

PROJECT 77: INTERPOL Hostage Debriefing Initiative

1. Project Information:	
a. Recipient UN Organization (Project Lead)	INTERPOL (under IMO)
b. Project Number	77
c. Project Title	INTERPOL Hostage Debriefing Initiative
d. Project Duration	Initially 12 months (followed by two no-cost extensions; overall duration 37 months)
e. Project Starting Date¹¹	1 November 2015. However, the project did not start until September 2016 (Project Manager start date).
f. End Date	30 November 2018
g. Current Status (as of 31 Dec 2018)	Finalised
h. Location of Project	Lyon, France and globally
i. Thematic/Focus Area	Debrief of hostages captured by Somali pirates
j. Primary Project Objective (Summary)	1. Intelligence gathering, 2. Assist law enforcement investigations, 3. Security – prevent future hijackings, 4. Humanitarian support to the seafarers.
k. Implementing Partner(s) (if applicable)	National Central Bureaus (NCBs), Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response (MPHRP), International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN), Sailors' Society, United States Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS), United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Director-General of Shipping of the Indian Government.
2. Time:	
a. Did the project start on time?	No
b. Is the planned end date still applicable?	The project is finalised
c. Is the project currently on time?	The project is finalised
d. Comments if a-c is negative	The project started 1 September 2016 when the Project Manager began her contract.
3. Financial Information (US\$):	
a. Overall Budget	\$296,456
b. Trust Fund Contribution	\$296,456
c. Is the overall cost still applicable?	Yes
d. Is expenditure currently according to budget?	Yes
e. Is the entire financing for the project secured? (for projects that receive bilateral funding in addition to the TF)	Yes
f. Comments if c-e is negative	N/A
4. Assessment of implementation and monitoring of project activities:	
a. Activities carried out in the reporting period (outcomes and outputs)	
The Indonesia debriefing took place in JAKARTA, 21-23 February 2018. The Sri Lanka debriefing took place in COLOMBO, 5-6 March 2018. Please see further details in section 4.b.	
b. Results achieved to date	
OUTCOME 1: Law Enforcement authorities in India, Philippines, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Indonesia will possess all the relevant skills to interview piracy hostages. There are two key components here:	

¹¹ The start date is the date of the first transfer of the funds from the Trust Fund.

Output 1, related to establishing the availability of the hostages:

- a) **Locating the hostages:** Building off the list of seafarers compiled in 2014, INTERPOL continued this work of identifying seafarers who were victims of Somali pirates over the period of 2012-2018. INTERPOL located seafarers using various resources, such as (1) charitable organizations that deal with seafarers' general welfare and well-being (i.e. MPHRP, part of ISWAN and Sailors' Society), (2) shipping companies and insurance agencies, and (3) national government agencies responsible for maritime affairs, navy forces, and law enforcement agencies. To date, INTERPOL has identified over 1,300 seafarers from over 50 countries. However, the MPHRP was absorbed by ISWAN and the specific focus of this programme on hostages was shifted towards general assistance to the seafarers. This became a challenge as MPHR points of contact in several countries claimed they lost contact with former hostages. INTERPOL explored several other avenues to locate hostages, such as through maritime management companies and individual agents as well as through previously interviewed hostages. Locating the hostages proved to be one of the main challenges encountered during this project.
- b) **Establishing seafarers' willingness to be debriefed** and if their response was positive, then arranging the debrief to take place. During the life of the project, INTERPOL contacted over 300 hostages trying to establish their willingness to take part in debriefs. The contacts were conducted through the (1) MPHRP and the Sailors' Society, (2) ship owners and managing companies as well as through (3) national government/law enforcement agencies.

