AMOSUP SHELTERS STRANDED SEAFARERS
Sailing Forward

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MAAP Profile

Geographic destiny has given the Filipino the innate talent to be an excellent seafarer. To enhance this natural skill, the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) was established on January 14, 1998. The Academy stands on a 103-hectare property in Kamaya Point, Mariveles, Bataan.

The Associated Marine Officer's and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) founded by the late Capt. Gregorio S. Oca, capitalized and developed the Academy. The new AMOSUP President, Dr. Conrado F. Oca, heads the Academy's board of governors. The board is comprised of representatives from the private sector, the International Transport Workers Federation, the Filipino Association of Maritime Employers, the International Mariners Management Association of Japan, the Norwegian Seafarers' Union, the International Maritime Employers' Committee, the Danish Shipowners' Association, the Norwegian Shipowners' Association, and the Japan Shipowners' Association.

MAAP conducts shipboard training aboard T/S Kapitan Felix Oca, a 5020 DWT dedicated training ship capable of accommodating 180 midshipmen and 9 instructors in 30 air-conditioned cabins and six berths.
Welcome. Numerous sectors have been badly hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. Evidently, the seafaring industry is one of them. From the threat of job loss, wage cuts, to the challenge in crew change and contract extensions, the crisis has left seafarers physically, mentally and emotionally exhausted. The fight with the invisible enemy that has claimed thousands of lives worldwide is still on. But despite the threats and difficulties, seafarers continue to soldier on.

In this issue, we give you a glimpse of the stories of our seafarers - onboard and ashore - caught in the excruciating challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic that directly affected their livelihood, and ultimately, their lives.

At this unprecedented time, it is the Union's duty to ensure the welfare of its members. Alongside our social partner - the All Japan Seamen's Union - AMOSUP sheltered around a thousand seafarers in both our union facilities in Intramuros and Malate during the state-imposed enhanced community quarantine.

You will also find how our frontliners took up the cudgels in assisting our members trapped in the union's dorms during the extensive lockdown. Likewise, we also feature our Seamen's Hospital health workers who showed their dedication and commitment in taking care of our seafarers and their dependents.

In response to the need for COVID-19 testing facilities in the country, we have launched our molecular laboratory that is equipped to provide immediate test results. With the all-out support of ITF Seafarers' Trust, putting up this project to test our arriving and departing seafarers has come into fruition.

Our feature on issues related to the crew change crisis lets you in on the difficulties the pandemic has put the maritime sector's long established system of relieving manpower on board the world's fleets. Stakeholders from the private shipping sector tell us how they find solutions into their crewing operations. Shipowners, maritime unions and crew managers, along with their officers and crew, take their turns giving away snippets of the challenges they face amid the crew change crisis.

We made an appeal to the national government through the Department of Labour and Employment to save the seafaring industry. The pandemic's devastating impact did not only affect maritime professionals, but also the millions of seafarers’ families, as well as a wide range of allied industries and services.

Moving forward, we also share with you that AMOSUP, together with other maritime unions, crew managers and manning agents, proposed an initiative to the government to help resuscitate and save the crewing sector.

We are in an extraordinarily difficult time in history. There's a lot of tribulations and uncertainty all around us. But in the face of adversity, we remain strong and resilient. There's always hope, with the grace of God, we shall overcome. Stay safe and well everyone.

Happy Sailing Forward!

Dr Conrado P Oca
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SEPTEMBER 2020

6 From the Crow’s Nest
10 Beating the crew change challenge
12 AMOSUP houses stranded seafarers
14 Problem areas hinder sending crew safely home
16 In the midst of mental health crisis
23 Euronav: ‘Largest ever humanitarian crisis’
24 InterManager calls for data entries on crew change
26 No call to go on strike
33 World Maritime Day 2021 theme
34 How do seafarers get by in time of pandemic
36 Cruise lines get most of their workers home, but challenging times wait ahead
38 Collective accord remains vital to cruise shipping
40 Seafarers down tools in their bid to go home
42 Anglo Eastern hits milestone

Cruise line completes crew repatriation efforts

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CONTENTS

SAILING FORWARD

8 Seamen’s Hospital Manila sets up lab for COVID-19 test

18 Union workers step up to assist seafarers on lockdown

43 Unions reach out to airlines
IMEC Launches Travel Bulletin

44 Joining ship in drydock during pandemic

46 Saving the seafaring industry

48 Crew change timeline

50 ITF Seafarers’ Trust launches Still at Sea photography competition

52 Ship registry gets its own seafarer welfare app

54 Seafarers as key workers: Vital to shipping, to the world

56 Seafarer education: What makes a competent trainer?

58 Quote in Action
Cover
Sailor’s Home in Intramuros and stranded seafarers (insert)

Sailing Forward 5
Failed crew changes

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the resilient and innovative spirits of many ship officers - from captains down to junior mates - in dealing with the problems attached to their chosen profession. Despite problems of embarkation and disembarkation as most countries went on lockdowns, seafarers fought on hurdling the obstacles that get in the way whether in performing or modernising their roles.

At shipmanagement firm V Group, for instance, two of its shipmasters described how they made their way home during this crew change crisis. Captain Maria Kristina Javellana disclosed facing “uncertainty and poor information that had impacted crew’s mental health” when signing off her ship. Whilst Captain Pavlo Gusyev finally leapt over “failed crew changes and last minute alterations.”

Uncertainty and lack of information

Captain Javellana got repatriated after a 10-month contract, which was only supposed to last four months. Her ship was on a drydock in a shipyard in China for its special survey when the news of the pandemic broke and China went into lockdown. This means the Filipino captain had to spend two months in the shipyard.

In January, her officer went home and she was expected to sign off a couple of weeks later. But this never happened as her ship had to sail to the Gulf region. She then had another crew change that was set this time in Fujairah, but once again cancelled due to lockdown measures.

Captain Javellana said: “As seafarers, we are used to last minute changes of destination and contract extension, but in this case it was the complete uncertainty that really affected people. We live and work by routines and when we do not know what is happening from day one to the next, it can be very taxing on the mental health of the crew.”

She believes that one of the biggest problems is the lack of concrete information and assistance for those struggling with the situation. “When up to date information isn’t available, it can instil a false hope among the crew. And when things change at the last minute it can really affect morale and negatively impact relationships on board the vessel,” she said in a statement issued by her shipmanager, V Group.

Both the captain and her crew were incredibly grateful for the service the shipmanagement company afforded to help its seafarers struggling with mental health issues, saying they were a lifeline for many on board. However, Captain Javellana believes that governments need to work harder to keep the maritime industry in the loop with clear and concise information to avoid any uncertainty.

Finding ports to get home

In the case of fellow Captain Pavlo Gusyev, the shipmaster from Ukraine returned home after six months at sea. His contract lasted almost four months longer than intended. But his experience was typical amongst many seafarers who have had a number of failed repatriation attempts.

These included travelling to Guinea, India, Singapore, and finally Reunion Island, where, after getting a PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test on the dockside of the French department in the Indian Ocean, he finally got cleared to go home.

“It was incredibly frustrating for everyone involved as things were changing very quickly and quite often at the last minute,” Captain Gusyev said. But he conceded, he was one of the lucky ones that actually managed to get signed off, stressing that many of the crew with expired contracts were still on board with no idea of when they will be going home.

The shipmaster believes that governments need to do more to alleviate the crisis and work together to ensure seafarers are not getting “demoralised and demotivated by not being able to go home.”

Captain Gusyev stated, “The biggest problem isn’t the extension of contract. As seafarers we are used to that. The problem is the uncertainty that the crew change will actually ever happen due to fast changing rules” He added that it can greatly impact the mental health of the crew that may eventually lead to accidents and unsafe working condition. That is “something totally unacceptable if something happens to the vessel.”
Innovation on board

Another shipmaster – this time whilst serving on board – has tried his way to perform some sort of an experiment on his ship. Filipino Captain Bernie Besa, must have loved tending his plants on land each time he goes home to the Philippines.

**Gardening at sea**

Thus, he tried to bring his hobby at sea: gardening, the hydroponic way. Hydroponic uses no soil, but instead grows plants in a solution of water and nutrients that can nurture both plants and vegetables faster and year-round.

His shipowner Berge Bulk, in one of social media posts, said that one of their carriers has installed the garden system. Now, a hydroponic system on board the bulker Berge Zugspitze, where the vegetable plot was put up last year, has created a vertical garden at sea that can grow up to 27 different plants at a time in one sq m of space.

“While providing fresh produce to the ship’s crew on board, the vegetables and herbs will take carbon dioxide and sulphur dioxide out of the air too,” said Captain Besa. The ship’s top officer and the crew of the 210,000 dwt Zugspitze can find the “vegetables growing right in front of our own eyes.”

Captain Besa added: “They come straight from our garden to our kitchen. Since COVID-19, we’re all more conscious about health and hygiene. It’s nice to know that we are eating produce that hasn’t been handled by other people.”

**Amazing Junior Engineer Onboard.** A Bernhard Schulte Ship Management’s (BSM) managed ship, the Donata Schulte, has a new amazing junior engineer that keeps its hands and mind busy at work. Such creativity on board the LPG tanker by one of its “minions” has sparked the dream of a shipping executive’s kid to be a seafarer someday upon seeing the photo, which a crewmember posted on the social media.

A commenter said that such creativity could be used too, to attract youngsters enter the maritime profession.
Seamen’s Hospital Manila sets up lab for COVID-19 test

AMOSUP President Dr Conrado Oca says the need for testing facilities in the Philippines provided the Hospital an opportunity to set up its own to cover thousands of Union members.

The AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital Manila has put up its own molecular laboratory equipped to provide immediate test results for COVID-19. AMOSUP hails the support of the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF), whose backing by its charitable arm – ITF Seafarers’ Trust – has given the realisation of the union’s molecular lab project.

The 90-square meter molecular lab at Seamen’s Hospital in Intramuros, Manila can perform 300 tests a day and determine seafarer’s status within a day upon testing.

“The construction of this RT-PCR laboratory is intended to give us the capacity to provide immediate results for seafarers especially because testing for COVID-19 is crucial to ensure their unrestricted movement as key workers,” according to AMOSUP President Dr Conrado Oca.

The machine being used has several applications and can be utilised to conduct tests for flu, RSV, tuberculosis and HIV. It can also detect bacteria in blood so it won’t get obsolete even if COVID-19 gets controlled to a minimum.

