

REPORT OF EASTERN ATLANTIC HYDROGRAPHIC COMMISSION WEST AFRICAN ACTION TEAM – OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2002.

INTRODUCTION

1. BACKGROUND.

A special meeting of the Eastern Atlantic Hydrographic Commission on Technical Co-operation in Hydrography and Aids to Navigation in Western and Central Africa convened in Lisbon in Mar 01 (Reference) to consider ways of improving the standard of nautical charting and overall safety of navigation in the region. Terms of Reference (TOR) were agreed for the West Africa Action Team (Annex A). The TOR place special emphasis on the revised Safety Of Life At Sea (SOLAS) regulations (Chapter V, Regulation 9), which came into force on 1 Jul 02, concerning contracting government's responsibilities towards the provision of hydrographic services. As co-ordinating nation, France invited all the littoral states in West Africa (Appendix 1) to consider accepting a visit from the Action Team. A total of 16 nations responded positively and a programme was developed to enable 9 nations to be visited in the Autumn of 2002. The WAAT comprised of members from those nations which have charting responsibility in the region (France, UK and Portugal) and a representative from US.

2. COMPOSITION OF TEAM.

The WAAT members were:

ICA M Le Gouic.....	SHOM (19 oct – 6 nov)
ICA M Even.....	SHOM (4 – 14 nov)
CF(R) D Baggio.....	SHOM (4 – 14 nov)
Captain I Turner RN.....	UKHO
Capitao de fregata F M Pimentel.....	IHP (6 – 8 nov)
Mr B Bullard.....	US Naval Oceanographic Office

3. COUNTRIES VISITED.

An outline of events is at Annex B. The WAAT visited Gabon, Nigeria, Ghana, Mauritania, Senegal, Cap Verde, Guinea and Sierra Leone. The Team intended to visit Côte d'Ivoire, but this was cancelled at a late stage due to disturbances in the country. Morocco responded to the invitation, but a separate IHO visit was already scheduled to take place early in 2003. Other countries that responded, but which could not be visited on this occasion were Benin, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea Bissau, The Gambia, The Democratic Republic of Congo and Togo. These countries should receive a visit in the future. No responses have been received so far from Cameroon, Liberia and Sao Tome and Principe.

ASSESSMENT BY THE ACTION TEAM OF THE SITUATION IN REGION

4. EFFICACY OF THE WAAT VISITS.

The WAAT considers that the visits represented a worthwhile investment by the EAHC countries which contributed resources. However, the number of visits conducted, combined with the difficulty of travelling between countries in the region, meant that time spent in each country was often insufficient to fully carry out the task. Future plans should allow for more time in country, particularly where there is more than one major sea port or where the seat of government is separate from the national port. A standard questionnaire was successfully used to obtain information that formed the

basis of the report. In future visits it would be helpful if the questionnaire was forwarded to each country in advance of the Team arriving, so that answers could already be compiled.

5. The WAAT is very aware of the danger of forming superficial conclusions from fleeting experience of local situations. The individual Country Reports have been written as comprehensively as possible in the circumstances, in the hope that they will assist with the development of national plans and other follow-on actions. Where any factual errors are found, the authors accept the blame. Where proposals and recommended follow-on actions are found to be helpful, the authors would hope that the momentum caused by the WAAT visit will not be lost.
6. In most cases the Team was able to meet local people at 3 different levels. Firstly, at the highest level, with Ministers or Permanent Secretaries, where it was possible to sensitise the government to their responsibilities and highlight the important contribution that can be made by hydrography to development of the maritime sphere. Secondly, at the management level, with officials and managers of the government or port authorities who play a key role in planning, funding and overseeing maritime affairs. It is this level of management that will play a key role in implementing most of the follow-on actions provided in the Country Reports. Thirdly, at the practical level, with those individuals (Port Surveyors and Harbour Masters) who appreciated encouragement, advice and support in their work. The Report is rendered in the same spirit as the advice which was tendered on the ground. The Team operated not as high-handed visiting experts, but as fellow professionals who came to listen to and to encourage the local experts, and to help them to seek solutions which are viable, affordable and sustainable.

7. CO-OPERATIVE ARRANGEMENTS AND POTENTIAL.

The Team was struck by how different each country visited was from another. For example, individual countries varied in terms of size, population, economic and political situation, language and culture. Although there are several regional organisations, co-operative arrangements between countries are not a strong feature of the region. Hydrography and maritime safety arrangements do offer potential for co-operation, but overall there was little evidence that this would be possible without broader agreements for security and co-operation between countries.

