retain individual scoring sheets prior to reaching consensus.
- Enhance vendor performance monitoring and evaluation through improved coordination between the Acquisition Management Unit and technical units, supported by targeted training and the regular conduct of documented performance review meetings.

UNAMA accepted all recommendations, implemented two, and initiated action to implement the others. Actions required to close the recommendations are indicated in Annex I.

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Audit of procurement activities and contract management in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of procurement activities and contract management in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).
2. The timely delivery of quality goods and services is critical for the Mission to achieve its mandated objectives. This depends on an effective and efficient procurement and contract management function that meets operational needs while upholding the principles of best value for money, fairness, integrity, transparency, effective international competition, and the interests of the United Nations.
3. The procurement activities include: (a) approving specifications, statements of work, and terms of reference; (b) identifying and registering vendors; (c) issuing solicitations; (d) evaluating bids or proposals; (e) approving contract awards; and (f) handling vendor protests or disputes. Procurement contracts are awarded based on effective competition, thorough market research, and the use of formal solicitation methods, including invitations to bid (ITBs) and requests for proposals (RFPs). Informal methods, such as request for quotations (RFQs) and low-value acquisitions (LVAs), are also used.
4. The UNAMA Procurement Unit is responsible for conducting solicitations, procuring goods and services, and preparing contractual documents. It comprises four international staff members, three national staff members, and one United Nations Volunteer, and is headed by a Chief Procurement Officer (CPO), who reports to the Chief of Operations and Resource Management. The Acquisition Management Unit (AMU), responsible for contract management, including monitoring contractor performance and ensuring compliance, is headed by an FS-5 staff member, supported by two national staff members and two United Nations Volunteers. AMU also reports to the Chief of Operations and Resource Management.
5. The United Nations Procurement Division plays a central role in supporting UNAMA by providing oversight of high-value and strategically significant procurement cases. At the same time, UNAMA manages routine procurement within its delegated authority. For cases up to \$1.5 million, UNAMA is authorized to issue solicitations, conduct technical and financial evaluations, and award contracts, subject to review by the Local Committee on Contracts (LCC). For cases exceeding this threshold, UNAMA conducts the solicitation and evaluation processes but must submit its recommendations to the Headquarters Committee on Contracts (HCC). Based on the HCC's review, the Procurement Division at United Nations Headquarters authorizes the award, after which UNAMA signs the contract on its behalf.
6. Table 1 summarizes the contracts issued by technical units for 2023-2024.

Table 1: Summary of contracts issued by technical units for 2023-2024

Technical Units	No. of contracts	Value (\$)
Security Section	3	69,811,726
Engineering and Facilities Maintenance Section	30	8,601,333
Field Technology Section	13	1,485,949
General Supply and Fuel Unit	16	2,783,302
Other technical units	12	891,116
Total	74	83,573,426

Source: DMSPC Management Dashboard and UNAMA-Procurement Unit

7. UNAMA's procurement and contract management depend on three key systems: Umoja, the Contract Performance Reporting Tool (CPRT), and the Instant Feedback System (IFS). Umoja administers the entire procurement process, from initial requisitions to contract execution. It tracks procurement actions, such as approvals, vendor registrations, purchase orders, and processes vendor payments, while staff training and certification are linked to specific roles in Umoja to ensure compliance. CPRT is used for quarterly vendor performance evaluations on technical performance, cost management, and timeliness. The IFS, interfacing with Umoja and CPRT, gathers immediate feedback on vendor performance upon delivery of goods.

8. Comments provided by UNAMA are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

9. The objective of the audit was to assess how efficiently and effectively UNAMA managed its procurement and contract management activities.

10. This audit was included in the 2024 OIOS risk-based work plan due to financial, operational, and reputational risks associated with UNAMA's procurement of goods and services and contract management. Additionally, the General Assembly requested OIOS to strengthen its focus on monitoring United Nations procurement, given the high risks inherent in these activities.

11. OIOS conducted this audit from December 2024 to May 2025. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2024 and included: (a) oversight and accountability mechanisms; (b) procurement planning; (c) solicitation and contract award process; and (d) contract management.

12. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key Mission personnel involved in procurement activities and contract management; (b) reviews of relevant documentation; (c) detailed reviews of solicitations and payments conducted during the audit period; and (d) analytical reviews of Umoja procurement data.

13. To assess the reliability of data pertaining to procurement and contract management, OIOS reviewed data extracted from the DMSPC Management Dashboard and corresponding Umoja records and consulted with relevant UNAMA personnel. Based on the review, OIOS determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purpose of the audit despite some issues as presented in the report.

