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Time to Steady the Pendulum

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The close coordination of a multitude of interdependent tasks of mine action is a difficult task. Donor organisations, however, have spent more than 10 years addressing policy, standards, advocacy and the fundraising role so that implementing organisations (both nongovernmental and commercial) can provide (if rules and regulations permit) operations that function efficiently. If the rules, regulations or external factors restrict the implementing organisations, then efficient, effective and timely objectives become difficult—if not impossible—to achieve.

IMAS—The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

Since 1997, the concept of operating an ISO-style system has become popular and the momentum to institutionalise an ISO-style standards regime has been clearly identifiable. While many argued for standards that address humanitarian needs and complained of the increased costs and donation depletion, the need for comprehensive standards is undeniable. Yet, while comprehensive standards have raised standards of quality, it has become obvious that the IMAS have developed lives of their own, raising the question of whether this is an acceptable cost.

While the IMAS are not actually ISO-based, the two are now so close together that they are seen as one. Several mine-action centres and individual nongovernmental organisational standards are now preparing to become ISO certified. It is difficult enough to achieve one standard of output. How do we then measure productivity on every task to conduct project management and work-oriented decisions?

The productsivity issue.

The three key elements of contracts are:

1. Performance ( achieves safety and quality) 
2. Work conducted within an agreed budget or contract cost 
3. Execution of the task within the contractual time

The emphasis on safety and quality alone has resulted in an environment where actual work output is reduced to a nonessential element. The increased costs and donation depletion, the momentum to institutionalise an ISO-style standards regime has been clearly identifiable. While many argued for standards that address humanitarian needs and complained of the increased costs and donation depletion, the need for comprehensive standards is undeniable. Yet, while comprehensive standards have raised standards of quality, it has become obvious that the IMAS have developed lives of their own, raising the question of whether this is an acceptable cost.

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Banks: Time to Steady the Pendulum

The inclusion of risk assessment in a 2006 study by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining is one of the most progressive and advantageous attempts to come from the establishment—so far, but without the help of the dragon. Risk assessment needs a complete understanding of the site and technological limitations. Undertaken correctly, risk assessment can reduce time and effort, and therefore costs, but assessments undertaken in the uncertainty of an operational site can sometimes go wrong. In mine and unexploded ordnance contracts, the possibility for being wrong may be treated with undisguised harshness.

Balanced response. A balanced response must maintain the equilibrium among mine clearance, finance, information technology, training, research and development, and mine and UXO clearance. The IMAS presently control all of these to some degree.

 Few will argue against the need for standards, but some may argue that the present interpretation of the IMAs by many makes the standards far too restrictive. For example, a newly formed NGO is measured at the same level (standard) as an international NGO or a national NGO.

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5. Information technology, training, research and development, and mine and UXO clearance.

While other industries, none of which have a major humanitarian element, demand five standards to be encouraged.

Modifying the IMAs to take a humanitarian perspective. Most of the land on which work has been undertaken before the IMAS was established has been accepted as cleared and returned to its owners, so former standards of work must have been acceptable standards of output. Standards must meet real need, not unless the IMAs can provide an effective QA/ QC framework, they have failed.

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The Parable of the Two Sons

by Dennis Barlow [Mine Action Information Center]

T he biblical parable of the two sons illustrates a great human dilemma often repeated in literature and life. It is a parable that presents a direct request to the reader to make decisions about their actions and their consequences.

In spite of the overwhelming good being accomplished by the Ottawa Convention to ban on anti-personnel landmines, there are still significant accomplishments that need to be made. The commitment and adherence to the Convention has been remarkable, but it is clear that there are still shortfalls, not wishing to be accused of being negative toward fellow States Parties.

The “other sons” (in this case, nonsignatories) have acted in various ways. One example of this is the inspection and training activities, recriminations rather than results, this is one of the reasons why the Ottawa Convention has not yet been seen as the success it should be. The efforts that go into humanitarian mine action programs, these efforts are often repeated in literature and life.

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Following a royal decree, the 2008 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban became an official part of Jordanian law. The Kingdom of Jordan, which signed the Ottawa Convention banning the use of landmines in 1998, has been working to eradicate landmines and other explosive remnants of war since that time. The new law represents a deepening of the government’s commitment to addressing the landmine problem in the kingdom.

The government of Jordan created the National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation in 2000 to manage and direct policy for and supervise mine-action activities. The NCDR is chaired by HRH Prince Mired and is responsible for the clearance of landmines in Jordan. The anti-personnel mine clearance rate in Jordan has been slow, but progress has been made in recent years. The government of Jordan has made significant progress in clearing landmines, and the NCDR has been working to eradicate landmines and other explosive remnants of war since that time.

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