Output 2: Debriefing of hostages and increasing capacity in each country (or group training) on interviewing skills and other aspects of maritime piracy investigations

- a) **Immediate debriefing of hostages:**
- **Indonesia:** The Indonesia debriefing took place in JAKARTA on 21-23 February 2018. The debriefed seafarers were victims of the Somali pirates and represented crew members from the NAHAM 3, released on 22 October 2016 after nearly 5 years in captivity. The debriefing was organized with the assistance of the representatives of the sailors' society (both local and from the main office). The debriefing was conducted in conjunction with the expert law enforcement personnel of the FBI. Also in attendance were representatives of the Indonesian National Police and INTERPOL Indonesia.
 - **Sri Lanka:** The Sri Lanka debriefing took place in COLOMBO on 5-6 March 2018. The debriefed seafarers were victims of Somali pirates and represented crew members from two different vessels and involved two separate incidents. Two of the debriefed seafarers spent nearly four years in captivity. The debriefing was organized with the assistance of the local maritime managing agent. The debriefed seafarers brought with them another seafarer (whose contact information had been unknown to the authorities) from the same vessel, so hence this seafarer was included in the debriefing. The debriefing was conducted in conjunction with the expert law enforcement personnel of the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and representatives of Sri Lankan National Police attended as well.

OUTCOME 2: INTERPOL used the data from the above-mentioned debriefings to populate the INTERPOL Global Database on Maritime Security, utilizing an INTERPOL analyst who worked on this aspect of the project. As a result, INTERPOL has been able to provide new and detailed information on many aspects of piracy off the coast of Somalia and produce new and updated analytical packages on a number of incidents.

Specifically, several analytical products were prepared and updated on incidents involving: **NAHAM 3, ALBEDO, and ARIS 13** utilizing the data obtained during this project. The analytical products have been shared with law enforcement agencies internationally to support the prosecution (if/when necessary)

of those who “illicitly finance, plan, organize, or unlawfully profit from pirate attacks off the coast of Somalia,” as stressed in UNSCR 2077 (2012). The existing “Key Pirate Leaders” report has been updated using the information obtained from the debriefs.

c. Major obstacles encountered when implementing the project

1. **Locating the hostages** proved to be a major challenge. While INTERPOL identified over 1,300 seafarers’ (victims) names, some were no longer involved in the industry, some had changed places of residence, some moved to work with different shipping companies, thus accurate contact information was often difficult to ascertain. Additionally, the organizations that were initially identified as the main stakeholders whose focus was on kidnapped seafarers shifted their focus towards more general assistance to the seafarers (e.g. with employment, insurance, etc.).
2. **Establishing seafarers’ willingness to participate** proved to be a challenge, as many of the seafarers did not see the immediate personal benefit of a debrief, some appeared to be still highly traumatized from the event so they did not want to talk about their experience(s). Additionally, positive response to attempts to interview seafarers was affected by the communication channel used to establish contact with the seafarers. Seafarers were contacted through a variety of avenues, such as the (1) MPHRP and the Sailors’ Society, (2) ship owners and managing companies as well as through (3) national government/law enforcement agencies. The seafarers seemed to be far more inclined to agree to be interviewed if contacted by humanitarian organizations, and when contacted by law enforcement authorities, they sometimes seemed to have far more reservations and objections to take part in the project. INTERPOL soon identified this tendency, and therefore resorted to primarily contacting the seafarers through above-mentioned charitable organizations.
3. **Encouraging countries to pursue investigations** was often a challenge. Historically, most countries have not been proactive with investigating the capture of their nationals. Reasons for this phenomenon seem to vary from country to country and involve issues associated with costs of investigations, lack of trained investigators, lack of supporting legal framework, etc. Therefore, INTERPOL attempted to show that this project can assist countries with their investigations as well as maintain a historical record of events to support future investigations into Somali piracy networks. Care was taken not to be perceived as overly critical of the shortcomings in national investigations as not every country has the specialist skills and capacity required to conduct maritime piracy investigations, but rather focused on building capacity where possible. Therefore, the Project Manager of the Hostage Debriefing Initiative participated in several capacity building sessions organized and carried out by INTERPOL in the South East Asia region to promote the Hostage Debriefing Initiative, familiarize relevant local (national level) law enforcement authorities with hostage debriefing and investigating maritime crimes (including kidnappings), including the importance of collecting evidence and witness statements in such cases. The audience appeared to be very receptive to the training and interested in the initiative. There were no costs for Project 77, as the financial costs for these activities were covered by other INTERPOL projects.
4. **The large number of victims.** INTERPOL has to date identified and placed in its database information relating to approximately 1,300 seafarers who have been kidnapped off the coast of Somalia. Organizing debriefs of large numbers of seafarers (similar to the Mumbai Debrief) is more economical and practical in the long run; but doing this does present logistical challenges due to the difficulty of coordinating all the seafarers in one place within a short period of time.
5. A debrief in Dhaka, Bangladesh, involving 15 seafarers had been planned and approved for 2017 and then for 2018; however, it had to be cancelled as law enforcement agencies from Australia, Canada, Germany and the USA declined travelling to Bangladesh due to the security concerns.
6. A debrief of Al Causar (Al Kasuar) crew members was planned and approved, but all crew members then became unavailable after they assumed new jobs on the same vessel, departing the area. Contact with the owner of the vessel and a request to schedule the debrief of the crew members