14. The audit was conducted in accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Oversight and accountability mechanisms

The procurement delegation of authority was effectively implemented

15. In accordance with the delegation of authority (DoA) framework, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General delegated procurement authority to the Chief of Mission Support, who further subdelegated it to the CPO and five Procurement Unit staff members. The Chief of Mission Support held the highest procurement authority in UNAMA, with a limit of \$1,500,000. The CPO (P-4) was delegated authority up to \$300,000, while the Deputy CPO (P-3) had a limit of \$150,000. One Assistant Procurement Officer (NO-A) and one Procurement Assistant (FS-5) were each authorized up to \$50,000, and two Procurement Assistants (G-5) were each delegated authority up to \$15,000.

16. OIOS reviewed Umoja and confirmed that the approval thresholds were appropriately mapped in Umoja. Additionally, OIOS reviewed 93 purchase orders, valued at \$39 million, for the period January 2023 to December 2024 and found that approvals were consistent with the assigned DoA thresholds.

17. OIOS reviewed the role mapping for 13 staff members (eight from the Procurement Unit and five from AMU) and noted that two staff members were mapped to both the local source planner and local demand planner roles, contrary to the Umoja Role Guide, which requires separation of these roles. This occurred because the Mission's Security Liaison Officer did not conduct the required quarterly role reviews during the approval process. UNAMA resolved the issue during the audit by correcting the role mappings.

The mandatory procurement certification and qualification requirements were not fully complied with

18. The Secretary-General's bulletin (ST/SGB/2006/6) on financial disclosure and declaration of interest statements requires that all staff members who are procurement officers, or whose principal duties involve the procurement of goods and services, should declare financial assets and conflicts of interest. Additionally, the Secretary-General's bulletin (ST/SGB/2018/4) requires procurement staff to complete seven mandatory training courses and obtain professional certification from an internationally recognized authority, such as the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS). Furthermore, a memorandum from the Office of Supply Chain Management (DOS-2022-04899), issued in December 2022, required that all procurement officials be professionally certified by 31 December 2022. It also established CIPS Level 4 (or equivalent) as a mandatory qualification for all procurement positions at the GS-5 and above, FS-4 and above, and P-2 and above levels.

19. OIOS confirmed with the United Nations Ethics Office that all 18 staff members involved in procurement activities in 2023 and 2024 in the Mission submitted the required disclosures each year. These staff members also completed the mandatory ethics and integrity training. Additionally, OIOS found that all eight staff members in the Procurement Unit had completed the required seven mandatory training courses.

20. However, only three of the seven staff members required to hold CIPS Level 4 certification had obtained it. The Procurement Unit did not periodically verify and enforce compliance with certification requirements, limiting its ability to ensure staff met the mandated qualifications. Moreover, an Assistant Procurement Officer recruited in April 2023 at the NO-A level did not possess the mandatory CIPS Level 4 certification at the time of hiring.

21. UNAMA explained that the staff member recruited without certification had been onboarded with a commitment to obtain the required certification, which he has since fulfilled by completing the course and submitting the work-based assessment. Management also indicated that the job opening listed CIPS Level 4 as a desirable rather than mandatory qualification and highlighted the challenges posed by the limited local talent pool. However, OIOS noted that the Department of Operational Support has established CIPS Level 4 (or its equivalent) as a mandatory qualification for all procurement positions to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of procurement operations, and emphasized that a formal waiver should be obtained if compliance is not feasible.

(1) UNAMA should take measures to ensure full compliance with the mandatory procurement certification requirements and that any exceptions are formally approved through the appropriate waiver process.

UNAMA accepted recommendation 1 and stated that its Procurement Unit had already put in place a robust internal mechanism, developed in coordination with the UNAMA Training Unit, the Business Transformation and Accountability Division, and the Procurement Division, to monitor and ensure

compliance with mandatory procurement certification requirements. It further indicated that CIPS Level 4 certification would be made mandatory for all future recruitment of procurement staff.

B. Procurement planning

The preparation of source selection plans and the assessment of procurement risks were inadequate

22. The Procurement Manual requires a source selection plan (SSP) to be prepared before any solicitation, except LVAs. The SSP should outline the sourcing strategy, key decisions, and risk factors, including mitigation measures, to ensure transparency, accountability, and value for money. Additionally, it requires missions to incorporate risk management into their procurement processes.

23. OIOS checked SSP for 36 solicitations comprising 12 RFPs, 9 ITBs, and 15 RFQs, with a total estimated value of \$82.1 million (94 per cent of the total value), out of 74 solicitations valued at \$87.1 million. SSPs were not prepared for eight solicitations (22 per cent) valued at \$678,286 (0.8 per cent), contrary to procurement requirements. UNAMA stated that six of the eight solicitations without SSPs resulted in purchase orders, and it considered them to be exempt from the requirement for an SSP. However, the Procurement Manual requires SSPs for all procurement activities, except for LVAs, regardless of whether the result is a contract or a purchase order. The Mission also did not justify the absence of SSPs for the remaining two solicitations that resulted in contract awards.