8. All of the countries visited are members of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the regional Maritime Organisation of West and Central Africa (MOWCA) and the Port Management Association of West and Central Africa (PMAWCA).
 - a. IMO. WAAT members visited the London offices of the IMO prior to the visit to be briefed on maritime safety issues and GMDSS in particular. The WAAT also met with the IMO Regional Coordinator whilst in Ghana.
 - b. Regional Maritime Academy (RMA). The WAAT visited the RMA at Accra in Ghana. This academy is currently training merchant mariners from several West African states. The possibility of adding hydrographic training to the curriculum could be explored. The formation of a regional hydrographic training centre, at least for English speaking countries, would greatly enhance the capabilities in the region.
 - c. Defence and Security Arrangements. Maritime defence and security arrangements were generally considered to be a weak area in most of the countries visited. Concerns were often expressed about piracy and other criminal activity at sea. Naval and Coastguard forces were often found to be under-funded and under-resourced to carry out their tasks and there is a lack of infrastructure to enable adequate coastal surveillance and communications. Hence these forces are generally not in a position to play a strong role in co-ordination of Maritime Safety Information (MSI) broadcast and Search and Rescue (SAR) components of GMDSS.

9. COUNTRY SUMMARIES.

Detailed Country Reports will be found in Annexes C to J. The following Tables seek to summarise the current situation and the proposals which the Team discussed. In many cases the authority with overall responsibility for safety of navigation had not been long established, and often division of areas of responsibility between Port Authorities, National Maritime Authorities and Naval Forces were not entirely clear. IHO Publication M2 was found to be a very helpful reference. The WAAT developed a simplified flow diagram to illustrate the 3 stages of development of hydrographic surveying and nautical charting capability (see Appendix 2). It was frequently found that Phase One – an effective organisation for the collection and circulation of nautical information – was either not in place, or in need of strengthening.

Table 1: Assessment of National Hydrographic Capability

Country	IHO Member	EAtHC	NHC Proposed	Phase 1 Capacity	Phase 2 Capacity	Phase 3 Capacity
Gabon	No	No	Yes	Partial	Partial	No
Nigeria	Yes	MS	Yes	Partial	Partial	Partial
Ghana	No	Assoc M	Yes	Partial	Partial	No
Mauritania ¹	Pending	Assoc M	No	No	No	No
Senegal	No	Assoc M	Yes	Partial	Yes	Partial
Cap Verde	No	Assoc M	Yes	Partial	No	No
Guinea	No	Assoc M	Yes	Partial	Partial	No
Sierra Leone	No	No	No	No	No	No

¹ Mauritania is a signatory but has yet to deposit.

10. GMDSS.

As indicated in Table 2, most of the countries visited have stated intentions in the GMDSS Master Plan to have A1 (VHF) and A2 (HF) Area coverage, but all except Ghana have been unable to confirm the capability is operational. All the countries have been invited to use SafetyNET as an interim arrangement prior to any NAVTEX stations becoming operational, but for the time being, no one has used this possibility. No country sends MSI to the Navarea II coordinator.

Table 2: Summary of Progress towards Implementation of GMDSS.

Country	Master Plan	A1 Area	A2 Area	A3 Area	NAVTEX	SafetyNET
Gabon	No	-	-	-	-	No
Nigeria ¹	No	-	-	-	-	No
Ghana	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Mauritania	Yes	Planned	Planned	No	Planned	No
Senegal	Yes	Planned	Planned	No	No	No
Cap Verde ²	Yes	Planned	Planned	No	Planned	No
Guinea	Yes	Planned	Planned	No	No	No
Sierra Leone	Yes	Planned	Planned	No	No	No

¹ Nigeria was encouraged to submit details of operational and planned radio stations to the IMO so they can be included in the Master Plan.

² Cap Verde was encouraged to consider updating the Master Plan and proceeding with the development of a NAVTEX station.

CONCLUSIONS

11. CO-OPERATIVE OPPORTUNITIES.

There would appear to be very few opportunities for cooperative ventures between the countries that were visited. The differences between each country seemed to outweigh the common themes. Quite often the local National Maritime Authority or Administration was found to be newly-formed and still coming to grips with its responsibilities. Likewise a hydrographic capability either did not exist or was found to be very limited in its resources and responsibilities. Equally, there must be a degree of political and economic stability within a region before joint initiatives can be launched between neighbouring countries. The priority must be establish Phase One of hydrographic development. This means setting up clear lines of responsibility for the different agencies involved in maritime safety and establishing a focal point for the collection and dissemination of MSI. This phase could be an opportunity for regional cooperation between the identified agencies, for instance via the EAthC. The CaCAO project (appendix 6) which has been mentioned in each country, could be the opportunity of common works between neighbouring countries.

12. NATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC COMMITTEES (NHC).

The WAAT visits helped draw attention to the importance of hydrography to the development of a maritime state. This was well understood at all levels during the visits and most countries either had, or were about to, institute a high-level group that would consider hydrographic matters within the broader context of maritime safety and security issues. It was noted that maritime security, particularly in response to the threat posed by piracy and criminal activity, was a major concern that appeared to dominate the agenda. The WAAT drew attention to the new SOLAS regulation regarding the government's responsibility to provide hydrographic services, noting that the only hydrographic capability very often resided in the Port Authority. This emphasised the need for high level coordination and planning in order to make the most of limited resources when developing a national hydrographic service. The defence forces invariably have a role to play in this high-level body; always as expert users of hydrographic data, and sometimes as qualified surveyors. The Team provided a suggested TOR for a Maritime Safety Committee (Appendix 3).

13. Potential for Development of National Capability, or for Improved Liaison with Co-ordinating Authorities. All countries expressed a desire to improve the safety of navigation in their waters and to build a national hydrographic capability to serve their needs into the future. The Team was careful to emphasise that the development of a national capability must proceed in logical steps, the first of which is to have an organisation that can deal with the collection and dissemination of nautical information. In most cases there was a great deal of important safety information that was known locally but not transmitted to the correct authority for navigational warnings or charting action. The most logical focal point was normally the Harbour Master's organisation, however, information in the coastal waters was often gathered by other agencies such as the Navy or Fisheries Department. Hence the need for improved coordination between these types of authorities.

14. Port Surveyors were located in 5 out of the 8 National Port Authorities that were visited. They often represented the only national hydrographic experts and were generally identified as the logical base upon which to build a national Hydrographic Service. Tasks beyond the port limits need to be identified and prioritised before considering what additional trained personnel are needed and what equipment should be purchased. Several issues arise that need close coordination between authorities. For example, wrecks outside of the port limits are usually the responsibility of the National Maritime Authority, but the Port Authority, or the Navy, might have the only means to find and position them. Once again, coordination and communication is the key to building an effective organisation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

15. URGENT GMDSS ACTIONS.

As indicated in Table 2, the majority of the nations which were visited need to make the transition from planning to implementation of GMDSS proposals. The national point of contact for GMDSS issues should be encouraged to discuss the national strategy with the IMO and revise the plans if necessary. In the absence of any NAVTEX stations along the coast of West Africa the WAAT emphasised the opportunity, as an interim solution, of broadcasting MSI for national waters on SafetyNET via the NAVAREAI coordinator (France). Details of this solution are at Appendix 4. Each country was invited to make contact with EPSHOM. Use of this solution would rely upon the individual nation having the organisation to collect and validate information, as well a focal point that is manned 24 hours a day.

16. EATHC FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS.

These fall under the following headings, with details in each individual Country Report:

- a. Encouragement of NHCs. The Team has endeavoured to assist with identifying terms of reference for this type of committee, and suggested which agencies should be represented. The IHO publication M2 could also be usefully considered by the Members of the NHCs. The Team recommend that the EAtHC should plan a regional meeting of NHC representatives to consider initiatives in the areas of training and equipment resources, as well as to establish survey priorities and look at solutions for MSI collection and dissemination.
- b. Funding. The situations are very different in each of the visited countries and the Team cannot provide common advice on funding issues. In general, the revenues from port levies should be partly reinvested in the maintenance of the fairways and of the buoys. Some funding considerations are given in the country reports, and funding plans could be considered after these country reports have been validated, and for possible regional projects, under the aegis of IHB and EAtHC.
- c. IMA and Bilateral Training. The Team provided information, whenever appropriate, on training which is available in North America and Europe. Several specific proposals have been made for follow-up action. Overseas travel costs are a significant barrier to training. Consideration should be given to promotion of training in the region. The RMA in Accra, Ghana, is one example of a potential location for regional hydrographic training in the future. The EAtHC may wish to conduct a follow-up study to examine how this might be achieved, including linkage with IMA or training schools in other member states. Training can of course continue to be provided in the existing schools of France, Portugal, Spain, UK or USA.

17. FOLLOW-UP OPPORTUNITIES.

The Team is aware of the following events which offer openings for follow-up actions:

- a. IMO COMSAR Meeting. London 13-17 January 2003.
- b. 8th EAtHC Meeting. Date and place of the next meeting not yet decided.