Dr Oca said, the need for testing facilities in the Philippines provided the Seamen’s Hospital the opportunity to set up its own to cover thousands of AMOSUP member seafarers departing and arriving who are required to be tested.

It will also aid the country’s response strategy in managing the COVID-19 situation that the Department of Health (DOH) promotes – prevention, isolation,
contact tracing, and treatment. The license DOH extended to the Seamen’s Hospital is for cartridge-based PCR Laboratory that can release result within 24 hours after testing. It began operating last 01 September.

Prior to DOH accreditation the Hospital carried out proficiency training for its lab analysts. They were evaluated prior to the issuance of the license, along with a dry run before the Union’s hospital officially started conducting tests amongst members.

With the expected arrival of thousands of seafarers in the coming months, as well as the requirement for embarking seafarers to undergo reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT PCR) before their deployment, the demand for the testing amongst seafarers is expected to increase.

The industry estimates that around 180,000 Filipino seafarers remain on board ships, with another 180,000 crew waiting to replace them.

The RT-PCR test the Seamen’s Hospital offers detects the actual presence of the virus. According to DOH, PCR determines if an individual is positive with the virus even when asymptomatic.

The DOH, in a recent statement, hailed the private sector’s initiatives in joining the government’s response to increase the country’s testing capacity to address the COVID-19 pandemic.
Beating the crew change challenge

Lockdowns and cancelled flights in key cities worldwide triggered massive delays to seafarers bound for duty and off signers get home to their loved ones. Sailing Forward’s Andy Dalisay shares how ship and crew managers hurdled barriers to executing manpower shifts for their fleets.

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown the maritime sector’s long-established crew change system into chaos that left many shipowners and shipmanagers fending for themselves to find solutions into their operations.

Finding the solution to the crew change crisis proved to be extraordinarily problematic. One of the major problems is the confusion related to strict health safety protocols as the virus swept across the globe.

Imposed lockdowns and cancelled flights in key cities worldwide triggered massive delays for crew off-signers longing to go home and on-signers bound to sail. Travel restrictions to stop the spread of the virus caused setbacks on visa application, airport opening and flight availability, along with quarantine requirements and inland travel to the ship.

Planning a crew change now takes days from what used to be just minutes after a few clicks on the keyboard.

Strict lockdown procedures

With an estimated 180,000 Filipino seafarers waiting to be replaced, the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) said the industry expected 30,000 officers and crew to disembark each month. But strict lockdown disabled the usual crew swaps, with only about 25% crew changes taking place since March 2020, TUCP said in a virtual press conference last August.

Seafarers trapped on board were forced to sign for contract extensions and worked during the duration of the lockdown. Many suffered physical and mental fatigue – some were even reported to have taken their own lives. Meanwhile, the stranded relief crew ashore held on for lost income. The Maritime Labour Convention allows seafarers a maximum of 11 to 12 months in their contract.

“No one really saw it coming. The sheer impact of the pandemic to the maritime industry affected our seafarers the most,” said Venus Godoy, assistant manager at Döhle Seafront Crewing. She stressed, “It was easy to get lost in all the chaos that ensued related to changing crew.”

Döhle Seafront managed to be one of the crew managers that resorted to chartered flights, ferrying crew between Manila and Hamburg, with the backing of its German shipowner, Peter Döhle Group.

Chartered flight and its challenges

Godoy, who led her team in tackling the group’s manpower swap, said the chartered flight was not without...
a challenge. “It was nerve wracking because you don’t know if you will get that permission to have your flight – land or leave the same day – and bring with it the much needed optimum number of our crew including from other companies to relieve those locked down abroad.”

Peter Döhle’s chartered Manila-Hamburg flight transported close to 100 seafarers via Condor Air last 13 June. The return flight from Hamburg flew 236 Filipino seafarers home including crew from various manning companies who disembarked in Europe after completing their contract. The same plane left again for Hamburg on 28 June with a fresh batch of 162 seafarers to relieve crew due for replacement.

The company’s chartered flight was said to be the first crew change effected in the cargo segment from one of the world’s main crew supplying countries since the pandemic. Although the cruise sector had already made their own repatriation efforts of thousands of Filipino seafarers from their fleets’ hotel and catering side following the outbreak of the coronavirus in March.

**Ever changing, varied requirements**

Philippines’ leading cruise agent C F Sharp Crew Management and its principals faced the “one-way challenge of bringing home crew”. In addition to quarantine restrictions and safety requirements, C F Sharp president and CEO Miguel Rocha said, the company had to make key adjustments to its crew change protocols to comply with the “ever changing and varied requirements of ports and airports around the world.”

Rocha told Sailing Forward, the company entered into a memo of agreement with travel agencies and medical clinics to ensure availability of needed infrastructure that includes holding facilities for quarantine, land transport and airline availability for both domestic and international flights. Apart from infrastructure, the company had to deal with the lack of procedures for thousands of its returning crew, leaving the crew manager and other manning agents to get involved in establishing the process to see Filipino seafarers home. But things became “more complicated as more safety protocols and requirements were adopted, especially because they were changing regularly,” Rocha said.

**Major hubs for crew change**

The hindrances to crew change appeared almost similar in other key cities abroad. In Singapore, for instance, requirements such as the 14-day prior notice along with a lack of consistency in the approval process seemed to be quite challenging.

Marlow Navigation Company noted, “The authorities approved and rejected crew changes without clearly providing information why applications get rejected.” In one of the company’s advisories to its seafarers, Marlow said, several of its applications had been rejected. Likewise in Hong Kong, Marlow initially managed a number of crew changes. But limited flights out of the city led to a number of off-signers crew getting stranded. Consequently, the HK administration imposed restrictions on crew changes.

According to shipmanagers, high costs, airline schedules, and strict coronavirus immigration and health restrictions in Asian shipping hubs Singapore and Hongkong made executing crew change very challenging.

Other key hubs, such as the United Arab Emirates, opened ports for crew changes across the nation’s seven emirates. Like Dubai, which had previously made crew change possible, UAE transport authorities opened up other important hubs such as Sharjah, Abu Dhabi and Khorfakkan.

But seafarers were strictly advised to adhere to public health requirements and precautionary measures in the Emirates, such as the mandatory pre-registration of crewmembers’ itinerary to join ships or return home and maritime declaration of health and a guarantee by the captain of the ship regarding the absence of any contagious disease.

Crew change in the United States (as of mid-August) remained very challenging as repatriation flights to the Philippines and Europe were subject to various restrictions, which in reality crew managers conceded “difficult to comply with.”
AMOSUP houses stranded seafarers in Manila

About a thousand officers and crew stayed in AMOSUP and JSU facilities during the state-imposed lockdown in the country during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Associated Marine Officers’ and Seamen’s Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) opened its doors to almost a thousand seafarers stranded in Metro Manila after the government imposed an Enhanced Community Quarantine in Luzon on 16 March 2020.

At the beginning of the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), there were 500 seafarers under the Union’s care at the Sailor’s Home Main and Annex in Intramuros, Manila and over 400 more at the JSU-AMOSUP Mariners Homes (Annex 1, 2 & 3) in Ermita, Manila. Their accommodations and daily subsistence were provided for by JSU and AMOSUP.

According to AMOSUP President, Dr. Conrado Oca, it is the Union’s duty to ensure the welfare of its members at this time. “We are here to look out for our members especially amidst this crisis. They have done so much for our society and now that they are in a difficult position—away from their families and uncertain about their jobs—our members deserve to be treated with compassion and dignity. Hence, we are all out in providing our members’ needs such as food, toiletries, routine check up and medicines,” Dr. Oca said.

Among the seafarers at the Sailor’s Home is 4th Engineer Vera Antonio. “Pinaluwas lang ako ng company-ang sabi aalis ako ng March 19 kaso nga lockdown two days before ng alis ko sabi cancelled nga daw kasi nagkaroon ng ganitong situation. So now stranded kami sa Manila malayo sa pamilya,” (I was asked by my company to come down to Manila-they said I will leave on March 19, but the lockdown was imposed 2 days before my flight so it was cancelled because of the situation. Now we are stranded here in Manila away from our family.) 4/E Antonio shared.

Jellie Ypo, housekeeping staff at a cruise line, also had the same fate. She revealed the situation has affected her a great deal. “Siyempre po may takot na hindi mo alam kung kalian matatapos, tapos hindi mo alam kung may trabaho ka pang naghinhintay sa’yo- kung makakabalik ka pa ba, makakasampa ka pa ba o hindi. Tapos siyempre yung health din po namin ang naisip namin, hindi lang para sa amin kundi sa pamilya din namin,” (Of course there’s fear, because we don’t know when it will be over, we don’t know if we’ll still have a job waiting for us- if we can still come back on board. Then of course we also think about our health, as well as our family.) Ms Ypo said.

But despite the uncertainty of the situation they are in, they said they are grateful that AMOSUP is there for them.

“But panahon ito ng laki po ng tulong ng AMOSUP lalo na po sa accommodation tsaka sa pagkain namin. Tsaka yung safety namin na hindi nila kami pinapabayaan. Sa everyday na nandito kami... alam namin na may AMOSUP na tutulong sa amin,” (During this time, AMOSUP is a great help, especially

**Despite the uncertainty of the situation they are in, they said they are grateful that AMOSUP is there for them**
The woman seafarer also has a message for her fellow seafarers affected by the crisis, “*Itong mga nangyayari sa atin, for sure trials lang naman ito eh, hindi naman ito permanente diba, so siguro wag lang mawalan ng pag-asa. May katapusan din naman lahat ng ito so laban lang po.*” (All these things that are happening to us, for sure, these are just trials. Hence, they are not permanent. So let us not lose hope. There’s an end to all of this, so just keep on fighting.)

**ITF Seafarers Trust emergency Covid-19 grant**

The International Transport Workers Federation Seafarer’s Trust (ITFST) has recognized AMOSUP’s vital role in reaching out to seafarers affected by the global health crisis. Two months into the Enhanced Community Quarantine in the National Capital Region, ITFST gave AMOSUP an Emergency Grant, which was allocated to help sustain the daily meals and utilities at the Union-run dormitories. The Fund was also used to produce food packs that were distributed to seafarers in other dormitories and some on their homes around Metro Manila.

**Food packs for stranded seafarers**

Since the start of the ECQ, AMOSUP has found different ways of helping out maritime workers in Manila. Despite the limited manpower, the Union was able to distribute over 10,000 food packs to seafarers in different dormitories in Manila as of August.