24. Of the 28 solicitations for which SSPs were prepared, the identification and mitigation of risks varied significantly. For example:

- Risks were adequately addressed in 8 solicitations valued at \$45 million, including risks related to the procurement process, logistical supply, vendor performance, political context, financial exposure, and legal considerations. No risks were identified in 11 solicitations valued at \$5.2 million.
- Risks were only partially addressed in 9 solicitations valued at \$31.2 million. For instance, the SSPs for RFP 3100005583 (\$7.6 million for explosive detection canine services) and RFP 3100006267 (\$6.9 million for facilities and camp management services) did not consider financial risks related to price adjustments or political risks from instability. Similarly, the SSP for RFP 3100006143 (\$172,800 for gym facility management) omitted performance risks, political and legal risks, and liability concerns for injuries sustained by contract personnel on United Nations premises.

25. Additionally, although procurement is typically considered a high-risk function with exposure to fraud and corruption, procurement and contract management risks were not included in UNAMA's mission-wide risk registers for 2023 and 2024.

26. The above occurred due to the lack of an adequate review mechanism to ensure SSPs were prepared in accordance with requirements and that procurement risks were systematically identified, assessed, and mitigated.

(2) UNAMA should strengthen its review mechanism to ensure that source selection plans are prepared for all applicable solicitations and that procurement risks are systematically identified, assessed, and mitigated

UNAMA accepted recommendation 2 and stated that its Procurement Unit had already implemented the practice and continued to ensure that procurement risks were systematically identified, assessed,

and mitigated. It added that, in October 2023, the Unit began using the simplified SSP and RFQ templates provided by the Procurement Division, into which risk factors and mitigation measures had been incorporated. UNAMA further stated that it had been fully compliant with procurement guidelines since adopting this format.

The cost estimation practice was ineffective

27. According to the Procurement Manual, a realistic estimated value should be identified before initiating a solicitation, based on market research and historical data, to determine the appropriate solicitation method and approval level.

28. OIOS identified significant variances between the estimated values in the shopping carts and the final awarded contract values in 34 solicitations, as shown in table 2. For example:

- RFP 3100005856 for international armed security services was estimated at \$42.7 million, but the contract was awarded for \$58.6 million, resulting in a \$15.9 million (37 per cent) underestimation. The HCC, in its April 2024 meeting, questioned the reliability of the estimate and noted that no market analysis had been conducted to support the pricing. Similarly, RFP 3100005599 for unarmed security guard services was estimated at \$12.2 million, while the award contract value was \$17.1 million, reflecting a \$4.9 million (40 per cent) underestimation. At its August 2023 meeting, the HCC noted that the estimate did not account for key cost drivers, such as mandated wage increases, and was inconsistent with prevailing market conditions.
- RFQ 3200035002 for the supply and delivery of domestic water purifiers and spare parts was initially estimated at \$76,800; however, the contract was awarded for \$19,366, resulting in an overestimation of \$ 57,434 (75 per cent).

Table 2: **Analysis of variances between estimated and awarded contract values for completed solicitations (2023–2024)**

Category	RFX count	Shopping cart value (\$)	Award value (\$)	Total discrepancy (\$)	% Difference	Average discrepancy (\$)
Overestimated value	19	11,000,889	9,598,435	1,402,454	12.7%	73,813
Underestimated value	15	67,094,940	89,131,929	-22,036,989	-32.8%	-1,469,133
Total	34	78,095,829	98,730,364			

29. UNAMA acknowledged the variances but attributed them to market volatility in Afghanistan, citing challenges such as unstable pricing, high importation costs, and shifting economic conditions. While OIOS noted that a perfect match between estimated and actual costs is not feasible, it emphasized that significant deviations should be supported by documented market research and clear justification; otherwise, it could hinder effective procurement planning.

(3) UNAMA should take measures to enhance the accuracy and reliability of the solicitation value estimation, including thorough market research and a mechanism to review the adequacy of the methodology.

UNAMA accepted recommendation 3 and stated that AMU would develop a robust remediation plan and prepare a standard operating procedure (SOP) to guide the technical units. It further stated that a follow-up review would be conducted after the SOP's implementation, and the resulting compliance data would be shared with the audit team for evaluation. In the meantime, AMU was already enforcing the audit recommendation by requiring all technical units to conduct market research as the basis for cost estimates before issuance.

C. Solicitation and contract award process

The Local Committee on Contracts functioned in accordance with requirements

30. According to ST/AI/2011/8 (Review Committees on Contracts), the LCC should comprise four voting members at the P-4 level and above and alternate members who serve in their absence. These members should have relevant commercial, financial, legal, or procurement qualifications and are required to complete mandatory training. Additionally, UNAMA's 2019 LCC SOP outlines the composition, responsibilities, and meeting protocols of its LCC.

