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The Parable of the Two Sons

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The Financial Implications

Standards cost money. They are expensive to write and maintain; they cost considerably more to implement than to develop. Little information has been provided regarding the actual cost of the IMAS implementation, but it is higher than expected.

Summary

Standards are necessary for any mine action activity, but standards must reflect actual needs. The authors of the IMAS must balance humanitarian with commercial needs, and they must ensure that this intention is not subject to different interpretations. Currently, evidence suggests a widespread lack of understanding on how to interpret the IMAS—this could point to failure of the standards.

As little money is available, standards could be blamed for pilfering the period that many communities have to contain mines. If this is the case, then standards will be responsible for making the task humanitarian mine action an oxymoron. It is time to carry out mine action in a more (cost) effective, efficient and timely manner.

The Parable of the Two Sons

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The Biblical parable of the two sons illustrates a great human dilemma. Often repeated in literature and life, it is a parable of action and response, and it depicts the role of a father’s request to work in the vineyard. By declining, yet recognizing his intention and accepting how to turn a blind eye to his father’s will, are his actions in keeping with his father’s wishes? If he had carried out the work, would his father have a new appreciation for his actions?

In spite of the overwhelming good being accomplished by the Ottawa Convention ban on anti-personnel landmines, there are indications that actual accomplishments and adherence to its tenets are sometimes ignored in favor of rhetoric. Worse is the tendency of other signatories to turn a blind eye to these shortcomings, not wishing to be accused of being negative toward fellow States Parties. The “other sons” (in this case, non-signatories) have acted variously Countries that decided not to ban APLs via the Ottawa Convention are not intrinsically evil. They felt that they had a larger responsibility in defending their allies (e.g., the United States), and to any of APLs. The belief that APLs were problems, but worse, that creates holier-than- that attitude that leads to words rather than actions, recriminations rather than results, and isolation rather than inclusion.

See Endnotes, page 110