As the ECQ was relaxed mid-May, the Union workers eased their way to different provinces in North Luzon such as Pampanga and Bataan, and places in Southern Luzon including Bicol, to distribute food packs to more seafarers affected by the quarantine in Luzon.

AMOSUP said the food packs distribution was also implemented in Cebu, and the union aims to cover more areas across the country to reach out to more members in need.
Crew changes have been very challenging due to a number of circumstances. Early on we had to deal with the lack of procedures and infrastructure for repatriation, and we needed to be involved with the government and private sector in establishing the process to send our crew home. Things became more complicated as more safety protocols and requirements due to the pandemic were adopted, especially because they were changing regularly.

Many areas are problematic hindering the ability to conduct crew change. Crew quarantine caused the most problems due to limited holding facilities, unreliable release date of test results or delayed releasing of COVID-19 test results. In addition, limited public transportation, unavailability and/or limited volume of domestic and international air travel, and different restrictions imposed by different local government units (LGUs) contributed to difficulty in completing crew changes.

Coordination with all interested agencies and parties has been challenging as well as the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases has not always been able to maintain consistency between government agencies and departments.

In addition to adapting to the new quarantine restrictions, social distancing practices and safety requirements, we have made major changes to our crew change protocols in order to comply with the ever changing and varied requirements of ports and airports around the world. Also, to ensure availability of needed infrastructure for crew change, we entered into memo of agreement (MOA) with travel agencies and medical clinics, and actively participated in government forums and industry initiatives.

Early on we faced the one way challenge of bringing home crew from the passenger lines. The bigger problem which looms large is the need to relieve crew of conventional cargo vessels who have remained at sea well beyond the allowable period by international standards. There is a tremendous backlog and pressure coming from the shipowners to remain in compliance with international regulatory standards.

What appears to be lost by the Philippine government departments and agencies is the importance of supplying replacement crew. Crew change is not only about getting crew home, but sending crew safely to their assignments. A crew change can only be accomplished if an off signer is replaced by a new joiner. If the Philippines wants to maintain its hold on the market, we must concern ourselves with ways to streamline the process of crew deployment. Should the Philippines not establish a steady supply of crew, we run the risk of owners replacing Filipino crew with other nationalities.

It is true that cruise operations will likely resume in Europe and Asia before anywhere else. For
the cruise segment, there is less concern for losing market share. The conventional cargo side is a different story. Bringing crew back is different than coordinating a two-way crew change transactions. Are things going back to normal yet in crew changeovers? Today, things are far from normal. It is extremely difficult to look into the future, especially under such unusual and unprecedented circumstances in which we find ourselves today. News on availability of vaccines for COVID gives hope that everything will eventually return to full capacity just not like before, admittedly under a new normal. How long it will take is anyone’s guess.

As part of policies and solutions to prevent a repeat of today’s chaos in crew change, we should prompt all concerned entities to establish guidelines in addressing the issues, struggles and loopholes we faced today. It should be acknowledged worldwide that seafarers are essential manpower thus, a true green lane should be made available to allow them to move with less restrictions. SF

Just Like Space Travellers. When you sign up for a ship, only to realise it’s a “space ship for the next lunar landing.” These Anglo-Eastern ship joiners pictured at top, whom the ship manager arranged as part of a recent crew change, are decked out in matching head-to-toe PPE (personal protective equipment). Coupled with the barren surroundings and black night sky, they look more like space travellers – or little blue (versus green) men. Such excessive PPE is not the norm, but neither is it so very unusual. A lot depends on the country/port in question. One thing is certain, however, and that’s the need for seafarers to meet stringent quarantine, testing, PPE and other requirements, and to remain virus-free, or else entire crew changes could be jeopardised. Full compliance and strict adherence is thus crucial – even if it means going to the moon and back! (Text and Images: Anglo-Eastern Management Services via LinkedIn)
Never has the statement "Money doesn’t buy happiness," had more meaning than in the crew change crisis during the pandemic.

That’s how the charity Mission to Seafarers aptly illustrated the situation of maritime workers in its Seafarers Happiness Index (SHI) report regarding the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the welfare of seafarers. "No bonus or extra pay can resolve the anguish and problems being faced by the crew today," SHI said in its first half 2020 report, echoing Wallem Group CEO Frank Coles’ statement on the situation.

The report makes it clear that the seafaring community is in the midst of a mental health crisis, largely due to the inability of crews to sign off and return home. "Heavy workloads, virus fears and a perceived lack of COVID-19 precautions on board vessels are exacerbating the decline in satisfaction," which the Index cites as "significant risks for the mental and physical wellbeing of crew" along with their safety.

The latest SHI survey, undertaken in association with the Shipowners’ Club and Wallem Group, analyses the experiences of seafarers across the global maritime industry between April and June 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, it said, seafarer happiness has dropped from 6.30 (out of 10) in Q1 to 6.18 in Q2 2020.

The Index is made up of a standard set of ten questions that cover key areas, such as mental and physical health, diet, rest, workload, connectivity, training, access to shore leave, as well as relationships at home and on board.

The report pointed out that "vessels are sailing with fewer crew, increased sickness onboard and a pressure to keep hygiene standards at almost hospital-like levels. The demands of meeting these standards while also maintaining social distancing are relentless and seafarers are struggling to adhere to new guidance."

The index further showed that seafarers have reported feeling unsupported and stressed, and without respite, which is impacting work standards as well as their welfare, "combined with the challenge of accessing medical services, the risk of an increase in incidents of self-harm and in the number of accidents is very real as stress impacts work, compromising safety at all levels."

SHI Q1 report showed how seafarers suffered as COVID-19 struck home and provided insight into the support that was needed. The Q2 report highlights the cost of inaction and the need for immediate solutions. It has suggested the need for
improvement particularly in the area of crew changeovers, onboard PPE (personal protective equipment) and improved communication between shore and sea. “Protecting our seafarers comes first and the industry must now come together before it is too late.”

Louise Hall, Director of Loss Prevention at the Shipowners’ Club, said: “Among other issues, this report highlights the toll that social distancing has taken on relationships and connectivity on board. Reports of additional safety measures, such as separating tables and limiting the capacity of mess rooms at meal times, has made even the most habitual social interactions difficult. This, coupled with extended periods of time at sea, raises serious concerns for seafarers’ mental wellbeing as feelings of loneliness and isolation intensify.”

The report also reaffirms the importance of communication to seafarers. With many seafarers unable to leave their vessels or contact their family due to the crisis, online access is fundamental to their wellbeing. Without the connection to home and restricted support from ship visitors and port chaplains, seafarers are on the edge of serious mental distress.

SHI identified the pride that seafarers feel in their work and their hope that the industry would protect them. Today, this is clearly tempered with disappointment that seafarers are not recognised as key workers.

“The challenges being reported are reaching intolerable levels due to contracts being disregarded and growing reports of sexism, racism and bullying and drunkenness onboard. Seafarers are at a tipping point and it is essential that faster progress is made to protect seafarers and stop the industry from falling into a deeper crisis,” the report stated.

Marlow Navigation has created an app for mobile devices for its seafarers to help make their working experience at sea and ashore more efficient and more enjoyable.

A range of features now make a big part of the admin process between the company and crew much easier, with information and material being sent directly to their device whenever they’re online, together with alerts and notifications to keep the seafarers reminded and updated. This includes access to crew’s documentation, flight details, contract, payroll and allotments, as well as company news and activities.

Marlow said its Crew Companion App is all about enhancing organisation and interaction, whilst supporting the seafarers in their work and day-to-day life. The app is accessible only for seafarers actively engaged with Marlow Navigation, with secure login and is free of charge, available on both iPhone and Android platforms.
Union workers step up to assist seafarers on lockdown

When the extensive community quarantine was enforced beginning mid-March, AMOSUP took up the cudgels to assist hundreds of its members trapped in the Union’s dorms in Manila. Camille A Simbulan interviews two of AMOSUP’s frontliners about their experiences on the ground at the onset of the pandemic.

Merriame Alea: Ensuring members are well taken care of

Despite the apparent risk of catching the virus on the job, she did not back down knowing union members were stranded at the AMOSUP dormitories – many of whom can’t go home to their families in the provinces, while some never made it to their supposed embarkation as the air and seaports were immediately shut down.

Merriame Alea came out as one of AMOSUP’s frontliners who braved the risk. A single parent with a 16-year-old son, the receptionist at Sailor’s Home and its Annex in Intramuros did not think twice about staying at her post when the whole of Luzon was placed under Enhanced Community Quarantine on 16 March 2020.

When the extensive community quarantine was implemented, Merriame said she had to step up from solely being the receptionist, taking on the duty as overall person-in-charge of more than five hundred seafarers under AMOSUP’s care in the transient facility.

She admitted the tasks seemed all too daunting. But nevertheless, she kept her head up, embraced her responsibilities and chose not to give up for the sake of the stranded members, as well as her colleagues who also work tirelessly to make sure the seafarers are well taken care of, their needs are met, and they get all the assistance they need from the union’s end.

“Nakaka-kaba po at nakakatatakot. Marami sila na dapat i-monitor, nakakatakot humawak ng ganun kadaming tao lalo na sa panahon ng pandemic. Kinailangan kong tibayan ang loob at humingi ng gabay kay Lord para magampanan ko nang maayos ang naiatang na responsibilidad. (It was nerve-wracking and scary. I was wondering how I could monitor that number of people especially at this time of pandemic. I had to toughen up and ask for the Lord’s guidance to be able to perform my responsibilities well.),” Merriame said.

Since the beginning of the ECQ, AMOSUP provided meals, medicines and toiletries for its members at the Sailor’s Home.

Hence, Merriame’s day-to-day involves coordinating with suppliers and staff from different departments and service units to ensure
members are provided with their basic necessities.

**One of her biggest challenges**

But while she is all out in fulfilling her duties, Merriame revealed her anxiety of acquiring the virus is always there. She said, “Papasok sa isip mo na, paano kapag naging positive ka? Paano ang pamilya mo? Takot na paano ang mga kasamahan mo sa trabaho pag nakaraon din sila ng virus. Takot para sa mga member na inaalagaan mo nung panahon na yon na magkaroon din sila ng virus. Pinakamalaking hamon ay yung sobrang pagod na at gusto mo nang magpahinga pero hindi pa pwede dahil kailangan mong tapusin ang trabahong nasimulan mo na. (Sometimes it bothers me, ‘What if I end up positive? What will happen to my family? What if my co-workers become infected? What if the members under our care turn out positive?’ One of the biggest challenges is the fatigue. Sometimes you want to rest but you can’t because you need to get the job done.)"

