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Update on IWC Entanglement Response Capacity Development Initiative

IWC Secretariat



INTERNATIONAL
WHALING COMMISSION

**REPORT OF THE IWC’S CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE
ON LARGE WHALE ENTANGLEMENT RESPONSE**

Submitted by Mattila

At the IWC 2010 workshop on the welfare implications of entanglement (IWC, 2012), along with assessing the welfare impacts of large whale entanglement, the participants recognized that mitigating entanglements could have significant conservation impacts for some populations. They suggested that any small populations that overlapped with high risk fishing gear were susceptible, and they gave several examples. One of the strong recommendations from that first workshop was to build capacity to respond to entangled whales, both for the benefits to the whale (and population), but also in order to gather better data on entanglement.

Since that workshop, a second was convened to develop “best practices” and a strategy and curriculum for capacity building. IWC capacity building began in March 2012, and the table in Appendix A lists the training that was accomplished between that time and April, 2015. Since the training listed in Appendix A, the following trainings have been carried out:

Dates of training	Countries, Commonwealths, Territories and Organizations	# of Response trainees in Classroom only*	# of Response Trainees	Trainer(s)
30/06/2015	POWER crew, Shiogama, Japan	~30	~30	Mattila
06-12/11/2015	Muscat, Oman	40	12	Mattila/Sharp
17-19/11/2015	Vina del Mar, Chile	40	24	Mattila/Rebolledo
1-2/12/2015	Guadeloupe	30	12	Mattila
	Dominica	1	1	
3-4/12/2015	Martinique	30	12	Mattila
	Dominica	2	2	

In addition, there are now confirmed trainings planned for Nuuk, Greenland (July, 2016), San Jose, Peru (Sept., 2016) and Santa Catarina, Brazil (Sept., 2016). In addition, there are ongoing discussions for possible trainings in Sakhalin, Russia, Thailand, Pakistan, Gabon, Colombia, South Pacific Islands (e.g. with SPREP), and more.

We bring this capacity building to the attention of the SC and the CC, as it will hopefully increase the level and accuracy of reported entanglements from these countries, possibly through the proposed IWC database. In addition it also represents possible conservation benefits for some critically endangered populations (e.g. Arabian Sea humpback, Chilean right whale, N. Pacific right whale, Western gray whale....etc.).

APPENDIX A

EXTRACTED FROM: *REPORT OF THE THIRD WORKSHOP ON LARGE WHALE ENTANGLEMENT ISSUES*

3. REVIEW OF IWC CAPACITY BUILDING

3.1 Summary of work since last meeting

The second (2011) IWC workshop on entanglement, also held in Provincetown, was focused on developing a strategy, curricula and advisory group to carry out the capacity building recommended at the 2010 Workshop (IWC, 2012). The result was a three-pronged training strategy comprising: (1) provision of an overview of the issue and a context for IWC-endorsed capacity building; (2) discussions with appropriate resource managers about feasible team and network structure; and (3) detailed entanglement response training by members of the IWC expert advisory group.

The two-day training consists of one day on land, largely in a classroom, where all participants are given an overview of the issue globally, with background information on how other countries are approaching this problem. In addition, the host Government is asked to provide a brief overview of what is known for the region, including: species and gear involved, examples of local events, and any local regulations. An overview of the science and methodologies used to understand the issue is also presented, and two overarching ‘principles’ are reiterated. Firstly, that human safety must come first, and secondly, that disentanglement is only the first step in helping whales and fishers. On the latter point it is made clear that prevention is the ultimate solution to this problem, and all responses to an entangled whale should include gathering information (safely) that will eventually lead to prevention.

The remainder of the first day is spent going over safe disentangling procedures using many images and video clips to illustrate the proper use of tools, techniques and safe decision-making procedures. The number of attendees for the first day in the class is only limited by the size of the room. However, not all of the attendees will be candidates for the hands-on training on the water, during the second day (see below).

The second day takes place on the water. Two small boats (per trainer) are used; one acting as the ‘whale’ and the other as the ‘rescue’ boat. The ‘whale’ boat tows a long rope with a variety of objects on the end (e.g. buoy, tangle of net....etc.), as the ‘rescue’ boat makes multiple approaches using various tools. As only two trainees are in the ‘rescue’ boat at any time, and the process is time-consuming, only 10-12 trainees can be accommodated.