in one of the ports along the way was initially positive. However, after multiple follow up attempts to contact the owner, the request was not met and the debrief had to be cancelled.

7. The lack of investigative experts in the police of the target countries posed a challenge as investigating this type of crime requires special skill sets. In order to counter this, INTERPOL planned to conduct training in maritime piracy investigations; however, the funds available through the project were insufficient for organizing such a training. Therefore, it was decided to focus on the debriefing aspect of the project in order to populate the Maritime Security Database using experts already available through law enforcement agencies (such as NCIS and FBI).
8. The wide scope of the project presented challenges. This project funds for a project manager to coordinate all aspects of the project in the target countries; such as logistics, missions, and liaison with the seafarers, national jurisdictions, law enforcement agencies, and other relevant entities. Considering the significant number of seafarers who are potential interviewees, as well as other stated challenges, this is a large undertaking for only one person: the debriefs that could have been scheduled concurrently in different locations could not be considered and had to be cancelled completely due to subsequent unavailability of interviewers and interviewees; thus affecting overall results of the project.

Additionally, INTERPOL provided all the analytical support at no extra cost to the project. However, as the Maritime Security Sub Directorate (MTS) has only one full-time intelligence analyst, the analytical reports could only be produced in conjunction with other analytical services required by MTS, which sometimes resulted in some delay in producing the final reports. Notwithstanding this, the MTS analyst produced and updated several detailed reports based on debriefings conducted under this project.

d. Concerning risks identified in the application – have any materialized – have any measures been taken?

N/A

e. Any health/safety/environment issues? Special measures taken?

N/A

f. Partnerships and cooperation with other organizations formed while implementing the project

INTERPOL has engaged with and collaborated with a number of agencies to date to assist with the implementation of this project, namely:

1. INTERPOL member countries in the regions utilizing INTERPOL NCBs. The NCBs provide logistical support on the ground.
2. The MPHRP and later the ISWAN. MPHRP was a link between the seafarers and INTERPOL and allowed INTERPOL contact with the seafarers in South East Asia. After the ISWAN absorbed MPHRP, the programming focus shifted towards priorities away from those associated with this project and the level of engagement naturally reduced. However, the relationship remains positive and ISWAN remains willing to assist INTERPOL when possible and necessary.
3. The Sailors’ Society has a much larger network globally and serves as a link between seafarers and INTERPOL in countries where MPHRP does not have representatives. The Sailors’ Society assisted with contacting seafarers for the Indonesia debrief.
4. The NCIS conducted the Mumbai debriefs on behalf of INTERPOL as NCIS has an active interest in building up a criminal intelligence profile of the pirates involved.
5. The United States Federal Bureau of Investigation conducted the Jakarta and Colombo debriefs.
6. The Director General of Shipping of the Indian Government – Mr. Deepak Shetty. His office assisted INTEPROL with obtaining the necessary political clearance for the mission to India.

Information from the India debrief assisted both the FBI and the Australian Federal Police with their active investigations into those involved in Somali piracy networks.