

Moving the dial through collaboration

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ABSTRACT

For many years there have been lots of Oil Spill Response Organizations (OSROs) worldwide. Their organization, concept of operations and skills have to a large extent been tailored to their specific areas of operations, members demand and the OSROs own practice and experience. Collaboration between OSROs has been somewhat limited.

During the last decade, the post-Macondo follow up has showed – and strengthened – the necessity of tiered preparedness, hence the importance of collaboration between different oil spill response organizations has raised to another level. One arena which has evolved tremendously during the last decade, has been the Global Response Network – GRN. The dial can surely be said to have moved considerably towards closer collaboration.

The Global Response Network (GRN) exists to share information, improve spill response performance and provide centers of expertise in spill preparedness, response and recovery techniques. It is a forum for oil spill response organizations to improve their individual performance and effectiveness by:

- a. fostering strong collaborative relationships between Members;
- b. establishing functional teams to exchange operating information, response techniques and share good practice; and
- c. assisting oil companies and other stakeholders to enhance industry standards for spill response.

The GRN will operate under an Executive Committee (EC) framework which purpose is to determine the broad strategic direction of the GRN.

The EC is also reviewing and assessing the work of the functional teams operating under the EC, known as the Operational Teams (OTs).

During the last decade, the OTs have developed into a global, functional group of experts working across nations and boundaries. The OT's represents the operational expertise within the OSROs and have become the bodies to operationalize and implement the Good Practice Guidelines developed through IPIECA post- Macondo. Having this body – or structure – of experts to support the industry (and IPIECA) has proven important.

This presentation will describe how the last decade has made improvements in collaboration between OSROs and different agencies – both regulators, companies, agencies, the public and responder – to make oil spill response more efficient, standardized and created a better understanding of the importance of having a good, well-functioned oil spill response.

INTRODUCTION

Because of the significance of the time and location of IOSC 2020, In New Orleans, Louisiana, exactly 10 years after Macondo, the industry, through IPIECA, has establish four special sessions, collectively billed as a “forward-looking retrospective”. The sessions will highlight where the industry and the wider response community have advanced oil spill preparedness and response since Macondo. Through IPIECA, and the general understanding of the role of Oil Spill Response Organizations (OSROs), the effort to global collaboration has increased.

This presentation will describe how the last decade has made improvements in collaboration between OSROs and different agencies – both regulators, companies, agencies, the public and responder – to make oil spill response more efficient, standardized and created a better understanding of the importance of having a good, well-functioned oil spill response. The importance and growing acceptance of the Global Response Network with their Operational Teams will particularly be covered in this presentation.

The focus will primarily be related to offshore oil and gas activities, even though there are significant activities both on shore, through mining and transportation of hydrocarbons both at sea and through inland pipelines. This paper will mention, but not focus on, oil spill response related to maritime activities or pipelines.

HISTORY

Ever since oil and gas exploration and production – like offshore activities – began decades ago, there has been an increased focus on safety, health and protection of the environment.

Oil and gas exploration offshore have developed over the years, initially starting in the late 1930's in the Gulf of Mexico (Offshore Oil and Gas in the Gulf of Mexico. Wikipedia), first findings on the Norwegian Continental Shelf in 1969 (Norway's petroleum history. Norwegianpetroleum.no, Ministry of Petroleum and Energy and the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate) and Colombia recently starting to focus on offshore activities in their part of the Caribbean water (Colombia hopes to sign 20 contracts in coming oil round: official. Reuters 26 September 2019).

Even if the regulators in general expect there to be realistic risk assessments and plans to prevent any incidents or oil spill (pollution), the follow-up on this may have varied according to focus, threats, incidents and activities. The Macondo incident 2010 (Deep Water Horizon Incident. Wikipedia) was an eye-opener but not the first one. The Gulf of Mexico had a major incident in 1979, the Ixtoc-1 blow out..

Before turning into the post-Macondo evolution, I would like to mention another incident having an impact on oil spill response and OSROs. Let me use an example from a faraway location – Norway – with her offshore activities.

The first discovery of oil on the Norwegian Continental Shelf was Christmas of 1969 when Phillips Petroleum hit a reservoir at the Ekofisk field in the southern part of the North Sea.

In April 1977, the Ekofisk Bravo (Ekofisk Oil Field. Wikipedia) experienced an uncontrolled blow-out.