31. UNAMA revised the composition of the LCC on 6 March 2024. A review of the revised composition confirmed compliance with the requirements of ST/AI/2011/8. Specifically, the LCC comprised nine members, including a chairperson and a deputy chairperson, drawn from technical, legal, finance, supply, budget, and administrative functions. The membership included one P-5, four P-4, two P-3, and two Field Service staff. All members completed the mandatory basic training, which covered procurement principles, committee functions, ethics, technical evaluations, and related procedures. Additionally, one member completed the optional advanced course focused on internal controls, operational challenges, and post-facto cases.

32. During the audit period, LCC held 17 meetings, including one case of ex-post facto, and reviewed 19 proposed contract awards with a not-to-exceed value of \$95.5 million for procuring goods and services. Four of the 19 proposed contracts exceeded the LCC's review threshold of \$1.5 million and were referred to HCC for further review. A review of all LCC meeting minutes showed that LCC complied with its terms of reference in its SOPs as evidenced by: (a) the attendance of at least four LCC members at each meeting; (b) the recusal of members from deliberations involving cases from their respective sections; and (c) the presence of staff from the Procurement Unit and relevant technical units to provide clarifications.

33. Beyond procedural compliance, OIOS found that the LCC was effective in exercising oversight and adding value to procurement reviews. For example, in its review of a long-term lease extension for UNMAC premises (Case No. NAMA/2023/0001, with a cumulative value of \$525,652), the Committee scrutinized the financial implications before recommending the extension. In reviewing a sole-source procurement for accommodation furniture at the United Nations Office Complex in Afghanistan (UNOCA) (Case No. NAMA/2023/0025, with a value of \$331,338), LCC validated the justification and benchmarked the price against market data to ensure value for money. Likewise, for the structured cabling works in UNOCA (Case No. NAMA/2024/001, valued at \$454,663), the Committee reviewed both the technical and commercial evaluation processes, sought clarifications on cost variances, and confirmed that the award struck a balance between compliance and value considerations.

The tender opening processes were properly conducted and compliant

34. The Procurement Manual requires the Tender Opening Committee (TOC) to have at least two members who are independent of the technical and commercial evaluation processes, responsible for verifying the timely receipt of submissions and completing a signed bid opening report. UNAMA's 2022 TOC SOP further requires members to complete a checklist confirming nine key actions, including receipt of bids, secure storage, timely opening, attendance, proper documentation, and adherence to handover procedures.

35. UNAMA updated the composition of its TOC on 19 February 2023, guided by its 2022 SOP. The TOC consisted of 20 members (18 regular members were independent of the Procurement Unit, while the two Ex-Officio members served by virtue of their roles). A review of 24 TOC cases related to 401 bids revealed that the TOC was adequately constituted, with the required members present.

36. OIOS also reviewed bid abstract sheets¹ and tender opening checklist² from the tender opening processes and noted that they were conducted properly. Across the reviewed cases, abstract and tender opening checklists were completed, signed, and aligned with the requirements of the Procurement Manual and UNAMA's 2022 TOC SOP, confirming that submissions were received on time, opened in the presence of the required members, and recorded transparently. For example, for RFP 3100005856 for international armed security services in support of the United Nations in Afghanistan, with a contract value of \$59 million, the TOC opened 13 technical bids on 12 November 2023, documented the opening in the required abstract and checklist, and referred the submissions to the Technical Evaluation Committee, which completed its assessment on 5 March 2024. The TOC then opened the financial bids on 7 March 2024 for the two offers that met the technical evaluation criteria.

The transparency of technical evaluations was hindered by a lack of documentation of individual scoring

37. The Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC) is responsible for evaluating proposals based on the criteria specified in solicitation documents, using clearly defined and measurable standards. Its members are required to sign affidavits of confidentiality and no conflict of interest, act independently, avoid superior–subordinate relationships to preserve segregation of duties, and apply scoring consistently with verifiable documentation. Best practices further recommend that each member complete individual scoring sheets before consensus to demonstrate independence, transparency, and accountability.

(a) TEC members submitted the required affidavits of confidentiality and no conflict of interest, but superior–subordinate relationships were not consistently avoided

38. OIOS reviewed the composition of the TEC in 36 solicitations and found that UNAMA consistently obtained the required affidavits of confidentiality and no conflict of interest from TEC members. However, OIOS noted two technical evaluations (RFQ no. 3200034182, valued at \$84,033, and RFQ no. 3200035002, valued at \$76,800) where TEC members were in a superior–subordinate reporting relationship, namely the Chief of the Electro-Mechanical Section and an Electrical Engineer reporting directly to the Chief, contrary to procurement requirements. This occurred because UNAMA did not conduct adequate due diligence to verify reporting lines or detect potential conflicts of interest when nominating TEC members. Consequently, the inclusion of personnel in a direct reporting relationship compromised segregation of duties and created a risk of actual or perceived bias, undermining both the independence and transparency

¹ The bid abstract sheet is the official record prepared at bid opening, listing all vendors who submitted bids and the total price of each bid.

