

A Tracking Study on “Empower Women in the Maritime Community” from International Perspective

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ABSTRACT

In the last years, programs and activities have been held in relation with the theme of “Empower Women in the Maritime Community”. The paper firstly takes a background introduction and then presents the status of women in the Maritime Community. Then it analyses and discusses its significance from theoretical and realistic points of view. Finally, based on conclusion of advanced experience from international maritime community, the paper puts forward approaches to create more diverse, sustainable Asia maritime culture.

1. Introduction

1.1 International Situation and Definition

UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDG 5 of 17 SDGs says “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”^[8]. It is indicated by a great deal of evidence that commitment to empower women is the most effective way to improve community, develop enterprise and strengthen nation^[9]. Gender equality is not only a basic human right, but also an essential foundation for world peace, prosperity, and sustainable development. Currently, women’s influence in maritime community and related industries is still weak, so how to break through gender bias and promote to create more inclusive and harmonious maritime culture becomes an issue we should face with.

The theme of World Maritime Day 2019 “Empowering Women in the Maritime Community” proposes to raise awareness of the importance of gender equality, highlights the contribution of women all over the world to the maritime sector and aims at creating a friendly, inclusive career development environment^[4]. IMO’s (International Maritime Organization)

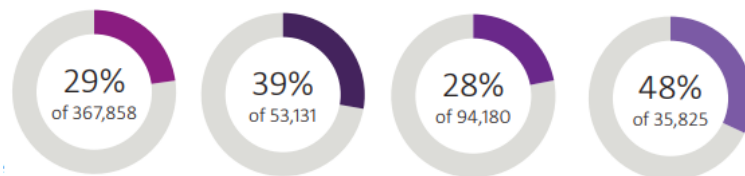
gender programme began in 1988. Since then, it has supported increased access to maritime training and employment opportunities for women in the maritime sector. The programme has helped create an institutional framework that incorporates a gender dimension into IMO policies and procedures.



1.2 Status of Women in the Maritime Community

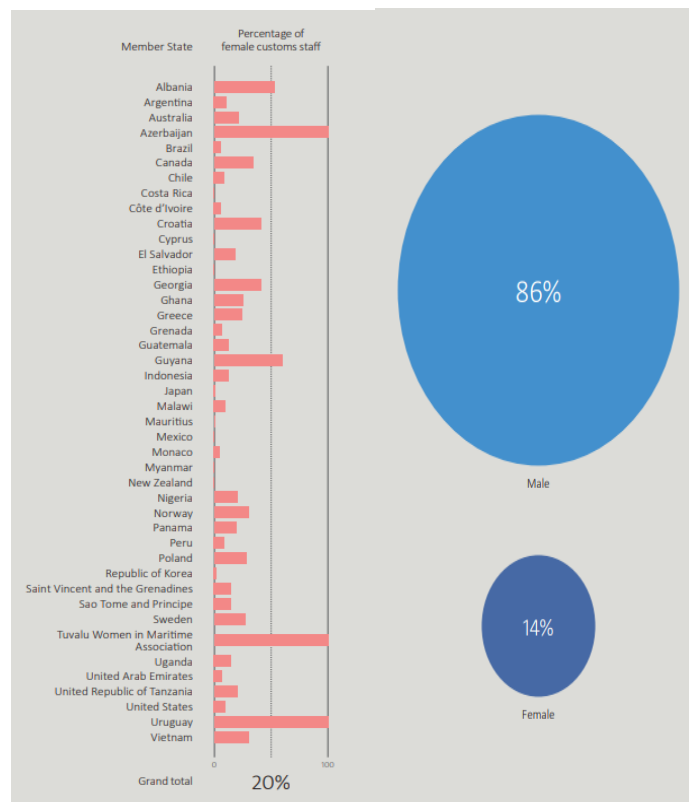
In many ways, maritime is an industry of diversity, but not true when it comes to women. IMO and WISTA International (Women’s International Shipping and Trading Association) have conducted the inaugural Women in Maritime – IMO and WISTA International Survey 2021^[6] to examine the proportion and distribution of women working in the maritime sector, from support roles to executive level positions.