Fig 1: Ekofisk Bravo Blowout

The spill from this incident was estimated to 20.000 tons (Ekofisk Bravo Blowout Oilfield Incidents. Drillingformulas.com Aug 6 2014) and the duration was 8 days, from April 22nd to April 30th.

As a result of the Bravo incident, the Norwegian Cleans Seas Association for Operating Companies, NOFO, was established in late April 1978. Norway got their Oil Spill Response Organization.

Throughout the years several Oil Spill Response Organizations have been formed. Those being present members of the Global Response Network, GRN, are

- Clean Gulf Associates (CGA), founded 1972
- Western Canada Marine Response Corporation (WCMRC), founded 1976
- Norwegian Cleans Seas Association for Operating Companies (NOFO), founded 1978
- Alaska Clean Seas (ACS), founded 1979
- Oil Spill Response Ltd (OSRL), founded 1985
- Marine Spill Response Corporation (MSRC), founded 1990
- Australian Marine Oils Spill Centre (AMOSC), founded 1991

- Eastern Canada Response Centres (ECRC), founded 1993

Even if these OSROs were founded as independent organizations, sometimes competitors, the idea of collaborations started to grow, and the Global Response Network was created in created as a result of Macondo.

The idea of GRN is that Team Members work collaboratively, exchanging operating information, sharing response techniques and identifying best practice. Over time, this has helped the OSROs to create new standards and consistent ways of working that will keep improving oil spill response.

Post-Macondo, the importance of GRN has increased, bringing the network into a new era, so to speak. The effect has truly been a move towards more extended collaboration. The dial has been moving forward.

OSRO COLLABORATION POST MACONDO – GLOBAL RESPONSE NETWORK – ORGANIZATION AND TERMS OF REFERENCES

When GRN was established, a Charter and Terms of References (Global Response Network Charter and Terms of References. October 2016) were developed. The Charter states the rationale for GRN as *“The Global Response Network (GRN) exists to share information, improve spill response performance and provide centres of expertise in spill preparedness, response and recovery techniques. It is a forum for (primarily surface) oil spill response organisations to improve their individual performance and effectiveness by:*

- a. fostering strong collaborative relationships amongst Members;*
- b. establishing functional teams to exchange operating information, response techniques and share good practice; and*

c. assisting oil companies and other stakeholders to enhance industry standards for spill response.

The GRN is not of itself a response organisation, nor does it act as a mechanism by which a spilling party can call on the GRN to activate Members it is otherwise not funding.”

Based on the rationale behind GRN, an operating philosophy was created.

The philosophy states that *“The GRN will operate under an Executive Committee (EC) framework.*

The EC will consist of a leading executive of each participating organisation who will attend the meetings firstly to act corporately on behalf of the GRN and representing their organisation’s needs secondly. The purpose of this EC is to determine the broad strategic direction of the GRN, addressing matters such as governance and membership.

The purpose also extends to the EC reviewing and assessing the work of the functional teams operating under the EC and known as the Operational Teams (OTs) (GRN Charter and Terms of References. Operational Teams, Offshore, Nearshore, Inland, Dispersants, In-situ Burning, Remote Sensing, Ice-covered waters.)

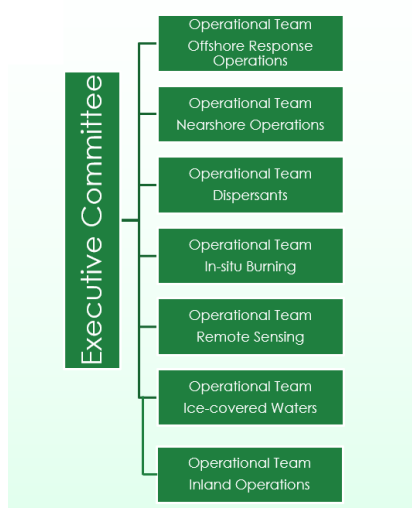


Fig 2: GRN Organizational Structure

What is the purpose and objectives of these Operational Teams? According to the GRN Charter the OTs are, in general, to:

- *Ensure a mechanism is in place to activate OT members to provide OT subject matter expertise for the lead GRN OSRO responding to the spill or the spilling party as appropriate.*
- *Maintain the database of major response resources available worldwide from among the GRN members. Such database to be included on the GRN website.*
- *Exchange information, good practice, and shared learning including an emphasis on safety and environmental practices in operations among members of the OT*
- *Keep a running tab of the major accomplishments or “nuggets” gained from the OT meetings and list on GRN website*
- *Maintain linkages to various industry initiatives (e.g. API-JITF, IOGP-JIP) providing both input and contributing to wider outcomes as requested and endorsed by the GRN EC.*
- *Assess specifically as a standing agenda item the OT’s contribution to the JIP Outreach and Communication Ambassador Programme to expand thinking and horizons on preparedness and response issues for the wider benefit of the JIP and response communities.*
- *Report on status of objectives twice-yearly to the GRN EC.*

In fewer words: The OTs are the tools of the GRN performing the real work of collaboration.