Because the ‘hands on’ work releasing a whale can be dangerous, and the second day can only accommodate 10-12 trainees, the following consensus criteria are provided in order to identify key trainees for the second day:

- Experience with whale behaviour and driving small boats around whales.
- Experience with fishing gear and with handling lines under powerful ‘load’ or strain.
- Experience with small boat safety.
- Physical fitness (does not need to be an athlete!).
- Availability for the network (there is no point training someone who will not be available to respond).
- Has appropriate insurance and authorisation of the relevant authority.
- Level-headed (is able to remain calm and think clearly in stressful situations).

At the conclusion of the training, the trainees are evaluated and the trainer works with the relevant authority to identify key participants who may be able to undertake a three week apprenticeship with one of the existing networks. So far these apprenticeships have been conducted at the Center for Coastal Studies, Provincetown in the USA, as they have: rescue facilities, proximity to whales, ongoing entanglement related research and proximity to other valuable sources of related experience (e.g. necropsy and stranding, fishing gear research....etc.). This is effectively training future trainers for the country represented.

Training is only undertaken with the knowledge of the authorities of the relevant countries. In some cases, they themselves request and support the training. Requests that come through the IWC to the expert trainers are prioritised using a number of criteria and this is discussed further under Item 3.3.

A valuable approach has been to partner with regional IGOs in order to provide the training in fulfilment of regional action plans (e.g. the SPAW marine mammal action plan in the Wider Caribbean, and the SPEP whale and dolphin action plan in the South Pacific). The global entanglement response network now includes established networks from 19 countries.

Table 1 lists the training exercises that have been undertaken and the trainers involved whilst Table 2 summarises the overview seminars.

Table 1

IWC endorsed Seminars and Trainings: 2012-2014. Countries represented with numbers of trainees. Response training only in the classroom takes one day; response training takes two days.

Dates of training	Countries, Commonwealths, Territories and Organizations	Response training in Classroom only*	Response Training	Trainer(s)
17-20/3/2012	Brazil	3	40	Mattila
27-29/3/2012	Argentina	50	10	Mattila
3-6/11/2012	United Kingdom	11	12	Mattila
15-16/11/2012	Mexico (Pt Vallarta)	17	36	Mattila & Landry
28-29/11/2012	Mexico (La Paz)**	18	20	Mattila & Lyman
	Costa Rica		3	
	Dominican Republic		2	
	Panama		3	
27-28/6/2013	Ecuador**(Salinas)	9	16	Mattila & Lyman
	Chile		3	
	Colombia	2	1	
	Panama		3	
	Peru	1	2	
26-27/9/2013	Panama	10	20	Mattila & Lyman
13-14/11/2013	French Caribbean**	2	10	Mattila & Sandilands
	Anguilla		1	
	Belize	1		
	Colombia		1	
	Dutch Caribbean		4	
	Trinidad and Tobago		1	
	Puerto Rico		1	
	St. Lucia		1	
	St. Kitts and Nevis		2	
	Venezuela		1	
18-19/01/2014	Mexico (El Vizcaino Biosphere Reserve)	14	20	Mattila & Lyman
3-4/4/2014	Dominican Republic**	10	14	Mattila
	Puerto Rico		2	
29-30/7/2014	Tonga	2	7	Mattila
	Vanuatu	1	2	
22-23/09/2014	Mexico (Oaxaca)	0	35	Landry
9-10/10/2014	Mexico (La Paz, advanced)	0	33	Lyman
3-4/11/2014	Mexico (Pt Vallarta, advanced)	10	30	Mattila

*These numbers are estimates, as the seminars and classroom training were open to Government staff, Universities, Scientists, Veterinarians, Navy and other potential support or decision-making parties, but who were not candidates for the practical training on the water.

** Several "National" trainings, which were arranged in conjunction with regional IGO's such as UNEP-CEP-SPAW, UNEP-SPREP and CPPS, brought some trainees from member countries to participate in the National trainings for Ecuador, the French Caribbean and Mexico.