Within the industry survey, 500 completed responses were recorded. Overall, the share of women employees by sub-sector was 29%. Of the segments in which the respondents operate, the largest single category is that of ship owning companies, followed by maritime associations. In the former, women were found to make up some 34% of respondents' workforces. In the latter, it was 16%. The survey also asked for the share of how many female seafarers a company employed. At less than 2%, the proportion of women employed as seafarers is small. Looking at the distribution of the ranks that women work in, 39% of women within the surveyed companies work in mid-management, 28% in technical roles, and 48% in administrative and support roles^[6].



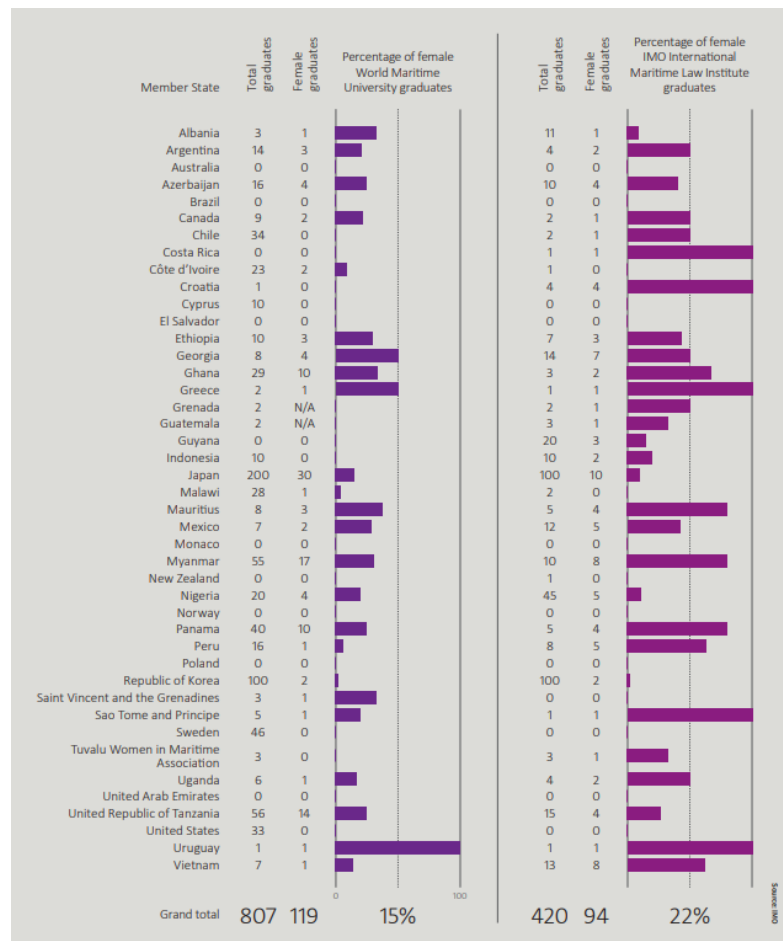
1. Total percentage 2. Mid-management 3. Technical roles 4. administrative and support roles

The separate IMO Member States survey recorded 45 completed data sets out of the 174 IMO Member States. In addition to the search and rescue department (the share of female staff lies around 10%), women make up around 20% of workforce of national maritime authorities. On the other hand, the share of female training staff lies above the average, just shy of 30% and so does the share of female diplomats with 33%. Currently, 14% of the respondents say that their national maritime authority is being headed up by a woman. This corresponds with the share of women in core roles such as specialist technical and operational ones. The share of women in support roles is nearly double at 35%^[6].



Looking further into the education of maritime staff, the survey asked for the number of WMU (World Maritime University) as well as IMLI (IMO International Maritime Law Institute graduates). Of the 45 Member

States that provided data, 33 have produced graduates of the university. However, while 15% of Japanese graduates were female, 2% of the Republic of Korea graduates were women. Of the 33 survey respondents that have said they have produced graduates of the institute, Japan and Republic of Korea again lead the table with 100 graduates respectively. 10% of the Japanese graduates were women, and 2% of the Republic of Korea cohort has been female [6].



When it comes to IHO (International Hydrography Organization), despite more and more women working in hydrography, leadership positions are still often occupied by men. Currently, only 7 out of 95 IHO Member State National Hydrographers are women. In the IHO bodies, only 13% are chaired by women. Currently, women qualified in hydrography represent 25% of the demographics, yet less than 10% of national hydrographers are women.