What kept Merriame going despite her dilemma is her family, as well as her fellow union workers at AMOSUP. “Unang una ko pong inspirasyon ay ang pamilya ko. Pangalawa ay yung mga kasamahan ko sa trabaho na kahit hirap at pagod na ay tuloy pa rin. At siyempre si Lord na laging nakasubaybay at gumagabay sa atin. (First and foremost, my inspiration is my family. Second are my colleagues who, despite being drained and exhausted, just keep on fighting. And of course, the Lord who always guides and watches over us.),” she said.

According to Ms. Alea, AMOSUP’s culture of genuine service and family, leaving no one behind, was what got her to apply for the organisation in the first place, “Ang values po na lubos kong hinahangaan sa AMOSUP ay ang pagkakaroon ng pagmamahal sa kanyang nasasakupan at kaagarang pagtugon at pagtulong sa mga nangangailangan. Sa kanyang mga tao lalo na sa pangahang pagdadaan at kaagad ng pagpapakita ng panahon ng pandemya. At siyempre ang pagiging maka-Diyos. (The values of AMOSUP that I admire most are its love and commitment to its general membership and its dedication to help those in need especially at this time of the pandemic. And of course, being God-centered.)”

Amidst all of the challenges at hand, union workers like Ms Alea share the same sense of fulfillment when it comes to carrying out their jobs to help seafarers. “Magaan po sa loob na isa ako sa nakagawa ng mabuti sa aking kapwa lalo na nang panahon ng crisis. Sa totoo lang nang nagahahatid kami ng mga seafarer sa airport para umuwi ng kanilang probinsya, nakakaitakwa dahil makikita niyo sa mukha at mata nila ang saya na sa wakas makakasama na nila ang kanilang pamilya. (It’s heartwarming to know that we are able to help people in this time of crisis. To be honest, whenever we bring seafarers to the airport, I get teary-eyed and am delighted because I see the happiness in their eyes that finally, they will be able to see their families.), said Ms. Alea.”
Atty Henry Zamora of the AMOSUP Legal Affairs Office is another familiar face among members staying in at the union-run dormitories in Manila. Unable to go back to his hometown, Roxas City, in central Philippines, for his youngest daughter’s baptism on 21 March because of the lockdown, he dedicated his time to helping out stranded seafarers in Manila. “Instead of staying at home doing nothing, he chose to volunteer and help AMOSUP by offering his services. “Kailangan ng tao sa ground eh. Actually, hindi alam ng asawa ko ‘to. Pinaalam ko na lang after two weeks kasi pag pinaalam ko sa kanya, mag-aalala siya," (Our members needed someone on the ground. Actually, my wife had no idea what I was doing. I didn’t want her to worry so I just told her after two weeks),” Atty. Zamora revealed.

During the Enhanced Community Quarantine, Atty Zamora personally assisted seafarers to undergo swab testing and processed their clearances to be able to travel back to their provinces amidst the difficulties encountered by the government in repatriating seafarers. He acknowledged that the situation called for a collaborative relationship with the government. “Lahat stressed. Kahit yung mga tao in government wala ring tulog, so minsan nakakaawa rin. So we told them we are here to help the government. We are not here to be an added burden, we offer our services. Hindi kami nagdemand ng time. Kami ang nag-adjust sa kanila kasi we know na wala silang tulog, pagod na pagod sila (Everyone was stressed. Even the people in government were exhausted. We were not demanding. We tried to adjust because we know they are also very tired),” he shared.

Collaboration with government agencies

AMOSUP’s cooperation with government agencies such as the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) further resulted in the successful transportation of hundreds of seafarers to their hometowns. Two buses of the union-run Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) were utilised as shuttle services for those returning home by land. According to Atty Zamora, they were also able to accommodate repatriated land-based OFW in some of their trips.

But it wasn’t all smooth sailing. At some point, he encountered several obstacles due to the constant changes in protocols and the lingering fear of acquiring the highly contagious virus while performing his duties. He disclosed, “Maraming beses na hinatid ko sa hospital yung mga ositive na seaman natin. Nakakaawa, kasi pag nag-positive ang seaman...”
walang gustong lumapit, kasi takot eh. So ang ginagawa namin lakasan nalang ng loob. Kami rin ang nagbibigay ng pagkain. Nagpapasalamat sila na mayroon palang ganito na kahit positive virus hindi sila iniwang at hindi nila na-feel na nandidiri kami sa kanila. (There were many instances when I drove our COVID-positive seafarers to the hospital. I feel bad for them because when they test positive, there's some sort of stigma because people are scared. So we toughen up, we continue to serve them. We also feed them. They were very thankful because even if they're infected, we did not abandon nor discriminate them."

Atty Zamora’s altruism and compassion for others appears to be embedded in his character. In his younger years, he actually dreamed of becoming a priest, having finished his secondary and tertiary education in St. Pius X Seminary and Dadat Sancta Maria Mater Et Regina Seminarium, respectively. He was supposed to take Theology, but he said God had other plans for him. He later on found himself in UST College of Law and passed the bar exams in 2007. He joined AMOSUP in the same year while awaiting the results of the bar.

"Nang nasa seminary ako, exposed ako sa social work. Naa-assign sa mga parishes, nagse-serve sa mga tao, so lahat ng klase ng tao nakakausap ko. Mahihirap man o hindi. Kaya madali nang makipag-usap kahit kanino lalo na sa mga seabased workers na mas madaling kausapin. (When I was in the seminary, I was exposed to social work. I was assigned to different parishes; I was immersed in serving all kinds of people from different walks of life. That's why I'm comfortable in talking to different kinds of people especially seafarers.)," he explained.

Fighting for seafarers’ rights

Over the past several years, the AMOSUP lawyer has handled cases involving vulnerable seafarers. He was instrumental in the successful repatriation of Jelcris Rontale—a Filipino seafarer who was implicated in the accidental death of his colleague on MV Beauforce at the Port of Cristobal in Panama in June 2015. Rontale was detained at a hotel for one year and seven months without any formal criminal complaint before he was acquitted and repatriated on 10 January 2017.

Atty Zamora also assisted four Filipino seafarers who were held hostage by Somali pirates for two years and three months onboard MV Leopard. Because of their life-threatening experience, the hostage victims all suffered Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). A case was filed before the National Conciliation and Mediation Board (NCMB) for disability compensation for them. The seafarers eventually won the case before the Panel of Voluntary Arbitrators, which entitled them to double disability compensation. Aside from the legal assistance, AMOSUP provided financial and medical assistance.

His commitment to continuously helping out seafarers despite the risk of getting himself infected by COVID-19 is greatly influenced by the principles of AMOSUP and its

Atty. Zamora stressed. "Sa mga pinapauwi namin, umiiyak yung iba sa tuwa, nagpapasalamat, lalo na yung mga iniwan ng kumpanya, na andoon pa rin ang AMOSUP. Tapos pagdating ng gabi, mag-uusap usap na lang kami ng ibang staff--pagod pero sabi ko wag tayo susuko. Nagpapasalamat nga ako sa mga kasamahan natin na ganun din sila. (Some members we sent home were really crying for joy, thanking us, especially those abandoned by their company, because AMOSUP was there for them. Then at night, we, the staff, just talked about how exhausted we are but none of us will give up. I am thankful for my colleagues who are equally committed.)"

"Ang sarap ng feeling na alam mong may uuwing tao na mayayakap nilang mula ang mga pamilya nila. Sa isip mong alam mong nakatulong ka sa kapwa. Tapos alam mong may napangiti ka. Kakabang feeling iyon. (It feels good knowing you sent seafarers home and they will be able to hug their families again. The thought that you know you helped someone in need. And you know you made someone smile. The feeling is priceless.), Atty Zamora concluded.)"
Giant tanker owner and operator, Euronav, dubbed this pandemic as the “largest ever humanitarian and logistical crisis” the maritime sector has faced that affected the lives and livelihood of nearly 40% of the world’s seafarers.

The Belgian shipowner, which announced its second quarter and first half 2020 results in August, said this is not just a tanker company problem but a global industry issue affecting 2.0 million crew including seafarers that are unable to join their ships. “This issue needs affirmative and positive action at border points to ease the backlog of stranded seafarers around the world,” the company said in a statement.

Euronav CEO Hugo De Stoop stated, “COVID-19 continues to create huge restrictions on the mobility and movement of seafarers. Crew changes are critical for all shipping sectors and movement of goods.” He reiterated the call to governments globally to acknowledge the essential role seafarers play in maintaining crucial supply chains and global commerce during this pandemic and recognise them with “key workers” status.

The company, which made an impressive $485 million net profit in the first half of 2020 or a significant improvement over the $19 million loss recorded in the same period last year, noted the COVID-19 pandemic is impactful in many ways. Since the public health crisis began, Euronav has focused on the safety and well-being of its people, as well as ensuring business continuity for its customers and all its other stakeholders.

The tanker owner’s main concern and challenge was the rotation of more than 600 Euronav seafarers with expired contracts stranded at sea. Euronav has worked closely with many organisations and countries to take measures to facilitate the movement of seafarers to and from their ships.

Euronav claims the virus has not affected any of its crew so far. Whilst the cost impact related to this situation was not too significant in Q2, Euronav predicts the third quarter may see an increase in crew related operational expenditure related to quarantine accommodation and increased travel costs.

“Notwithstanding this challenge, we are extremely thankful to our crew members who, despite those challenging circumstances, have continued to ensure the safe operation of our fleet and the delivery of essential supply chains for our customers,” it said.

Moving forward, Euronav sees the market becoming more challenging if demand for crude oil continues to be negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. “This decrease in demand combined with the gradual release of vessels that are currently used as storage may distort the supply-demand balance and thus the freight market.”

However, the Belgian company asserted that “some of these negative consequences could be partially offset by continuing logistical delays of ships in ports, increased level of recycling, reduced ordering of newbuild vessels and increased crude oil production, all neutralising the COVID-19 impact to a certain extent.”

Euronav: Largest ever humanitarian crisis
The tanker company’s main concern and challenge was the rotation of more than 600 Euronav seafarers with expired contracts stranded at sea.
InterManager calls for data entries on crew change

The launch of the Maritime Champions Club isn’t a competitive comparison between others who submit statistics but to boost industry’s confidence in repatriating seafarers

Who cares about numbers? What is the relevance of numbers in the publicly unseen crew change problem the maritime industry faces in this time of the pandemic?

