THE IMO/IPIECA GLOBAL INITIATIVE: OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE PREPAREDNESS

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ABSTRACT
Formally launched in 1996, the Global Initiative (GI) is an umbrella programme under which International Maritime Organization (IMO) and International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association (IPIECA) are working together to encourage/facilitate the development and implementation of contingency plans and increase ratification of related international conventions. Other organizations also participate in and support the GI, including Governments, the International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation Limited, the International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds, various regional bodies and local oil industry. IMO, a specialized agency of the United Nations, works closely with member State Governments and the international shipping regulatory community to improve the safety and security of international shipping and protect the marine environment from shipping-related sources of pollution.

GI has been active since 1996 and its achievements are encouraging; countries have made significant progress in both elaboration and further development of national response systems and strategies. GI also assists in efficiently targeting donor agency funds and in leveraging such funds. It is important to recognise that the GI is a long-term process.

BACKGROUND
Major oil spills are unfortunate events that can have high impact on the affected communities. Short and long term effects of the pollution can greatly distress the socio-economic structure of the impacted area.

Although ongoing work on preventative measures within IMO and at national and regional levels within regional agreements is driving down the number of major spills, the risk cannot be reduced to zero. The reality is that events beyond the scope of human control (such as extreme weather conditions) will always remain and so will the potential for oil spills.

Against this background, the oil and shipping industry has become increasingly conscious of a need to improve its capacity to respond to spills through the development and implementation of comprehensive and effective contingency plans. The realization is also growing that capacity building requires a joint effort by key stakeholders such as local industry, governments and non-governmental organizations, particularly if plans are to accommodate and respond to local conditions. To that effect, IMO and IPIECA work closely to encourage and facilitate co-operation between the relevant Authorities, and the oil industry at national and regional levels.

PURPOSE OF THE PAPER
The paper aims at highlighting the challenges for the Global Initiative (GI), the contribution of the regional dimension, as well as the strategic role of IMO and IPIECA in this initiative, which is an overt representation of the call within the OPRC Convention for Government and industry to work together in improving oil spill preparedness, response and cooperation. Another objective is to illustrate why the Global Initiative remains a key programme within the joint work of IMO and IPIECA.

THE IMO/IPIECA GLOBAL INITIATIVE
Formally launched in 1996, the Global Initiative is an umbrella programme under which the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the oil industry (through the International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association (IPIECA)), and other partners, are working together to encourage and facilitate the development and implementation of national and regional oil spill contingency plans and increase the ratification of oil spill-related international conventions. The IMO, a specialized agency of the United Nations, works closely with member state governments and the international shipping regulatory community at a senior level to improve the safety and security of international shipping and prevent marine pollution from ships.

KEY PARTNERS
- International Maritime Organization (IMO)
- International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association (IPIECA)

In addition to the key GI partners – IMO and IPIECA-the Global Initiative brings together the International Oil Pollution Compensation (IOPC) Funds, the International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation (ITOPF), Government, local industry, donor agencies and Non - Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to a common platform where the key players can exchange facts, explain their responsibilities, contributions, expectations, and ideas as the precursor to advancing national preparedness for and response to the threat of oil pollution.

IMO, IPIECA and ITOPF present the best international practice in terms of oil spill preparedness and response. IMO provide the inter-governmental liaison, whereas IPIECA facilitate industry involvement. The Governments, local industry, donor agencies and NGOs provide the regional and local input, which allows the development of a focused work programme for implementation.
A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE

The International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation, 1990 (more commonly known as the OPRC Convention) designates the IMO as responsible, among others, for education and training, technical assistance, and also explicitly recognizes the role of IMO and the oil and shipping industry in improving cooperative and sustainable oil spill contingency planning around the world.

Wishing to respond positively to the objectives of the OPFR Convention, the oil industry requested IPIECA to develop a basis for co-operative action with the IMO, the skills and expertise of which complement the technical knowledge, oil spill experience and ability to engage local industry that IPIECA (including its Oil Spill Working Group), its industry constituents and its technical partners (such as the International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation) bring to the relationship.