Obviously, in order to ensure women's equal participation in maritime work and promote to create a maritime culture of diversity and sustainability, the number of women, women's ways of career promotion, education and training for women should be improved.

2. Significance of “Empowering Women in the Maritime Community”

2.1 Theoretical Significance

2.1.1 Implementation of “UN2030”

On October 24, 1945, the United Nations, an intergovernmental international organization composed of sovereign states, was founded. “To achieve international co-operation in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion”

In Asia, there are 39 member states of the United Nation. Over the years, every member state firmly supports the important role of the United Nations in safeguarding world peace and promoting common development, pays high attention to implement “UN2030”^[12].

IMO has a strong commitment to help achieve the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” and “17 Sustainable Development Goals”. In 2018, the Council of IMO, meeting for its 120th session at IMO Headquarters in London, endorsed the theme “Empower Women in the Maritime Community”, following a proposal by IMO Secretary-General Kitack Lim. In 2019, the IMO Assembly adopted a resolution to preserve the legacy of the 2019 World Maritime Theme and work towards a barrier-free environment for women throughout the maritime sector^[5]. In 2021, the IMO Assembly has adopted a resolution proclaiming an International Day for Women in Maritime, to be observed on 18 May every year. On 18 May 2022, events and activities around the theme "Training-Visibility-Recognition: Supporting a barrier-free working environment" for the inaugural IMO International Day for Women in Maritime were held.



In Asia, there are 22 IMO Member States and two Associate Members. As an important maritime region, Asia plays a key role in international shipping. In 2004, IMO established a regional presence office for East Asia located in Manila, the Philippines. “Empower Women in the Maritime Community” is managed by Technical Cooperation of IMO, the Regional Coordinator for East Asia plays a significant role in supporting the formulation and execution of the Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP) and facilitates IMO’s input into national and regional

development policies in the subregion. When it comes to IHO, the East Asia Hydrographic Commission (EAHC) is a regional hydrographic commission within the framework of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO). It aims to coordinate the activities of national hydrographic offices, facilitate the mutual exchange of information, encourage mutual assistance, work out regional cooperative programmes in hydrographic work. Asia is the most populous and largest continent in the world, most Asian countries are maritime nations, except for four land-locked countries. For many years, nations in Asia area have taken an active part in related international affairs and contributed strength of Asia for global maritime governance.

2.2 Realistic Significance

2.2.1 International Level

With the development of ages and the acceleration of socialized division of labor, the social status of women in the world is gradually improved, and the ability and scope of women's participation in political affairs are greatly enhanced ^[11]. Nowadays, social progress and harmony cannot be separated from the balanced development of men and women and the promotion of women's status in the workplace. The same is true for maritime field, in which collision and fusion of ancient and modern, traditions always happen. The maritime sector's future lies in the hands of its workforce, tasked with creating a pathway to a sustainable future with a decarbonized and highly digital industry. Our ability to cope with the challenges that this transformation requires hinges on innovative thinking, a resilient attitude and technical skill – qualities that are shared by people of all genders and nationalities. “Today, IMO's newly renamed Women in Maritime programme is going strong. Empowering women fuels thriving economies across the world, spurs growth and development, and benefits all of us working in the global maritime community as we strive towards safe, secure, clean and sustainable shipping” ^[4], said Mr. Kitack Lim, Secretary-General, IMO.

2.2.2 National Level

Beijing Declaration put forward in United Nations Fourth World Conference of Women pointed: “Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace” ^[7]. With the progress of economy and society, gender equality has become a symbol to measure the degree of political democratization and to reflect the level of fairness and civilization of a nation. As people's main social activities, gender equality in the labor market has become an important symbol to measure the realization of gender equality of a nation ^[11]. Gender equity is vital if organizations want to make the best use of 100% of their talent pool, keep employees motivated, retain talent etc. Encouraging diversity brings different experiences and perspectives, and enriches an organization. For nations in Asia area, promoting gender equality from all aspects and taking actively part in the events and activities around “Empower Women in the Maritime Community” held by IMO and IHO, will not only promote our participation in international maritime affairs but also enhance the position and influence in the maritime field, so as to safeguard maritime rights and interests of nations of Asia.