² The tender opening checklist is a control tool used internally by the TOC as a step-by-step list to ensure that all mandatory opening procedures are followed consistently.

of the evaluation process. UNAMA acknowledged the exception and committed to enhancing the nomination process.

(b) Lack of individual scoring documents in technical evaluations

39. OIOS reviewed the adequacy of technical evaluations in three high-value contracts totaling about \$70 million, as shown in table 3.

Table 3: Summary of selected UNAMA contracts

RFP No	Contract No	Contract name	Contract value (\$)	Mandatory criteria ³	Technical criteria ⁴	Total
3100005856	4700028161	International armed security services	58,585,849	10	11	21
3100005583	4700026143	Explosive detection dogs (K-9) services	6,927,000	3	9	12
3100005453	4700025708	Refurbishment of UNOCA accommodations	4,838,637	5	19	24
Total			70,351,487	18	39	57

Source: Umoja and SSPs

40. For the mandatory criteria, OIOS confirmed that TECs correctly assessed bidders in line with solicitation requirements. Bidders that submitted valid and complete legal documents, certifications, warranties, and mandatory confirmations were properly recorded as compliant. At the same time, those with missing or incomplete documentation were appropriately rated non-compliant and disqualified, as noted in both the armed security services and K-9 services solicitations.

41. Across the three solicitations, OIOS found that the technical criteria were clearly defined and measurable, ensuring consistent and fair evaluations. For example, the international armed security services solicitation capped the mobilization period at 60 days, providing a clear benchmark. For the K-9 services solicitation, bidders were required to submit monthly training records with quantifiable data on hours, alerts, and corrective actions, enabling a verifiable assessment. Similarly, the refurbishment of UNOCA accommodations solicitation required detailed quality control plans, setting measurable standards for quality assurance through specific inspection, testing, and rectification processes.

42. However, OIOS noted that TECs documented only consolidated scores in procurement files with no evidence of individual scoring sheets. This made it difficult to confirm that members had independently assessed proposals, which reduced assurance that evaluations reflected each member's independent and balanced judgment. The gaps occurred because UNAMA did not require evaluators to complete and retain individual scoring sheets prior to consensus.

(4) UNAMA should strengthen technical evaluation practices by requiring all Technical Evaluations Committee members to complete and retain individual scoring sheets prior to reaching consensus, thereby enhancing transparency and accountability.

³ Mandatory criteria are the minimum essential requirements that bidders must fully meet to be considered compliant and move forward in the evaluation process.

⁴ Technical criteria are the qualitative and quantitative standards used to assess and score the relative merit of compliant bids against the solicitation's technical requirements.

UNAMA accepted recommendation 4 that its Procurement Unit would implement the use of individual scoring sheets to allow each TEC member to independently assess bids and proposals. This measure was intended to address concerns that the previous approach limited assurance that evaluations reflected each member's independent and balanced judgment. It further noted that the individual scoring sheets would be submitted as part of the final technical evaluation report, and that the template for the request for technical evaluation had been revised to incorporate this requirement.

Sole-source contracts were adequately justified and documented

43. The Procurement Manual requires that sole-source contracting be adequately justified and awarded to vendors whose offers substantially meet the requirements at a reasonable price.

44. There were seven sole-source contracts issued during the audit period, with a total value of \$1.6 million. These contracts covered services such as airport ground handling, fueling and de-icing, internet, software, power backup, and the provision of furniture for UNOCA. OIOS noted that UNAMA had established procedures and controls to ensure that sole-source contracts were properly justified, documented, and reviewed in accordance with procurement requirements. OIOS also found that each contract was supported by documentation, including market research, technical evaluations, price comparisons and negotiations, site inspection reports, and records of deliberations in the relevant LCC meetings. For example, contract no. 4700027825 for internet services was approved under direct contracting, as the vendor was the sole provider in Afghanistan. Similarly, contract no. 4700026599 for furniture was awarded to a local vendor identified through market research and LCC deliberations, after formal solicitation and site inspections revealed that items from the shortlisted vendors did not meet the technical specifications.

There were gaps in the management and use of low-value acquisitions

45. The Procurement Manual allows LVAs up to \$10,000 to be awarded without formal solicitation, provided that at least three quotations are received. It prohibits the use of LVAs for recurring needs or items under existing contracts, as well as bypassing formal solicitation through split purchases.

46. OIOS reviewed a sample of 35 LVAs valued at \$279,163, out of 76 LVAs processed during the audit period, with a total value of \$473,848. The review identified that five LVAs (14 per cent), valued at \$32,824, were processed without obtaining the required minimum of three quotations and lacked adequate justification. In two of these cases, the justification for not obtaining three quotations, citing vendor unavailability, was prepared only after the purchase orders had been issued and the services had been delivered. UNAMA acknowledged the gaps and agreed to take measures to strengthen compliance with LVA procedures by ensuring that the required number of quotations is obtained and that any exceptions are properly justified and documented before initiating procurement actions to ensure value for money.