At a workshop in Cape Town, South Africa in 1996, the Global Initiative (GI) was formally launched, with the aim of encouraging and facilitating the development and implementation of national, regional and sub-regional oil spill contingency plans (particularly in developing countries) and increasing the ratification of relevant international conventions, including the OPRC Convention.

Although also active in the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, Caspian and Black Seas, and South Asia, much of the early GI effort focused on the West and Central African (WACAF) region. Technical missions and training workshops/courses resulted in a substantial increase in African nations’ ratification of relevant conventions between 1996 and 2003. It became apparent, however, that more needed to be done in terms of technical assistance to complement the activities implemented in the region since 1996, in order to ensure that all of the 21 WACAF countries had an acceptable state of preparedness and operational national contingency plans in place. A reassessment of the process underlined the limits, in building sustainable local capacity, of the initial approach consisting of technical missions. The GI has therefore modified its approach to a planned, budgeted process supported by IMO and industry, business units in targeted countries to facilitate co-operation between government authorities and the oil industry. This realignment to a nationally and regionally based model puts local stakeholders, rather than London-based staff and secretariats, at the heart of the process.

OBJECTIVES OF THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE

The IPIECA/IMO Global Initiative aims to improve and sustain the capability of developing countries to protect their marine and coastal resources at risk from a maritime oil spill incident. The high-level partnership between IPIECA and IMO enables relevant actors to be brought together at a national and regional level in pursuit of this aim: the IMO provides access to governments; IPIECA brings local industry to the table. GI aims are achieved through:

- support for the national and regional implementation of the relevant international conventions, including OPFR 90, CLC 92, Fund 92, etc.;
- Regional Agreements on oil spill preparedness, response and co-operation (Barcelona Convention, Abidjan Convention, Bonn-Helcom, etc.); and
- Organization of workshops and training sessions related to contingency planning, sensitivity mapping, etc. delivered jointly by IMO and industry with support at national and regional levels.

The Global Initiative also provides the main mechanism for the IPIECA OSWG to carry out a key strategic aim: to ‘build oil spill response capacity at national/regional levels’.

THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE TEAM

A value of the Global Initiative is success through team work and the basic premise is one of an IMO/IPIECA union. Within IMO, the responsibility for co-ordinating GI rests with the Marine Environment Division (MED). A focal point for the GI has been appointed under the Director of the Division and the Senior Deputy-Director, Sub-Division for Pollution Response and Technical Co-operation Co-ordination in MED. Within IPIECA, the responsibility for GI comes under the auspices of the Oil Spill Working Group which is parent to a dedicated GI Task Force and, likewise has a designated focal point. IMO and IPIECA meet at regular intervals to manage GI and direct actions in line with the agreed strategy.

To help deliver the GI objectives, IMO and IPIECA have in the past assembled teams of specialists with international expertise, experience and credibility to impart to the relevant Government and industry officials the necessary information and guidance. The international teams make recommendations for an approach to international donor organizations to provide funding for defined projects aimed at the development of national and regional systems for preparedness and response. They also act as brokers to such agencies to help fund the planning process. For the implementation of the activities under the GI, IMO renders available the services of senior MED officials and IPIECA has access to senior consultants from Oil Spill Response Limited / East Asia Limited (OSRL/EARL) based in Southampton, United Kingdom and Singapore respectively.

Where appropriate and dependent upon project objectives, the GI team has been extended to include representatives from the International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation (ITOPF) and from the International Oil Pollution Compensation (IOPC) Funds. Language barriers during the meetings are overcome by using a combination of interpreters from the afore-mentioned organisations coupled with in-country translators.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE

The OPRC Convention calls for national authorities to work with the “oil and shipping industries” to unify their efforts; the GI still embodies the spirit of the OPRC Convention. The experiences gained and results attained in one GI regional group are good examples that can be replicated elsewhere at both the national and regional levels.

Caspian, Black Sea and Central Eurasia

The Oil Spill Preparedness Regional Initiative (OSPRI) was established by 8 companies under the IPIECA umbrella in 2003, with an emphasis on participation from the regions’ business units. Since then, excellent relations with governmental regional bodies (Black Sea Commission and the Caspian Environment Programme) have been established, bringing clear and recognized support to the development of sustainable oil spill preparedness and response.