2.2.3 Individual Level



Social harmony refers to the realization of people's all-round development. The all-round development of people means that each person's ability, social essence, personality and other aspects are fully and harmoniously developed. In maritime field, the kindness characteristic and maternal management style of female enable them tend to non-power influence and become more responsible and enterprising for career, which will promote the sound development of maritime career. For every female individual, more extensive and profound involvement in maritime work will not only enhance the recognition and understanding of maritime career, realize the self-improvement of skills and competitiveness, but also have more career choices, thus to realize the comprehensive and full improvement of ability and form the unique charm of maritime women. For male, “Empower Women in the Maritime Community” will reduce workplace stress based on society's inherent expectations for male’s career success, which providing conditions for men to participate more actively in family life. Besides, as the stronger of general acceptance standard, men are likely to choose self-digestion while faced with distress in working and daily life, which will inevitably affect physical and mental health. Therefore, “Empower Women in the Maritime Community”, anti-driving society to change stereotypes and standards for male, will reduce the burden and benefit health of men. Only when everyone, regardless of gender, realizes all-round development, the maritime field will realize sustainability and inclusiveness development, the whole world will become more harmonious.

3. Actions for “Empowering Women in the Maritime Community”

3.1 IMO Level

IMO has been working to achieve gender equality in maritime through several paths. IMO’s Women in Maritime program has been in operation since 1988, delivering on the actions named in its slogan: Training Visibility-Recognition. IMO has also launched eight Women in Maritime Associations (WIMAs) through its gender and capacity-building programme, continued to prepare women to be future maritime leaders by sponsoring women from developing countries to take part in the Maritime SheEO leadership scheme, which actively empower women with necessary skills, advance to reach a barrier-free environment and create sustainable institution of gender equality.

IMO is strongly committed to helping its Member States achieve the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. Take 2019 for instance, under the theme of “Empower Women in the Maritime Community”, IMO puts into US\$735,000 for promoting women related programme, which includes:

3.1.1 Strengthen Publicity to Raise Awareness

In 2019, awareness raising events held all over the world on: empowering women, women in the blue economy, digitalization and diversity and so on. Besides, 15 million people reached in Day of the Seafarer campaign to raise gender awareness at sea. At the same time, a great emphasis was placed on showcasing the achievements of Women in Maritime through the launch of a film, *Turning the Tide*, and the promotion of role models. By profiling Women in Maritime who have benefited from IMO, either by membership to a WIMA or through fellowships or access to high-level technical training, valuable insights were gained about how IMO has helped these individuals and shaped their future aspirations.

3.1.2 Conduct Training to Improve Capacity

Among the main objectives of the programme during 2019 was facilitating increased access of women to technical training through short development courses and participation of female officials in key capacity-building activities in order to empower women in maritime. 65 women trained in port management and protection of the port marine environment, 9 women managers trained on level 1 aids to navigation (AtoN), 13 African women trained in search and rescue (SAR) operations. Sponsorship of 24 female representatives from IMO-established networks to attend the World Maritime University (WMU) Third International Women's Conference on Empowering Women in the Maritime Community, held in Malmö, Sweden, in April 2019. In 2019, 65 fellowships awarded to women to study port operations, port security and maritime management, 1 place sponsored on all-women expedition to study ocean microplastics, 1 study launched (with WISTA International) to establish numbers of women employed across several maritime sectors. WMU and IMLI, respectively founded in 1983 and 1988, want to enhance capacity-building in all Member States to contribute to the fulfilment of the IMO objectives.

3.1.3 Associate Inter-regional to Promote Cooperation

Regional collaboration has been a key element of IMO's empowerment of women through implementation of SDG 5. During 2019, IMO provided ongoing support to the seven Women in Maritime Associations (WIMAs) established in Africa, Arab States, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific to improve gender balance in the shipping industry. Covering some 152 countries and dependent territories, access to these regional associations provide a focal point for Women in Maritime to meet, network and provide support and mentorship to each other on several technical issues, beyond gender, and aim to help bridge the gap in narrowing some of the institutional barriers and cultural stigma facing women who enter the maritime industry.