D. Contract management

There were inconsistent evaluations of vendor performance and irregular conduct of required contract review meetings

47. The Procurement Manual requires vendor performance to be evaluated throughout the contract period, with comprehensive documentation, periodic reporting, scheduled meetings, and regular inspections on delivery timeliness, quality, compliance, and vendor responsiveness. UNAMA's contract monitoring plan further requires that the technical units conduct regular contract performance meetings, supported by the Procurement Unit and AMU, to monitor contract execution and address performance issues.

48. An analysis of vendor performance evaluations for all 74 contracts valued at \$83.6 million found that 429 CPRT evaluation reports were completed for 62 contracts totaling \$83.2 million. No CPRT evaluations were conducted for the remaining 12 contracts, valued at \$325,171, as they were issued under memoranda of understanding or piggyback agreements, deemed irrelevant due to non-utilization or delays resulting from unforeseen circumstances.

49. OIOS further reviewed 136 CPRT evaluation reports for 41 active contracts, valued at \$6.8 million, during the audit period. The review noted inconsistencies in 14 (10 per cent) CPRT evaluations, where conflicting evaluator comments were present despite “acceptable” ratings. For example, in contract no. 4700028042 (commissary services), the technical unit head cited failure to meet delivery deadlines and the need for improvement; in contract no. 4700026634 (logistics), authenticity documentation concerns were noted; and in contract no. 4700024418 (construction), differing views existed on vendor inflexibility, communication gaps, and the need for a meeting to address performance improvements.

50. The performance review meetings were limited to only 14 contracts, and their frequency was not consistent, and insufficient for significant contracts, as shown in table 4. Even when meetings were held, follow-up on performance issues could not be confirmed. For example, in a security services contract, two review meetings were held in February and October 2023, and two more in January and February 2024, during which issues such as fine payments, tax obligations, valid security licensing, and the acquisition of weapons were discussed. However, OIOS could not verify whether these issues were resolved, as no additional meetings took place before the contract concluded in June 2024.

Table 4: Frequency of contract performance review meetings held during the audit period

	Section/Unit	Contract type	No. of contracts	No. of meetings	Average meetings per contract (rounded)
1	Security Section	Security	3	8	3
2	General Supply and Fuel Unit	Fuel	2	31	16
3	Medical, Staff Counselling and Welfare Section	Welfare	9	12	1
	Total		14	51	

Source: UNAMA’s performance review meeting minutes

51. These issues were due to inadequate coordination between AMU and the technical units, as well as inadequate training of the technical units. UNAMA acknowledged the inconsistencies and explained that responsibility for contract performance oversight was recently transferred to AMU as part of ongoing structural realignments. The Mission viewed the recommendation as an opportunity to enhance consistency, strengthen follow-up mechanisms, and improve documentation practices.

(5) UNAMA should enhance coordination between the Acquisition Management Unit and technical units and provide targeted training of the technical units to ensure consistent vendor performance evaluations, regular and documented performance review meetings, and timely follow-up on identified issues.

UNAMA accepted recommendation 5 and stated that AMU would establish a performance evaluation plan for all active contracts with clear compliance requirements, including the scheduling of regular performance review meetings. The Mission further stated that it would conduct quarterly reviews supported by compliance documentation and, where applicable, develop follow-up action plans for contractors.

UNAMA needed to enhance the monitoring of financial security instruments

52. The performance and retention bonds serve as financial guarantees to protect the Mission against expenses or losses resulting from vendor non-performance. The Procurement Manual requires that solicitation documents and contracts include appropriate clauses for providing and enforcing such financial instruments.

53. OIOS reviewed the performance bond tracking matrix maintained by the Procurement Unit and verified its contents against bond letters, guarantee extensions, releases, and related memoranda. The review revealed that the matrix, which was updated as needed by a designated staff member, accurately captured essential contract details, including bond start and end dates, percentages, durations, and the status of the original documents.

54. OIOS further analyzed all 74 UNAMA contracts and found that 53 contracts, valued at \$6 million, included only liquidated damages clauses. According to the Mission and in line with procurement requirements, performance bonds were not required for all contracts; instead, their use was determined on a case-by-case basis, particularly in the Afghan operational context, where requiring bonds from local vendors posed practical challenges. In cases where bonds were not required, alternative contractual safeguards, such as liquidated damages clauses and retention mechanisms for works contracts, were consistently included, ensuring that the Mission retained enforceable means to claim compensation for measurable losses resulting from contractor default or delays.