Mediterranean region

The Mediterranean Oil Industry Group (MOIG) which was institutionalized in 2004 has a membership of 24 oil companies and commercial providers in the Mediterranean region. The group serves as a regional oil industry forum on oil spill preparedness and response, the counterpart to the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC), the activity centre in the region.

West and Central Africa (WACAF)

Recognizing the need to strengthen national oil spill response capability and encourage the ratification and implementation of the
relevant IMO Conventions, the GI partners, IPIECA and the IMO, set up the GI WACAF Project, which was launched in April 2006 in Libreville, Gabon.

The project is jointly funded by IPIECA through 7 oil company members, and by the IMO through their Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP). The project is implemented in partnership with the UNEP Regional Seas programme, the Guinea current Large Marine Ecosystem (GCLME) Project and various bilateral cooperation initiatives and more importantly with the recipient countries.

The first biennial Action Plan was developed based on local consultations and includes 4 regional and 14 national workshops. Seven indicators of preparedness were used to monitor the project impacts and the evolution of country profiles. These same indicators will be used to establish the regional priorities and develop an action plan for the next biennium 2008-2009. As an illustration of the achievements under GI, the Annex to this document gives an account of the activities implemented/programmed during the first two years of the WACAF project’s life.

Latin America and Caribbean Region

Following GI workshops in the Latin America and Caribbean region in the last decade, a mature GI-style arrangement has been formed between industry bodies Clean Caribbean and Americas (CCA) and ARPEL (Regional Association of Oil and Natural Gas Companies in Latin America and the Caribbean), and the activity centre in the region, the IMO Regional Marine Pollution Emergency, Information and Training Centre for the wider Caribbean Region (REMPEITC).

Clean Caribbean & Americas continues active engagement in GI programme objectives in the Caribbean/Latin America region in both unilaterally and cooperative involvement with ARPEL and IMO/REMPEITC.

South East Asia

Countries in the East Asian region are at high risk of oil spills due to crowded shipping routes, and new Exploration &Production developments. The number of major spills (over 700 tonnes) in the East Asian region has not decreased over the last 40 years as is the global trend, but has remained constant. The GI partners, IPIECA and the IMO, are currently working to build on established national and regional arrangements, with the aim to strengthen preparedness in the region.

North West Pacific

The Marine Environmental Emergency Preparedness and Response Regional Activity Centre (MERRAC) represents a collaborative effort of 4 governments in the East Asia region: Japan, China, Russia and host-nation Republic of Korea, to coordinate activities under the Action Plan for the protection, management and development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Northwest Pacific Region (NOWPAP).

PROGRESS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Successful partnerships can be defined in many ways, but most are underpinned by mutual trust, understanding and respect, shared vision and goals, a shared responsibility, and a willingness to work together on equal terms. For the GI, success has certainly been built on these characteristics, but also on mutual recognition of each partner’s strengths and weaknesses and an adaptive approach that reinforces positive progress and facilitates sustainable engagement with relevant policy makers. Throughout the journey, the partners have been faced with a range of challenges and opportunities. From these have come some key lessons:

The level of commitment of each partner can be difficult to quantify

There is no standard ‘currency’ for commitment. When partners are channelling different types of contribution into a partnership (e.g., ‘sweat equity’, funding and in-kind support), ensuring that the commitment of each partner is, and is perceived as equivalent can be a substantial challenge. Real or apparent imbalances in the commitment of each partner can undermine the trust and respect necessary for a healthy working relationship. In the beginning, the ad-hoc nature of the GI activities made it difficult to quantify the level of contribution of the two major GI partners, IMO and IPIECA. The GI change to a budgeted regional focus has no doubt contributed to the reduction of the relative significance of the less easily quantified forms of equity.

External factors beyond the partners’ control can affect progress

IMO provides a platform for co-operation among governments in the field of governmental regulations and practices relating to technical matters affecting shipping. It also encourages and facilitates the general adoption of the highest practicable standards in matters concerning maritime safety, efficiency of navigation and prevention and control of marine pollution from ships. The IMO Integrated Technical Co-operation Programme (ITCP) is a key element in meeting these goals. It aims at assisting countries in building up their human and institutional capacities for uniform and effective implementation of the Organization’s regulatory framework. Some of the Programme elements might be subjected to shaping or reforms aiming at improved coherence with IMO technical objectives and priorities.