Table 2

Summary of invited overview seminars

Date	Venue	Participants	Countries
8/11/2011	ICMMPA2	150	42
14/2/2012	Korea (CRI)	40	
25/3/2012	Argentina (Univ.)	30	
31/10/2012	Norway (Science Council, Fisheries)	20	
4-6/12/2012	WSPA Debris Symposium	60	20
11/4/2013	Permanent Commission of the South Pacific (CPPS)	30	5
13/5/2013	WHOI (Scientists)	40	8
6/9/2013	SPREP	30	26 (Pacific Islands)
17&20/10/2014	American Samoa (DMWR, NPS, NOAA)	25	
1/12/2014	SOLOMAC and SOMMEMA	90	15 (Latin American)
27-29/1/2015	Arabian Sea	30	12
22/3/2015	European Cetacean Society	30	

The Workshop **congratulated** the trainers and the trainees, recognising the importance of this work, not only in terms of training the entanglement teams but also in stimulating discussion surrounding the ultimate goal of prevention (see below). It noted the advantage of having more than one trainer where this was feasible (e.g. see Item 3.2.3) and **agreed** that efforts would be made to expand the international pool of trainers in the future.

Further discussion of the programme is considered under Item 3.3.

3.3 Review of strategy, curriculum and prioritisation

3.3.1 Introduction

In discussing this item, the Workshop took into account the 2011 Workshop report, especially IWC (2013c) and IWC (2013d), the discussions under Items 3.1 and 3.2 and consideration of A15/ER/ALL9. This last document comprised a brief report from one of the IWC sponsored trainings, held in La Paz, Mexico in 2012. It was co-sponsored by the IWC, UNEP-CEP-SPAW and the Mexican Government. The training included an extra day of training in the determination of human impacts to whales. It was noted that the training had been very well received by the trainees, based on their evaluations and comments (Tables 1 and 2, and Annex 5 of the report). It was also noted that, as at previous and subsequent trainings, all trainees on the second day of practical training on the water, were evaluated using criteria which became the basis for the trainee evaluation form that is currently used.

Mattila noted that since the first workshop in 2010 (IWC, 2012), which prioritised whale populations of highest management concern, the prioritisation of when and where to conduct capacity building had evolved to include criteria other than just the recovery status of the population concerned. Subsequently, the criteria for evaluating requests that come through the IWC for training have evolved into the following:

- (a) Conservation: How endangered is the whale population and how significant is the entanglement impact?
- (b) Human Safety: Are well-meaning but un-trained people currently responding with dangerous techniques?
- (c) Animal Welfare: How many whales are likely to benefit from the range states developing a response network?
- (d) Socio-economic impact: How much impact do entanglements have on the affected fishers?
- (e) National support: Has the country requested and is supporting the training?
- (f) Added impact: Does the training fit into and/or encourage other productive initiatives?
- (g) Funding: Is there logistical and financial support?

3.3.2 Conclusions and recommendations

The Workshop **reiterated** its support for the existing strategy and curriculum, including emphasis on the long-term goal of prevention, recognising that local circumstances must be taken into account when finalising individual workshops. In particular, the Workshop **emphasised** the importance of involving members of the commercial sector in the process (e.g. fishing, whalewatching); it noted that in many cases the effort expended by the fishing community in prevention involves business decisions; as witnessed for example by the successful work undertaken in Newfoundland over several decades, it is important to work with fishermen in the context of how improved practices will assist them as well as whales.

The Workshop **agreed** that it was important to evaluate priorities in the light of experience and **endorsed** the above criteria. These should be made clearly available on the IWC website. It **agreed** that a degree of flexibility would be required in assigning the balance amongst the above criteria on a case-by-case basis. The importance of some commitment to a reasonable level of longer-term funding to ensure that training was not wasted was also stressed. With respect to funding, it was noted that the issue of entanglement response and bycatch prevention are attractive to outside funders and it is particularly important that evidence of the success of the Networks be visible.

The Workshop also **stressed** the importance of follow-up training. This can take a number of complementary forms including:

- (1) apprenticeships of several weeks, such as those hosted by CCS which can provide broad-based training including attendance at actual entanglement response events should they occur as well as exposure to photo-identification, biopsy sampling and other relevant research activities;

- (2) follow-up workshops held by expert trainers, primarily aimed at participants from initial workshops and which can be tailored in the light of local experience and events with on-water training focussing on more difficult scenarios than the initial training;
- (3) internal follow-up work (such as that discussed under Item 3.2.3 undertaken by RABEN) involving a considerable degree of self-critique that may also involve remote interaction with other experts from the global network.