For the International Association of Ship and Crew Managers or InterManager, having the figures means a lot. Collating the numbers of stranded seafarers that have been sent home or signed-on ships would provide an accurate picture in recognising the efforts of the seafaring community in their “crew repatriation achievements,” according to InterManager.

Through the Maritime Champions Club (MCC), which the group launched last May 2020, InterManager appealed to ship and crew managers to submit their crew changeover counts. The data collected isn’t a competitive comparison between others who submit statistics, the association insisted, saying “it exists to boost seafarers’ confidence and to demonstrate the community’s collective efforts to those who are skeptical about the shipping industry’s ability to successfully repatriate.”

Captain Kuba Szymanski, InterManager secretary general said: “The Maritime Champions Club has already been a huge success, and InterManager would like to extend a massive thank you to those who have already taken part.”

However, he said the current data represents only 10% of the whole picture. “Our most recent data shows that over 19,000 seafarers have already been successfully repatriated for crew changes, yet 200,450 seafarers are still due to travel.” InterManager hopes that it will convey a clear message to all stakeholders that the maritime industry has not forgotten their seafarers, and “that we are willing and able to conduct crew changes and show utilised routes,” Capt Szymanski said in a statement.

The Club table or chart will also detail the nationalities of those who have been relieved, and will show the efforts of national administrations and their willingness to cooperate and be an inspiration for those who are still in the planning phase. “By working collectively, we can pool our resources for crew changes and achieve far more than we could alone,” according to Capt Szymanski.

The League table is live on the InterManager website at https://bit.ly/3dBSA0c and will be continuously updated with relevant data as and when it becomes available. Those wishing to join the Maritime Champions Club may send an e-mail to kuba.szymanski@intermanager.org.

As of 01 September, 64,784 seafarers have travelled of the estimated 550,000 mariners due to travel for crew change as monitored by the InterManager’s Maritime Champions Club since COVID-19 swept across the world in mid-March. (Source: InterManager)
IKAW NA KAYA ANG SUSUNOD NA MILYONARYO?

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JOIN NOW!
No call to go on strike

The ITF’s ‘Enough is enough’ campaign is aimed at pushing the various government and authorities to relax crew change restrictions, far from being aimed at JNG and their Members.
Recent move by seafarers to refuse extending their contract and request repatriation instead was not an incitement to go on strike. Both unions and employers agreed that once the crew finishes the extended contract and a ship is safely in harbour, they have the right not to extend.

But the ITF and the Joint Negotiating Group (JNG) also acknowledged the “circumstances where a seafarer is denied disembarkation, due to lack of flights and/or their replacement, but they cannot be compelled to work either.”

A statement issued by the ITF and JNG, along with the International Chamber of Shipping, said they’ve worked tirelessly since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic on finding solutions to the issue of crew changes. It stated: “The ITF’s ‘Enough is enough’ campaign is aimed at pushing the various government and authorities to relax crew change restrictions, far from being aimed at JNG and their Members.”

Moreover, the ITF and JNG stated: “The social partners have actively engaged with and received public support from the United Nations Secretary General and other UN agencies, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). We have supported our affiliated unions and our membership in discussions with their national governments and assisted with getting seafarers emergency medical treatment.”

In addition, the social partners also negotiated and agreed twice to an extension of the Seafarers’ Employment Agreements covered under IBF CBAs and an additional 30 days implementation phase to allow governments time to put in place practical solutions for the facilitation of crew changes.

Along with European sister organisation, the European Transport Workers Federation (ETF), and the European Community Shipowners Association (ECSA), the social partners lobbied the European Commission to ease visa requirements within Schengen and their affiliates and members have done the same with their governments.

ITF and JNG also arranged a meeting with major flag state authorities, the ILO and IMO to discuss crew change challenges and held meetings with ICAO and IATA to find solutions to the issue of flights.

“We contacted other non-maritime non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and asked for support to help raise awareness around the crew changes issue and use their contacts and influence to lobby governments,” the statement said.

Whilst both pursued every diplomatic avenue available, still crew changes remain a major issue. “Desperate messages from anxious and fatigued crew who are convinced governments, including their own, have forgotten them. However, not once has the ITF publicly called out or put the blame on companies and employers. Still crew changes remain a major issue.”

The Guidance on Your Rights to Crew Change issued by the ITF does is made up of extracts from the ILO MLC 2006, as amended. In the early stages of the pandemic, the ILO issued a circular that spoke of force majeure, which at the time when the Covid-19 spread was raging was a necessary decision. Recently the ILO confirmed that force majeure can no longer be used as a blanket excuse for seafarers’ contract extensions, but these must be considered on case-by-case basis.

ITF’s and JNG’s main concern is that “failing to relieve fatigued, stressed and desperate crew, is only inviting accidents or major incidents which will damage the shipping industry and the reputation of those same seafarers who, throughout the pandemic, have professionally and responsibly carried on and continued working in to keep the world’s global supply chain moving. They vowed to continue to “support companies and use their networks and contacts with both the UN and other agencies and nationally to assist them. We appreciate that this is a difficult time for everyone and we want to work together on finding solutions.”
COVID-19 pandemic indubitably caught the whole country’s healthcare system off-guard. The union-run Seamen’s Hospitals across the country were no exception, but the hospitals’ leaders were quick on their feet at the onset of the pandemic and immediately imposed protocols to address the spread of the virus while ensuring the hospitals are capable of continuing operations to serve union members and their families.

According to Seamen’s Hospital Manila’s Medical Director, Dr. Alejandro Ortigas, it was not difficult to ask for the commitment of AMOSUP’s hospital workers, which allowed them to plan and to take action. “The hospital administration team (Medical- Dr Pile and myself, Nursing- Ma’am Kaye and Hospital Administrative Ancillary Services Ma’am Gysrell) set into motion a strategy to evaluate our capabilities, needs and designed a road map together with the Infection Control Committee head, Dr Pamela Rose Matti, as the lead adviser to address the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic we were facing,” Dr Ortigas said.

The hospital’s leadership also issued guidelines and recommendations based on the latest scientific data and best practices to ensure clarity and implementation of their plans. “We regularly convened communicated our instruction as well as listened to the different heads and staff to ensure we had open two-way communication,” he added.

Other branches quickly responded. Seamen’s Hospital branches in other parts of the country were also able to respond to the situation accordingly. At Seamen’s Hospital Cebu, Medical Director Dr Teody Alcantara said, health workers were immediately given trainings to equip them with the necessary knowledge and capabilities. “(We) finalized the safety protocols, admission procedures - everybody has to be aware of the safety measures and we are trying to teach them and train them para kung
Gig Oca Robles Seamen’s Hospital in Davao City quickly made structural adjustments to be able to accommodate COVID-19 patients when the need arises. According to the Davao Seamen’s Hospital’s Medical Director, Dr. Ricky Pecson, ICU room was even converted to an isolation room to increase their capacity. “In the worst-case scenario, we will be able to handle COVID-19 positive patients with mild to moderate symptoms. However, for severe cases that would require a mechanical ventilator, our Hospital will need to refer the patient with such facilities.”

Dr Pecson noted that, “Mayor Sara Duterte has made an executive order stating that all COVID-19 positive cases and Persons Under Investigation (PUI) patients must be referred to Southern Philippines Medical Center, the tertiary government hospital. This was done in order not to exhaust the supplies and manpower of the private hospitals if more patients need to be hospitalised.”

Dr Arnold Liwag, Medical Director of Seamen’s Hospital Iloilo, said they started conducting administrative meetings as early as January 2020 when the first reported COVID-19 was recorded in Manila. “We coordinated with DOH to have our doctors and nurses oriented regarding the regional plans of DOH. The first meeting with DOH was on preparedness and response to the Corona Virus. The infectious disease committee was called to discuss needed structural modifications and protocols to follow in light of this new, highly infectious disease,” he added.

Virtual medical consultation

The union-run hospitals remained open for emergency and in-patient services but had to limit outpatient services (OPD) when the government implemented the Enhanced Community Quarantine on March 16. This prompted the Seamen’s Hospitals in Cebu, Iloilo and Davao to put up their own Telemedicine - a virtual medical consultation service patterned to Seamen’s Hospital Manila’s existing TeleHealth, where members and dependents can consult with the hospitals’ specialists through phone and e-mail.

Dr Alcantara said the increasing COVID-19 cases in Cebu urged them to discourage walk-ins. “We are able to reach them through Telemedicine. We informed patients to prevent them from coming here right away. In-establish na namin yung Telemedicine April pa then increasing yung patients sa Telemedicine. Increasing yung naga-avail because of awareness. June-July nasa 500 consultations siguro. But of course that’s compared to 150 (physical) consultations per day pre-COVID,” he said.

But aside from the necessary changes implemented to ensure the hospitals’ continuous operations amidst the health crisis, other challenges emerged such as the health workers’ anxiety and fear of getting infected.

“We are highly motivated to do our duties during this crisis, but our worries and fear for our family by carrying the virus ourselves and passing to them is sometimes
WE STAYED AT WORK FOR YOU
PLEASE STAY AT HOME FOR US!
STAY SAFE EVERYONE

AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital, Manila
of limiting of services due to the strategic rotational schedule to preserve and protect our health workers. The overwhelming numbers of patients who get infected and need hospitalisation, are obstacles that bring both a physical and emotional stress to the already challenging working conditions, according to Dr. Ortigas.

But the challenges did not weigh them down. Rather, it made them stronger and more resilient. "Challenges and struggles will always remain, but if you prepare for the worst, you are prepared for anything. Of course all the challenges are worth facing and addressing when you are working with a dedicated group," Dr. Ortigas stressed.

Turning challenges into strengths

In fact, the tremendous challenges brought about by the public health crisis brought out the best in AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospitals’ health workers. “Our frontliners (at Seamen’s Hospital Davao) have rediscovered their passion and renewed their dedication towards their profession since after all, this is a medical problem. We realised that we have each other, and the Administration has always stressed that we are one big family in handling this crisis,” shared Dr. Pecson.

Dr Alcantara also praised the dedication of the health workers at the Seamen's Hospital in Cebu. “Those who are here, they are giving it all, working hard,” he said.

“Our team here had the sense of responsibility towards our patients and with our institution. Our dedication also helped us work with minimal supervision as we are more dedicated to render our services even with tonnes of limitations due to the strict quarantine guidelines,” remarked Dr Lalas of AMOSUP Satellite Clinic Dagupan.