55. The remaining 21 contracts, valued at \$77.5 million, included financial security instruments; however, only 11 of these contracts (\$76.7 million) were reflected in the tracking matrix. The other 10 contracts, valued at \$805,070, were not recorded. UNAMA conceded that some smaller contracts may have been mistakenly omitted from the matrix. However, OIOS attributed these gaps to the absence of regular reconciliation between the tracking matrix and the list of active contracts. This could hinder the Mission's ability to enforce contractual obligations and increase the risk of financial loss in cases of vendor non-performance. UNAMA could enhance contract monitoring by periodically reconciling the performance bond tracking matrix with all active contracts to ensure that all applicable contracts are accurately captured and regularly updated.

Vendor payments were processed and paid timely

56. The Procurement Manual requires payments to be made within 30 days of satisfactory delivery and receipt of all required supporting documentation. Additionally, under a Service Level Agreement signed on 17 August 2022, the Kuwait Joint Support Office is responsible for processing UNAMA's vendor invoice payments related to procurement.

57. During the audit period, the Kuwait Joint Support Office processed 1,804 invoices totaling \$63.2 million. OIOS reviewed a sample of 98 invoices totaling \$17.1 million and confirmed that all the invoices were processed through appropriate review and approval with the necessary supporting documentation, and they were paid within the 30-day contractual timeframe.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

58. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNAMA for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of procurement activities and contract management in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁵ / Important ⁶	C/ O ⁷	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁸
1	UNAMA should take measures to ensure full compliance with the mandatory procurement certification requirements and that any exceptions are formally approved through the appropriate waiver process.	Important	O	Pending receipt of evidence of staff compliance with procurement certification requirements and formal approval of any waivers.	15 October 2025
2	UNAMA should strengthen its review mechanism to ensure that source selection plans are prepared for all applicable solicitations and that procurement risks are systematically identified, assessed, and mitigated.	Important	C	Action completed.	Implemented
3	UNAMA should take measures to enhance the accuracy and reliability of the solicitation value estimation, including thorough market research and a mechanism to review the adequacy of the methodology.	Important	O	Pending receipt of evidence of improved solicitation value estimation supported by market research and methodology review.	15 January 2026
4	UNAMA should strengthen technical evaluation practices by requiring all Technical Evaluations Committee members to complete and retain individual scoring sheets prior to reaching consensus, thereby enhancing transparency and accountability.	Important	C	Action completed.	Implemented
5	UNAMA should enhance coordination between the Acquisition Management Unit and technical units and provide targeted training of the technical units to ensure consistent vendor performance evaluations, regular and documented performance	Important	O	Pending receipt of evidence of enhanced coordination between the Acquisition Management Unit and technical units, targeted training, vendor performance evaluations, review meetings, and follow-up actions.	15 January 2026

⁵ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

⁶ Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

⁷ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁸ Date provided by [entity] in response to recommendations. [Insert “Implemented” where recommendation is closed; (implementation date) given by the client.]

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of procurement activities and contract management in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁵ / Important ⁶	C/ O ⁷	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁸
	review meetings, and timely follow-up on identified issues.				

APPENDIX I

Management Response

United Nations  **Nations Unies**
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM MEMORANDUM INTERNE

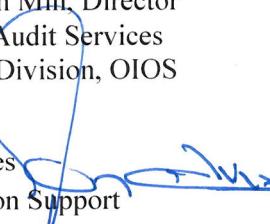
United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

TO: Mr. Byung-Kun Min, Director
A: Peacekeeping Audit Services
Internal Audit Division, OIOS

DATE: 21 September 2025

REFERENCE: 020-2025

CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

FROM: Jorge Goncalves 
DE: Chief of Mission Support

SUBJECT: Detailed results of an audit of local procurement activities and contract management in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (Assignment No. AP2024-63-04)
OBJET:

1. Reference is made to your memorandum dated 4 September 2025, ref. OIOS-2025-01709, on the above subject.
2. As requested, please find attached UNAMA's response to the recommendations made in the Draft Audit Report of the subject audit assignment.
3. Kindly note that all relevant evidence will be shared with the Senior Resident Auditors, Kuwait.

Best regards.

cc: Ms. Denise Wilman, Chief of Staff, UNAMA
Mr. Conrad Lesa, CORM
Mr. Bard Stamnes, CPO
Mr. Adityavikram Pachisia, Audit Focal Point, UNAMA

Management Response

Audit of procurement activities and contract management in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	UNAMA should take measures to ensure full compliance with the mandatory procurement certification requirements and that any exceptions are formally approved through the appropriate waiver process.	Important	Yes	Chief Procurement Officer	Under Implementation, expected implementation date is 15 October 2025	<p>UNAMA Procurement Unit has implemented a robust internal mechanism, in coordination with the UNAMA Training Unit, the Business Transformation and Accountability Division, and the Procurement Division, to monitor and ensure compliance with mandatory procurement certification requirements.</p> <p>On the specific case of the audit finding, we would like to share that on 28 August 2025, the Assistant Procurement Officer (NOA) who was selected has successfully completed the CIPS Level 4 certification. <i>A copy of the certification is attached.</i></p> <p>The two (2) Procurement Assistants (GS5) are currently awaiting the results of their final examination for UK CIPS Level 4, expected by 30 September 2025.</p> <p>For future recruitment of procurement staff, CIPS Level 4</p>