Furthermore, the philosophy states that *“Participation in the GRN is intended to support and enhance each Member’s existing operation and does not limit or affect how Members otherwise provide their services. Each Member’s involvement remains subject to that Member’s internal policies and requirements. The sharing of information between GRN Members will not be used by a Member to gain financially from the information that is shared”*.

When establishing the GRN, it was important for the OSROs to make sure that members followed a certain standard.

By doing so, the Network would avoid that such a collaboration could turn into a pure business and profit generation. The membership criteria, as stated in the Charter clearly indicates this network is based on common collaboration within the rationale and the philosophy. Membership criteria states that *“Each Member organisation of the GRN will meet all the following criteria.*

- *Be an industry-funded response organisation whose prime objectives do not include profit generation.*
- *Provide a diverse portfolio of response capability and/or services for multiple companies and operators.*
- *Have enough breadth of interest and scope of service delivery to participate actively in the GRN EC and contribute seasoned subject-matter experts to at least 3 of the GRN OTs.*
- *Be able to cover its own expenses on a regular basis for GRN meetings (EC and OT).*
- *Be willing to collaborate in the sharing of knowledge and resources with no financial gain to the contributing party.*

By following these criteria, the idea was to ensure necessary contribution making GRN the “think tank” of OSROs rather than being a forum “to gain experience, not sharing and collaborate”.

COLLABORATION WITH REGULATORS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS

In lieu of the growing acknowledgement of OSROs representing a solid group of expertise within oil spill response, political and technical organisations, producers and regulators have started to include these organisations in their work.

Quite a few of the GRN OSROs are also members of other associations. The Association of Petroleum Industry Cooperative Managers (APICOM) is one such organisation, with many OSROs in North America as members.



Fig 3: APICOM

This Association meets for the mutual benefits of the member to exchange information and best practice as it relates to global oil spill response and includes support through mutual aid agreements (people and equipment) (apicom.org).

Another organization with association to OSROs, is the Australian Institute of Petroleum (AIP). The Australian Institute of Petroleum (AIP) was formed in 1976 to promote industry self-regulation and an effective dialogue between the oil industry, government and the community (aip.com.au).

In Norway, NOFO is associated to Norwegian Oil and Gas Association, a professional body and employer's association for oil and supplier companies (norskoljeoggass.no/en).

Through these different organizations, the OSROs are likely to be involved in activities where the authorities, the regulators, take part. By doing so, the mutual understanding of legal requirements and practical follow-up are strengthened.

Of course, some of the GRN OSROs, even if not governmental themselves, are directly associated with the authorities, for example Canada.

As we understand, GRN and their members are heavily involved in activities with industry, other organizations and even the regulators. This strengthens the credibility to OSROs.

IPIECA AND GRN COLLABORATION

After Macondo, the industry through IOGP/IPECA developed many working papers and studies – Joint Industry Projects (JIPs). The effort was, obviously, to document experiences, summarize lessons identified and learned and establish Good Practice Guidance (GPG) (IPIECA publications). The idea with these GPGs has been to assist the users – the responders among others – to perform better, get necessary knowledge and increase their professionalism. A major question has been: All these studies and papers – how do they work in the practical life? Can they be operationalized in any practical way? This question had to be forwarded to the users – the responders.

To establish necessary contact with the responders, IPIECA invited GRN and their members (OSROs) in 2017 to join as Technical Partners (IPIECA invitation to GRN members. IPIECA e-mail (Rob Cox) Tue 20th June 2017). The invitations were (obviously) welcomed and GRN representatives started to join JIP meeting and further on IPIECA OSG – Oil Spill Group Meetings.

GRN Executive Committee decided in the fall of 2018 that cooperation with IPIECA OSG should involve the real “experts” – the Operational Teams.