Dr Liwag said a shared vision helped steer Seamen’s Hospital Iloilo’s team of health workers to a clear, communal direction. “All our employees are aware of our goals in keeping the hospital safe,” he noted.

For Dr Ortigas, teamwork was the greatest strength of the frontliners at Seamen’s Hospital Manila, “the willingness to work together to achieve a clear objective. Proactiveness, cooperativeness, ability to listen, ability to comply are all integrated. Without everyone’s support, from the ranks to our leaders we would have not achieved and succeeded.”

To keep the health workers motivated, the Seamen’s Hospitals ensure their safety by providing PPEs, masks as well as free transportation, meals and accommodation. Seamen’s Hospital Chief Dr. George Pile also mandated all the branches to provide psychiatric evaluation and support for all the frontliners.

Another effort by the hospital’s leadership to drive motivation is through giving merit based on professionalism. “Reward those who perform well so they serve as model. Being firm and strict but fair when you apply rules. Transparency and lead by example. We walk the talk. Listen to their suggestion, acknowledge good work and reform bad habits, allow them to participate and ‘own their work’,” concluded Dr Ortigas.
AMOSUP SEAMEN'S HOSPITAL

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‘Seafarers: at the core of shipping’s future’

IMO says the 2021 World Maritime theme will provide flexibility to the secretariat, member states and NGOs in consultative status to focus on seafarers as the people at the heart of shipping

Seafarers: at the core of shipping’s future" has been selected as the World Maritime theme for 2021, reflecting a clear need to raise awareness of seafarers' vital role in world trade and increase their visibility.

The focus on seafarers comes as the COVID-19 pandemic has placed extraordinary and unprecedented demands on seafarers. Hundreds of thousands faced and are still facing extended sea times, going months at sea without seeing families and loved ones. The crew change crisis in 2020 has highlighted seafarers' exceptional contribution as key and essential workers, on the front line of delivering world trade through a pandemic and in ordinary times.

The IMO Council, meeting for its thirty-second extraordinary session held by correspondence, endorsed the theme following a proposal by IMO Secretary-General Kitack Lim.

The theme will provide flexibility to the Secretariat, Member States and NGOs in consultative status to focus on seafarers as the people at the heart of shipping, while also allowing for activities to delve into specific topics relevant to the role of the seafarer in safety, maritime security, environmental protection and seafarers' well-being; and the future of seafaring against a backdrop of increased digitalization and automation.

Mr. Lim said that the COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated, more than ever, that it is crucially important to ensure the functioning of the global supply chains and the facilitation of the safe and efficient operation of maritime transport. “Through these difficult times, the international community has seen how the ability for shipping services and seafarers to deliver vital goods, including medical supplies and food, has been central to responding to, and eventually overcoming, this pandemic. This could not happen without the professionalism and dedication of the world’s seafarers,” Mr. Lim said.

Seafarers have always been at the heart of everything IMO does. IMO has addressed training of seafarers, put the human element at the heart of the development of new regulations or amendments and recognized seafarers' contribution to shipping and world trade through the annual Day of the Seafarer campaign. In 2020, the tenth iteration of the Day of the Seafarer campaign took on the theme "Seafarers are key workers".

The World Maritime theme for 2021 also links to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - particularly SDG 4 on education and training; SDG 8 related to decent work; SDG 9 on innovation and industry, which links to the promotion of a resilient maritime sector; and SDG 5 on gender equality, linked to efforts to promote seafaring as a career for all, including women, in particular.

Moreover, the theme can be viewed as an extension of the theme for 2020, namely "Sustainable Shipping for a Sustainable Planet" as seafarers are at the core of that theme, as well. (From IMO Press Briefings)
How do seafarers get by in time of pandemic

Sailing Forward catches up with some AMOSUP members who either got stuck on board their respective ships or stranded ashore during lockdowns imposed in many cities worldwide due to COVID-19

Francisco Montinola, Boatswain

“I’m still on board and already finished my contract but cannot sign off due to lockdown in Asia and Europe (as of writing). For our safety, we avoid shore leave during port stay.

Wala pa kami balita sa crew change. Baka maabutan pa kami hanggang June. (No news for crew change yet. We might as well stay till June.)

Halos lahat kami dito on board extended contract. May nauna pa nga sa akin noong March pa sila dapat umuw. Pati ang mga officer dito sa barko namin lahat expired na ang kontrata, pero hanggang ngayon wala pa rin silang balita sa crew change.

(Almost all of us here on board have extended contract. There were those ahead of me who were supposed to be home in March.)

Menillo Calderon, OIC Navigation

“I’m currently on board MV Belitaki, a Liberian-flagged vessel managed by a Greek company based in Piraeus. My contract was supposed to have ended last March 2020. So, I made a request letter to the company through the shipmaster for early repatriation in March. I was hoping that I can attend the college graduation date of my niece and nephew.

Unfortunately, I was not able to sign off due to travel restrictions brought on by the coronavirus pandemic. Until now I’m still on board waiting for my company to arrange our crew change. However, Manila is still lockdown, with no chances not only for me but for other crew who have finished their contract as well. We want to go home.

Now we are stranded on the vessel here in Spain while at anchor. The pandemic also affected the market as we have no charterer. At this time we are waiting for a charterer to resume our voyage, but unfortunately there is no update from the company yet. Numerous vessels are drifting at anchorage nearby.

I’m eager to be repatriated as early as possible, especially this time as there is no reason for me to stay on board for long. We’ve been sailing to various ports, and we’re prone to catch the virus especially for the deck crew as we encountered different people such as the stevedores working to lash and unlash our container cargoes. We do not know whether these people are positive to coronavirus. As deck crew, we are prone to catch the virus if we do not take extra care while facing these people.

We are 21 officers and crew on board. I fear that once a crewmember gets the virus, he will contaminate the entire ship’s personnel. This is why I want to go back home as soon as possible. For me money can be found anywhere on land if you know how to make it. You can run a small business while waiting for the next contract until this COVID-19 totally disappears. For now seafaring is my plan B, while entering into business is my plan A.”

Arnel Untal, Second Officer

Our cruise was in Antarctica. We started 08 November 2019 and supposed to end cruising on 07 April 2020. But it was shortened to March 16 due to COVID-19. Two cruises to Antarctica got cancelled. Bago ang barko namin. (Our ship is newly built). It has a warranty from the shipyard that has to be released. Kelangan munang umuw naming mga crew (The crew have to go home yet), except for the two officers who have to supervise the ship.

Ibinaba namin ang mga pasahero sa Argentina. (We disembarked the passengers in Argentina). The crew signed off and flew to Chile where they were quarantined for nearly two months before health authorities allowed us to leave. Others were not lucky to depart as lockdown caught them up. They stayed there for a month.

Lay-up na po kami (Our ship had been laid up since). We may resume operation in August.”
Noel Gabrido, Shipmaster

“So far, life on board remains the same during the pandemic. My crew still work hard and in high spirit. Though we need to impose rules for our safety and while ashore, we cannot prevent shore people to keep on coming on board to continue operation for loading and unloading crude oil.

Regarding the supply of food and fuel, we don’t have any problem at all. But the supply of ship spares are sometimes delay. These spare parts normally come from Korea, Japan and China. Delays are apparently due to transport restrictions as many cities are on lockdown and flights are unavailable.

Crew change has not been available at the moment. Well, we are lucky being on board because our family continuously receive the allotment. The chief engineer and third officer have their contracts extended for another month, while shore leave is not allowed except on emergency.”

Margie Daniot, Cruise cabin stewardess

“I embarked to join our brand new Ponant Cruises ship, Le Bellot, as part of a pre-opening team last 23 February 2020. However, last March 14, the captain announced to send us home due to the pandemic. I know it was not easy for management to come up with such a decision at these very difficult times.

After hearing this, I felt frightened and got worried about my financial status and the debt to be paid as I am the only one raising up my two children. But despite the feeling, I prayed that I needed to survive and let God handle everything for these trying times. I hope I can survive and manage to conquer this pandemic. I disembarked last 16 March 2020. If I’m not mistaken I was the first batch (in our company) who flew back to the Philippines and yes, up to now I’ve never seen my children yet in Cebu.

I can’t go home due to extended lockdown. I’ve been stranded in Clark in Angeles, Pampanga up to this time (30 May). During this pandemic, we have learned that time is very essential. We must stay strong and be healthy. We are lucky to be given another chance to be with our children and our loved ones.

For now, I am facing major difficulties of how I am going to survive as no one could tell when this pandemic would end. Until when can we resume to work. For some reasons I am very happy and thankful enough that my manning agency and the principal showed their generosity in assisting us in our needs, a big thumbs up for them for accommodating us in spite of their busy time at work and at home just to answer our queries.

Now that we stay home, I think we have lots of things that we can do. We all know that we humans are not perfect, but for the sake of our family, we also need to do our part. We all know that there are some people that are not taking this problem seriously.

I hope and pray for all the safety of humanity. I know in my heart that we can win this battle, for as long as we fight as one together.

Wendy Caneo, Third Engineer

“I just signed up for an extension of contract for another month. We are in Barcelona en-route to Malta. It seemed this has become the norm for those who have been caught by lockdown in many cities whilst on board: extended contract! Kahit ayaw pumirma wala naman kaming magagawa dahil hinirang na kami kayang pauwi. (Even if we don’t want to sign up, we can’t do anything since they can’t just send us home.)

I was about to be relieved by mid-March and when it was almost there, lockdown was just imposed by one country after another due to COVID-19. I thought it’s unfair at first, but then as the COVID-19 stats get worsened by the day, it became so scary that I would rather prefer to stay for a few more weeks or months than take the risk of getting infected on the way home. Besides, as much as I want to be with my family, I think getting stuck on board is much better than in at home under ECQ (enhanced community quarantine) for the meantime.

I would sometimes think about what if I were stuck on the way out of the country to join a ship. Normally during such time, my earnings get almost exhausted and I won’t have enough to survive a few more months with no job.

Seafarers may have some properties but they devalue during crisis. I hope everyone realises this among the many lessons this pandemic is teaching us. Saving up is very important.”
This pandemic has shown the best and worst of humanity. That’s how the ITF perceives the grand contrast between government and employers, alongside maritime unions, on the global repatriation of thousands of seafarers from the cruise industry.