¹ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

² Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

Management Response

Audit of procurement activities and contract management in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						certification will be made mandatory.
2	UNAMA should strengthen its review mechanism to ensure that source selection plans are prepared for all applicable solicitations and that procurement risks are systematically identified, assessed, and mitigated.	Important	Yes	Chief Procurement Officer	Implemented	<p>UNAMA acknowledges the audit recommendation and as also evidenced, confirms its full compliance with the requirement to consistently prepare Source Selection Plans (SSPs) for all applicable solicitations, including the identification of risk factors and corresponding mitigation measures.</p> <p>UNAMA Procurement Unit has already implemented this practice and continues to ensure that procurement risks are systematically identified, assessed, and mitigated.</p> <p>In October 2023, UNAMA Procurement Unit began implementing the simplified Source Selection Plan (SSP) for Requests for Quotation (RFQs), using the template provided by the Procurement Division (PD). Please note that the approved template from PD does not include risk factors and mitigation measures, contrary to the audit observation. However, the UNAMA simplified SSP format does include these elements, in compliance with the audit</p>

Management Response

Audit of procurement activities and contract management in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						<p>recommendation to incorporate risk-related parameters. UNAMA has been fully compliant with procurement guidelines since the adoption of this format.</p> <p>During audit verification, some sampled cases included RFQs processed before October 2023. At that time, SSPs were not required for RFQs, which explains their absence in those earlier procurement actions.</p> <p>Attached are the SSP templates currently in use for the following solicitation methods, each including risk factors and mitigation measures:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Request for Quotation (RFQ) 2. Invitation to Bid (ITB) 3. Request for Proposal (RFP) <p>Additionally, to demonstrate compliance, the following signed SSPs are provided, each outlining risk factors and mitigation measures:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. RFQ – Provision of Freight Forwarding Services

Management Response

Audit of procurement activities and contract management in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						<p>2. ITB – Supply and Delivery of Hardware, Timber, and Paint Products</p> <p>3. RFP – Provision of Drinking Water</p> <p>With full compliance to the audit recommendation, UNAMA respectfully requests the closure of this audit recommendation.</p>
3	UNAMA should take measures to enhance the accuracy and reliability of the solicitation value estimation, including thorough market research and a mechanism to review the adequacy of the methodology.	Important	Yes	Chief AMU and Chief of Technical Units	15 January 2026	<p>UNAMA Acquisition Management Unit (AMU) will develop a robust remediation plan and prepare a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to guide the technical units. It is noted that a follow-up review will be conducted after the SOP is implemented, and the resulting compliance data will be shared with the audit team for evaluation.</p> <p>Currently, AMU is enforcing the audit recommendation that all technical units must conduct market research as the basis for cost estimates prior to the issuance of shopping carts (SCs).</p>
4	UNAMA should strengthen technical evaluation practices by requiring all Technical Evaluations Committee members to complete and retain individual scoring sheets prior to reaching consensus,	Important	Yes	Chief of Technical Units and	Implemented	Although, in accordance with the Organisation's best practices followed by its Procurement Offices under the United Nations Secretariat, the Technical Evaluation Committee

Management Response

Audit of procurement activities and contract management in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
	thereby enhancing transparency and accountability.			Chief Procurement Officer		<p>(TEC) meets to discuss technical submissions and reach a consensus based, conclusive and unified decision in compliance with the Procurement Manual, UNAMA Procurement Unit is already practicing and remains compliant with this policy.</p> <p>However, to further strengthen the technical evaluation process and in adherence to the audit recommendation, UNAMA Procurement Unit will implement the use of individual scoring sheets. These sheets will enable each TEC member to independently assess bids / proposals, addressing concerns that the previous approach reduced assurance that evaluations reflected each member's independent and balanced judgment.</p> <p>The individual scoring sheets will be submitted as part of the final Technical Evaluation Report.</p> <p>Additionally, the template for the request for technical evaluation has been revised to reflect this requirement.</p> <p><i>A copy is attached for your perusal.</i></p>

Management Response

Audit of procurement activities and contract management in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						Also attached is documentation demonstrating compliance with the audit recommendation.
5	UNAMA should enhance coordination between the Acquisition Management Unit and technical units and provide targeted training of the technical units to ensure consistent vendor performance evaluations, regular and documented performance review meetings, and timely follow-up on identified issues.	Important	Yes	Chief AMU	15 January 2026	UNAMA Acquisition Management Unit (AMU) will establish a performance evaluation plan for all active contracts, outlining clear compliance requirements, including the scheduling of regular performance review meetings. UNAMA will conduct quarterly reviews, supported by compliance documentation and, where applicable, will develop follow-up action plans for contractors.