On the industry side, the availability of staff can change at short notice, for example, if they are called to respond to an oil spill incident. On the government side, the assignment of resources—particularly limited in developing countries—may not align well (or at all) with the requirements of the partnership. These external factors can cause frustration for the partners. The GI has addressed the issue in part by erring on the side of caution in planning events and activities, but the partners acknowledge the need for, and engaged into, improved organizational and time-keeping aspects within these external constraints.

The scope of each partner’s interest is likely to develop over time

Interests may diverge somewhat, with one partner wishing to push progress on a specific topic or in a particular region, while other partners have less interest in or reasons for doing so. In the case of the GI, a ‘collective’ of industry groups is required to effectively address the broad range of activities that IMO wishes to pursue on a global basis; where one industry group has little interest or expertise, another must take the lead.

THE CHALLENGE OF WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Partnership can be characterized by entities with different structures, mandates and operational capabilities. This is the case for IMO and IPIECA. Under these circumstances, working together might need some adjusting and reciprocal understanding, as the ultimate goal is the effective implementation of a given programme of activities. To achieve this, partners would need to integrate their strengths and balance their possible weaknesses; which is exactly what both Organizations are aiming at within the GI partnership.

The development of partnerships with other related programmes and international and regional organizations is key to the success of the Global Initiative.
Staff turnover and periodic shortfalls in staff availability must be anticipated where possible

Staff turnover and staff availability have been issues for both the IMO and IPIECA. Staff change requires lessons to be relearned and working relationships to be redeveloped. Staff shortages or reduced staff availability can also deter the rate of progress and the vibrancy of the working relationship. Even if staff turnover is expected to be low, a formal process of capturing and managing knowledge from the outset is essential. In the case of the GI, the production of case study materials, country-by-country assessments and a formal process for documenting outcomes have helped manage knowledge and information and reduce the impacts of staff changes and shortages.

Selling’ and sustaining interest in the issue that the partnership is addressing can be a challenge

The financial resources available from industry have been constrained by a failure to effectively ‘sell’ oil spills as an ongoing and significant issue to those assigning corporate budgets. While oil spills have a long history, their association with oil industry market leaders is diminishing through implementation of best practice at company level, weakening the business case in these companies for supporting external, industry-wide actions. Communication to senior corporate staff of the potential negative business as well as environmental impacts of oil spills should be ongoing to ensure appropriate and sustained financial support.

CONCLUSIONS

Clear progress has been achieved in a number of areas such as the designation of Government Responsible Authorities, the development of national and sub-regional contingency plans and of national legislation and ratification, as well as the effective implementation of relevant IMO conventions by the recipient countries. The IMO/ IPIECA GI Project for West and Central Africa launched in April 2006 has substantially contributed to advancing such progress in that region. However, more efforts need to be made by the GI partnership to increase the recipient countries’ capacity in oil spill preparedness and response, and to enhance national and regional co-operation among Governments and between Government and industry. In this respect, it is important to recognize that GI is a long-term process and the results attained so far in some countries are good examples, which are being replicated elsewhere. Also, the regionalization of the programme should drive progress more rapidly and deliver effective and sustainable contingency plans in a reasonable time frame, overcoming some of the obstacles of the past 10 years. However, a complete changeover to a regional approach may result in the loss of strategic analysis; therefore a centralized role for IMO and IPIECA is likely to continue in order to facilitate co-operation and the exchange of information.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

With regards to this part of the document, the reader may wish to note that the paper was prepared based on the experience gained over the years by the authors in dealing with the GI. Following websites are being provided as possible sources dealing with matters of relevance to the topic.

Useful Internet Web Sites

IMO Home Page http://www.imo.org
IPIECA Home Page http://www.ipieca.org
IOPC Funds Home Page http://www.iopcfund.org
ITOPF Home Page http://www.itopf.com
GI/WACAF Project Home Page http://www.antipol.com/wacaf