“On the one hand, we’ve seen governments shamefully shutting their doors to seafarers as port states, transit countries and even their home countries when governments should have done everything within their power to get seafarers on cargo and cruise ships home. On the other hand, this pandemic has shown the best of unions and many employers who have tried their hardest for their seafarers in really difficult circumstances,” said Dave Heindel, chair of the Seafarers’ Section at the ITF.

The global federation has nothing but respect and admiration for the seafarers. “These are people who simply went to work and found themselves trapped aboard what some seafarers came to call their ‘floating prisons’, unable to come ashore even for a walk. We thank these seafarers for their patience and fortitude through an incredibly difficult time,” said Heindel.

He stressed that some seafarers have been overwhelmed by the situation, whilst some have tragically taken their own lives out of desperation. “We are deeply saddened by these events, and although most of us have never experienced a situation like theirs, we feel for them and their families. Seafarers deserve solidarity and respect from the public for what they’ve endured during this pandemic,” he added.

The operational scale needed to get almost 250,000 seafarers home from cruise ships on a global scale may be extremely difficult. But the ITF family of maritime unions has been working round the clock since March to coordinate visas, flights and travel exemptions for seafarers to get home to their families.

It is estimated that around 300,000 seafarers remain trapped, working over their contracts on board cargo vessels by as much as 16 months, well over their expected eight or nine months.

“This number is growing day-by-day. The answer here is simple: Governments have to make practical exemptions to restrictions on seafarers’ travel and transit so that we can see a return to functional crew changes. It is imperative that we get these hundreds of thousands of seafarers off their ships after their contracts have expired, just as we did in the cruise industry,” said Heindel. Johan Øyen, the chair of the ITF’s Cruise Ship Task Force, says the combined efforts represent a major humanitarian success.

“We commend the cruise lines and those governments which have worked with the cruise lines to achieve the repatriation of nearly a quarter of a million seafarers from these ships. This has required tremendous logistical coordination,” said Øyen.
He noted, “This success has occurred despite governments, including flag and port states, failing to live up to their legal and human rights obligations under international law. Not only was it morally wrong for states to refuse seafarers the ability to come ashore in order to get home, it was also illegal. We will be looking at what kind of enforcement mechanisms are required to prevent states from shirking their responsibilities in the future.”

Despite the challenges, majority of the cruise industry has worked to achieve this result. Øyen stressed that the ITF and its affiliated unions “look forward to working cooperatively with the industry to ensure recovery plans and the restart of operations coincide with an open conversation on how to improve the working and living conditions of seafarers on board.”

He concedes the ITF is concerned at reports that a number of Covid-19 outbreaks have occurred on cruise ships, although at least one of these outbreaks is believed only to have happened due to important procedures not having been followed prior to the voyage.

“Cruising should only happen again when adequate health and safety measures are in place and are followed, and commitments are made from cruise location countries that they will allow seafarers shore leave and ashore for medical assistance and crew change as required. Cruise lines need to learn from the mistakes many of them made early in this pandemic to ensure safe work environments for seafarers,” asserted Øyen.

He said the ITF hopes “the global community will take note of the suffering of the seafarers left for months on board waiting to get home, and pay due respects to those seafarers. They are heroes of this pandemic.”

As the global cruise industry and seafarers’ unions near completion of the repatriation of almost 250,000 seafarers, the federation warns that there are challenging times ahead for the industry and its workforce. The ITF and its affiliated unions represent much of the global cruise ship workforce. The federation and the unions have actively supported the return of tens of thousands of seafarers in all categories from catering, hospitality staff, and entertainers to deck and engine crew, who were left stranded aboard cruise vessels across the globe as Covid-19 struck and governments shut their borders.
Collective accord remains vital to cruise shipping

ITF Cruise Ship Task Force chairman Johan Oyen tackles the importance of collective agreements and the significant job share of Filipino seafarers in cruises before the pandemic halted cruise operations, writes Andy Dalisay.

The COVID-19 pandemic has sent big international cruise lines to the waters of Manila that made the city’s famous Bay a vast park for their enormous fleets.

But this rendezvous of the cruises did not bring in foreign tourists normally ferried by buses to various destinations ashore. Instead, the cruise lines disembarked thousands of Filipino seafarers after undergoing quarantine in their respective ships.

The seafarers mainly comprised the cruise lines’ hotel and catering staff who were fulfilling people’s dreams of travel and good time before the global health crisis. Cruising, next to cargo shipping, is one of the segments in the maritime industry many Filipinos have opted to pursue.

The ITF Cruise Ship Task Force (CSTF) notes that the Filipinos are one of the leading contingents in the fleets’ hotel and catering department, comprising nearly a third of the industry’s current cruise employment. “It is very significant,” CSTF chairman Johan Oyen told Sailing Forward, referring to the Philippine deployment. Before the pandemic, Filipinos made up the 81,000 cruise personnel of the total 280,000 seafarers who had worked on the world’s cruises, according to CSTF in its 3Q 2019 figures.

As the pandemic grounded operations of major cruises since mid-March 2020, the manning sector is anxious of the employment impact as members of the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) are set to resume sailings in 4Q this year. Meantime, unions and shipowners continue to operate on agreements collectively negotiated between the labour sector and employers. Hence, the seafarers are expected to work on the perennial terms of contracted jobs with the aid of the collective bargaining agreements (CBAs).

Oyen, who is also a senior adviser on cruise ships at the Norwegian Seafarers’ Union (NSU), says Filipinos working on cruises where NSU holds collective agreements are also covered by AMOSUP CBA. Working relations between AMOSUP and NSU commenced in the 1980s when they initially covered crewmembers on deck and engine departments. The partnership slowly moved up from “partial cooperation” to the level of a full partnership with the inclusion of the hotel and catering side, according to Oyen.

It’s a large segment when it comes to the number of CBAs, but too low in terms of fleet size. Oyen says the ITF and its affiliates cover more than 12,000 FOC vessels with only 320 of cruises within collective agreements. He points out that most of the large cruise vessels are covered by CBA except the 26 ships operated by Carnival Cruise Line, and maybe another five or six, two of which operate out of the USA and the others in China.

Despite the CBA, Oyen said there are still malpractices that exist in cruise operations. However, he pointed out that it’s not to a great...
extent. "There will always be some issues in an industry that employs around 350,000 seafarers yearly," he stated.

The terms and conditions including wages are normally negotiated every two or three years where "some improvements" normally take place, the CSTF chair explained. The cruise sector, along with other segments, has achieved a list of changes in employment.

For instance, the recent mandatory pregnancy testing amongst women, whose gender represents a big number of crew in cruises, has been considered a sexist discrimination. The NSU has campaigned on this issue and is pleased that progress is being made following the International Labour Organisation’s legal office's declaration to stop the requirement. "It’s a message female seafarers deserve to hear loud and clear," the NSU said.

The list of changes in the CBA and the parameters of various issues are tackled in the ITF's Miami Guidelines, which is undergoing its second revision since the ITF Congress endorsed the document in 1994. It sets guidelines for ITF affiliated unions in negotiation on cruise agreements, which include acceptable terms, conditions, procedures, and wages.

Oyen believes that education and skills are the key challenges being faced by crewmembers of the cruise lines hotel and catering department. "The industry needs a lot of additional seafarers in going forward regardless of gender or nationality. They have equal chances for employment as long as they have the right skills," he stressed, adding that learning and upgrading individual skills will be needed to advance in the field.

According to Oyen, even the advent of automation or autonomous shipping would not be a concern. "It is hard to see that it can affect an industry that earns its living fulfilling people's dreams of travel and having a good time," Oyen noted.

As part of a training initiative of the cruise crew, ITF affiliates participate in the cruise trade union seminars being held in select countries. Oyen said they do this to teach seafarers about the various conventions and regulations that affect their working environment and employment conditions.

NSU and AMOSUP, for instance, regularly hold seminar workshops yearly that cover topics such as financial planning, bullying and harassment, the dangers of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, and of course, CBA issues. They used to have a spectrum of cruise crew in different positions attending the workshops.

The CSTF chairman sees a bright future having all cruise ships under CBA coverage, whether they are river, coastal, ocean or expedition vessels.

**Oyen: Permanent employment for seafarers**

Johan Oyen worked on ships for several years before joining the Norwegian Seafarers’ Union (NSU) in 1983. He sailed on various types of vessels that include a bulk carrier, parcel tanker, ferry and cruise ships.

He was a member of the Group Management Board of Klosters Rederi, the then owners of the Norwegian Caribbean Lines (now Norwegian Cruise Line) for four years before they opened the Miami office of NSU. The Norwegian Union has been involved in cruise union operation since the start of modern cruises in the mid-1960s.

Oyen says he simply likes the negotiating part of the job. This want began from the very start when he attended a round of negotiations in covering the catering crew of NCL and Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines. To this day, he still likes playing the same role, "until today when I give a hand to any ITF affiliate who asks for help and sometimes when they don’t," he shared.

He is proud to be part of a growing industry and to be able to help seafarers and their families to gain a better life. He wants to help seafarers have their "permanent employment", but he knows it will take time to achieve the goal.

However, Oyen believes cruise operators are practically equal opportunity employers, saying they employ their crew based on their skills and abilities, not on preference for gender, sex or nationality.
Cases of seafarers downing tools have hit ships in ports as a result of the worsening crew change crisis during this pandemic.

Three merchant vessels docked at Australian ports whose crew refused to keep sailing in bids for repatriation last August. The container ship Conti Stockholm and the bulker Ben Rinnes became the latest tonnage to be idle and blocked berths due to over-contract crew. They enforced their right to refuse to sail indefinitely from Western Australia and Victoria, according to the International Transport Workers’ Federation.

The incidents follow the same fate of another bulk carrier Unison Jasper, which had been held up in July at New Castle, NSW as the owner awaited a relief crew. The Jasper was carrying alumina to a smelting plant when authorities detained in the port of New Castle following allegations that the crew were abused, intimidated and forced to sign contract extensions which would have kept them on board for up to 14 months, well beyond the legal maximum of 11 months.

The Liberian-flagged Conti Stockholm’s Romanian, Chinese, Sri Lankan, Filipino and Polish crew had been on board for longer than the legal maximum, and have a right to stop working under the Maritime Labour Convention, according to the ITF. “They have the right to stop working at completion of their contracts and be returned home at the employers’ expense,” said the ITF.