As a result, the GRN EC made the following decision and approval (GRN Executive Committee Meeting. Minutes 27 Nov 2018): *“Participation in IPIECA OSG to adhere to the following guidance:*

- *GRN (EC) in general participates in the IPIECA OSG work (as deemed appropriate). In this respect, our respective OSROs collectively represents GRN.*

- *The actual follow-up on OSG works/working groups are vested in the respective OTs as appropriate.*
- *If any topic/area arise which is not covered by one specific OT, an ad hoc OT (or Special Project OT) may be established for this purpose. The EC will decide on the composition/representatives to such an OT.*
- *As our respective OSROs may have more expertise than covered by an OT, this OT could be augmented with the necessary expertise to cover a specific task. Such augmentation to be decided/coordinated by the OT chair, his sponsor and the EC if so needed.*
- *Cost related to participation in IPIECA OSG Meetings and Working Groups, to be covered by the individual participating OSROs.*

Through this decision, the EC has brought the OSROs – and the OTs – even closer to collaboration, not only between themselves, but in the greater good for the industry. By doing so, IPIECA has in practice gained a “formal” access to a representative group of experts – responders – from different globally located OSROs to assist in their important work to implement Good Practices in an efficient and professional way.

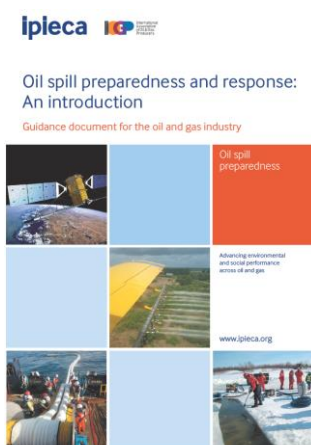


Fig 4: IPIECA Publications

It is important for the industry that all the good work created post-Macondo are carried on, assisting and helping the responders to perform their job even better, should a new incident happen. The need for and understanding of the benefits vested in collaboration has been strengthened during the last decade.

FUTURE COLLABORATION

Originally GRN “*exist to share information, improve spill response performance and provide centres of expertise in spill preparedness, response and recovery techniques* (GRN Charter and Terms of References. October 2016).” This “limitation” may change in the future as the thought that “*GRN should strive to move in the direction of a more response-based network, with emphasis on people and equipment sharing during a response. Such sharing should be between the individual GRN members, formalized through bilateral agreements*”.

Such a thought is bringing the philosophy of GRN to a whole new level – physical collaboration, strengthening the individual OSROs own capabilities.

Another issue is whether the OTs could assist in a more active way to disseminate information and knowledge of the GPGs, hence becoming a sort of “custodians” of these documents.

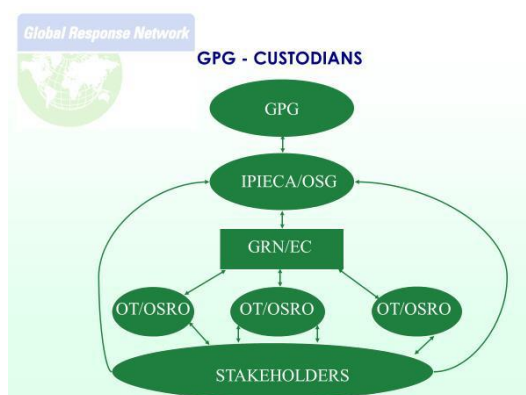


Fig 5: Suggested GRN GPG involvement

CONCLUSION

After Macondo, different OSROs acknowledged the benefit of collaboration. The Global Response Network, GRN, was established as a forum for exchanging information and experiences.

Throughout the last decade, collaboration within the GRN has evolved, making the OSROs tighter in exchanging information, standards, lessons learned and participating in each other's activities such as exercises, trials, research and development programs etc. The global OSRO community has surely become more closer with both professional relationships and knowing key personnel on an individual basis.

It is fair to say that the initial rationale and philosophy of GRN has been fulfilled. In addition, GRN has delivered significant knowledge and experience not only between the members, but also to industry and organizations. This includes regulators looking to OSROs for fact-finding and advises on oil spill response capabilities and effects.

By aligning OSRO capability to member company spill risk and plans, it is a hope that the offshore oil and gas activities are conducted in a safer, healthier and environmentally better way. Hence the trust between companies, regulators, OSROs and the public has increased.

The clock has been ticking, the dial moving and the OSRO community been even tighter in their connection and mutual understand of weakness and strengths – One for All, All for One as a good motto. The dials are still moving through even more improved collaboration.

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