3.2 IHO Level

In recent years, a series of activities are organized by IHO to enable more women to participate equitably in the field of hydrography and to assume more leadership roles within the hydrographic community. Under the terms of the Contribution agreement, the total DFO contributions (financial+ in-kind + administrative costs) cannot exceed 75% of the total cost of the project. The way this funding works is that CA will contribute up to a maximum of 75% of project's total cost, where total cost includes actual costs and in-kind contributions. The IHO and any other contributors must cover at least 25% of the costs through direct (cash) or measureable in-kind support. IHO needs to apply to the fund. which would be for 100 000 CAD (approx. 65 000 €) per year. The kick-off meeting involving 33 participants from 16 countries was held, internships in IHO and NOAA were provided, women role-models activity, related webinar^[3] and mentoring programme were conducted to increase awareness of IHO Members States and hydrographic community on the benefits of having gender-diverse teams at all levels, ensure equal access to opportunities for women to improve their technical knowledge and leadership skills, support and promote greater participation of women in the working bodies of the International Hydrographic Organization, increase the awareness of what constitutes a safe, secure, and supportive workplace for all employees^[2].

As an example, at the Canadian Hydrographic Conference in February 2020(CHC2020), dedicated networking activities as well as a special session entitled «Leadership feminine style! » were part of the official program. This session, chaired by Shelly Leighton (Advanced Access Engineering, Memorial University of Newfoundland), aimed at promoting female role models from hydrographic organizations, and inspiring women to take actions on their career and seek opportunities. Vanessa Rochester, president of Women's International Shipping & Trading Association Canada (WISTA Canada), opened the session with a presentation on «unconscious bias», highlighting how bias, conscious or not, is a disabler of diversity and leads to sameness of thinking^[1].

In recent years, more and more maritime authorities realize, no matter for women themselves or for the industry they work in, diversity, equality and inclusiveness make up the key elements for potential development. Thus, various ways like symposium, celebration and festival with the theme of “Empower Women”.

3.3 What Should We do?

women are the creators of material and spiritual civilization and an important force for social development and progress. Promoting gender equality and all-round development of women should be attached great importance. Nowadays, under the background of promoting “Empower Women in the Maritime Community”, what actions should we take?

3.3.1 Raise Awareness

Recognizing the contribution of female officials in the maritime sector highlights the fact that women form an indispensable part of the human capital of a country and the region to which that country belongs. By conducting related survey, holding workshop, delivering training, and launching media, for example, in the maritime day and other anniversaries, adding the maritime women theme module to give more attention and publicity to women who are brave enough to devote themselves to the maritime career ^[10], to raise awareness of empowering women in the maritime community.

3.3.2 Safeguard Policies

Based on every nation’s basic national condition and the actual development of women in the maritime field, a series of top-level design institutional arrangements and decision-making arrangements will be introduced. For example, to improve maritime laws and policies and optimize basic institutional guarantees for gender equality. To establish and improve governmental organizations to implement “Empower Women in the Maritime Community”, which should be responsible for organizing, coordinating, guiding and urging relevant departments to do a good job in safeguarding maritime women's rights and interests, promoting gender equality and women's development. Improving related regulations on the recruitment, retention and sustained employment of women in the maritime sector and support work to address the current gender imbalance in maritime.

3.3.3 Promote Implementation

Under the premise of national publicity and guarantee policies, all organizations and units are planning and coordinating to track the international community and give full play to the effective synergy of empowering women. At the same time, we have been making great efforts to strengthen communication and cooperation, realize information sharing and resource complementarity, and give full play to the advantages of government, industry, university, research and application. Maritime individuals are led to actively participate in various activities such as forum, network seminar, model selection and so on with the theme of maritime women empowerment, strive to create an atmosphere of full participation, and constantly promote the establishment of a more diversified and sustainable maritime culture.

4. Conclusion

“There is still a gender imbalance in maritime – but times are changing as it becomes recognized that diversity in maritime benefits the entire sector. Today, maritime is for everyone, it is not about your gender – it is about what you can do”^[4], said Mr. Kitack Lim, Secretary-General, IMO. Today, Asia maritime community has become an important force active in the international arena, our international influence and competitiveness gradually

enhanced. “Empower women in the Maritime Community” should present the voice of Asia.

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Author’s Biography

Xu Yiran, female, engineer, born in July, 1990, postgraduate student. As an English major ,she graduated from Shanghai Maritime University in 2015. Currently works in hydrographic surveying and mapping department of Eastern Navigation Service Center, Maritime Safety Administration. In recent years, she has participated in the preparation of many international conferences and tracked the forefront of IHO international research.