The global federation believes governments failures to introduce
effective crew change system have directly led to more seafarers working beyond their contract and taking matters into their own hand to get home. The Marshall Islands-flagged Ben Rinnes, which has been chartered to load soy product for Cargill, was stopped at the Victorian port of Geelong after initially four, then five, of the crew told the ITF that they wanted to be repatriated following expiry of their contracts. All of the Ben Rinnes crew who have taken a stand to get off have been on board above the legal maximum, except for just one, who will go beyond the 11 month limit within the next 30 days at the time.

One of the crew was said to have been more than 17 months on board. The ITF was told that the crew signed five-month extensions after their nine-month tour, on a promise from the owners to repatriate them.

Dean Summers, the ITF Australia coordinator, said the global federation and its affiliate Maritime Union of Australia were answering the call of seafarers who are exercising their human right to stop working once their contracts have finished.

“The crew of these two ships have bravely stood up and said that they will not be leaving these ports to do another tour of duty on what amount to floating prisons. They have finished the contracts they signed up for, and now they are getting off,” said Summers, stressing that it was not the crew’s fault that governments like Australia are so profoundly disinterested over the last five months “to find a way to get international seafarers to and from our ports.”

He was referring to crew change crisis in which tired seafarers had to simply resort to exercising their human rights to get off their ships and be home with their family. The ITF coordinator insisted that “if Australia is happy to continue benefiting from global trade, from sending exports overseas and receiving essential goods, then Australia can’t treat the seafarers who ship those goods like our slaves.”

Summers hinted that the three ships were “just the tip of the iceberg” as many ports globally became inaccessible for crew change for the last five months. He said “you can expect to see more and more crews decide to drop anchor and get off in Australia.

“The crew change crisis is mounting, but so is the courage of seafarers to stand up and fight back. What you’ll find is that they’ll be saying they are getting off – whether or not the bureaucrats and politicians have their shit together,” concluded Summers. SF
A milestone for Anglo Eastern

Anglo Eastern Shipmanagement has surpassed the incredible milestone of 10,000 crew movements worldwide during this pandemic.

That’s more than 5,000 joiners and off-signers each across 700+ vessels, Anglo Eastern said in one of its recent posts on social media. By nationality, the shipmanager relieved or signed-on over 7,000 Indian seafarers, nearly 2,000 Filipinos, about 1,000 Ukrainians and Latvians, and more than 200 crew of Chinese or other nationality.

“The journey has been far from easy. We have had to contend with lockdowns, travel restrictions, commercial flight limitations, testing/quarantine requirements, bureaucracy, and other challenges – many of which still persist today, as countries waver between relaxing and (re)tightening their crew change policies,” according to the company.

But for now, it wants to celebrate this exceptional milestone and continue to push for crew changes and ‘key worker’ status for seafarers. Anglo Eastern extends its gratitude to its “professional family of dedicated seafarers and exceptionally hardworking, committed team of fleet personnel staff,” for achieving this milestone.

Cruise line completes crew repatriation efforts

Carnival Cruise Line reported that a number of countries, including the Bahamas, Barbados, Colombia, Curacao, Mexico, Panama, St. Maarten and Nicaragua, have all assisted in the repatriation effort of its crew through seaport operations. The countries also helped facilitate the seafarers’ safe and efficient transfer via chartered and commercial aircraft and ground transportation.

Panama, for example, permitted the transfer of crew across the Isthmus between two of the company’s cruise ships. In the Bahamas, the company said 18 Carnival vessels made a rendezvous to sail nine of the ships to repatriate more than 10,000 crew members who remained on board due to restrictions limiting air travel to Asia, Africa, India, Europe and Latin America.

Carnival said it is in the final stages of repatriating its crew members. More than 26,000 crew members have been sent home from the cruise line’s 26 ships. The process of returning crew home has included sending ships to Northern Europe, the Mediterranean, South Africa, India, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

By July 20, Carnival expects to have less than 400 crew members remaining on board its cruise ships awaiting repatriation. For most of these seafarers, they are waiting for their home country’s borders to open up or travel restrictions to be eased.
**Unions reach out to airlines**

Maritime unions have reached out to airlines to expedite the processes of seafarers’ repatriation and send relievers to the ships.

The ITF, AMOSUP and Associated Philippine Seafarers Union (APSU) have advised that an airline initially signalled the intent to deploy a regular number of daily flights in and out of Manila, Cebu and Clark international airports to Doha, Qatar provided that the Philippine government agrees with the initiative.

The temporary launch of humanitarian shuttle flights to and from these airports would substantially increase capacity to allow for crew changes, said a letter to President Rodrigo Duterte signed by ITF General Secretary Stephen Cotton, AMOSUP President Conrado Oca, and APSU President Michael Mendoza.

Qatar Airways, which acceded to the travel plan, “could provide appropriate number of daily flights, as many as three per day, and ensure that we can tackle the backlog in a realistic time frame.” The flight arrangement, however, requires approval from the Philippine government as this is beyond the “usual bilateral framework” between the two countries, the union leaders said.

Fathi Atti, senior vice president - aero-political and corporate affairs - at Qatar Airways, was a co-signatory to the unions’ request to the country’s chief executive. The unions along with the shipowners aim to collaborate with the Philippine government as long as the testing procedures for COVID-19 are in place, with sufficient tests and facilities and sufficient ground transport established for seafarers to move safely from their homes to testing facilities and then to the airports.

Travel restrictions due to pandemic led to current cap on passenger arrival and departure in the country’s airports. Scarcity of flights to make crew change has derailed seafarers’ repatriation and deployment.

The unions stressed their willingness to work with government to “deploy an interim procedure that would allow us the opportunity to constructively resolve this challenging situation.”

**IMEC launches travel bulletin**

In an attempt to assist in the movement of merchant mariners, the International Maritime Employers’ Council (IMEC) has launched a travel bulletin for seafarers of its member shipping companies.

IMEC said the new “travel bulletin board”, which can be accessed via its “COVID-19” tab on the IMEC website, will hold details of any charter flight for crew change arranged by the council’s membership and enable a wider visibility of travel opportunities.

They can visit the website www.imec.org.uk to access the “Covid19” dedicated section, which also includes useful documents, protocols and links.

“Due to the lack of commercial flights to enable effective crew changes,” IMEC said, “this tool has been created for our website and will be updated with flights arranged by our membership to provide up to date access to vacant seats.”

IMEC is the only international employers’ organisation dedicated to maritime employers’ industrial relations. Established over 50 years ago, the group operates from offices in Hampshire, UK and Manila, Philippines, representing over 250 shipping companies worldwide.
Joining ship in drydock during pandemic

C/E Mark Philip Laurilla recounts his crew change and travel experience signing on for his next vessel in Istanbul, Turkey in this difficult time.

It’s been 15 months since I signed off from my previous ship. I took a long break for a few personal projects, most of which I accomplished but because of the pandemic there were a few things I didn’t get to finish. Now my vacation time is over and I have to join my ship for another tour of duty.

But the current situation around the world made things a little bit more complicated. I’ve been a seafarer for over 20 years. As always leaving my family and being away for months has been the hardest things I have to face in this profession. If you think it gets easier as time goes by, well, it doesn’t.

But I have long accepted this fact, along with the other situations that seafarers have to go through. One of those is the difficulty of air travel on joining and signing off the ship. Under normal circumstances flying to the country where your ship is, always involves a lot of effort. But now because of the pandemic additional requirements were set in place.

Most prominent is the wearing of face mask and social distancing as a minimum of protection against the spread of the virus. In an ideal scenario this will be strictly implemented. But apparently things were not as ideal as we wanted them to be. On board the plane there’s not much difference from flight before covid-19. Except the plane crew, everyone had to put on a face mask.

From Manila, it’s the first of three flights we were booked for, and after four hours we landed at Incheon International Airport in South Korea, where we waited for eight hours before our connecting flight. It was quite a long wait as it’s the only available schedule. I’ve been to Incheon Airport for a couple of times before. It was usually a busy airport. But because of the pandemic there was only a few people. It was like a ghost town. While the shops were all open, no one’s shopping.

Due to the limited number of flights going to and from South Korea, there were very few passengers. And so we passed by shops with no shoppers. We reached our boarding gate where we intended to kill time mainly using the internet and having a meal.

On our next flight to Qatar the airline strictly enforced social distancing. There was a few passengers aboard and space in between seats. Passengers were supplied with face shields they wear for the whole flight. The flight from Korea to Doha took a grueling 10 hours. I tried to sleep but managed to douse off occasionally during the flight.
At the Doha International Airport it was usually one of the busiest but there’s not many people where we stayed for about two hours. After breakfast we boarded another plane to Istanbul, Turkey. For our third flight, although facemasks and face shields were still required but social distancing was not observed. And after 4.5 hours we reached our destination – Istanbul.

Since we started travelling the previous day at 0700H, it’s been 34.5 hours since I left the house, waiting for our agent to pick us up at the airport going to the ship. Eventually, our agent came and assisted us through immigration, and after retrieving our luggage we hopped onto the bus and enjoyed the view on the way to our ship. After about two hours we finally caught a glance of our ship. We were schedule to sign on while it is on drydock. So, we were expecting to hit the ground fighting, so to speak.

It was not an ideal situation, but during this pandemic flights are very limited and there are only a few countries which allow crew change. Luckily, Turkey was one of those, and it was a stroke of luck that our ship was going there for drydock.

A lot of seafarers are stranded on board with expired contract and a lot of them have been stuck on board for more than a year. On the other hand, the ones who are supposed to relieve them are stuck at home with no source of income. I guess we got lucky that everything fell into place. And our company made the effort to conduct crew change in this very difficult time. I for one am thankful that we made it into our ship without any incident.

Upon coming aboard I was greeted by a familiar face. On board, I proceeded to my temporary cabin. The ship will be staying in drydock for a week. And while the incumbent chief engineer has still to disembark, I will be berthed in the temporary spare officer’s cabin.

As a precautionary measure before we went to dinner and mingled around with other crew on board we had to change our clothes and put them in a plastic bag with the “bio-hazard” symbol. Yes, our clothes are considered bio-hazard materials. [1]

“...

It was not an ideal situation, but during this pandemic flights are very limited and there are only a few countries which allow crew change.
The country’s crewing industry has appealed to the government to help save the jobs of hundreds of thousands of Filipino seafarers who risk the threat of unemployment since the coronavirus swept across the world.

Since January 2020, deployment of sea-based workers has been falling monthly compared with last year. Due to strict lockdown and quarantine protocols, the industry faced tremendous backlog in crew changeover amidst pressure from shipowners to comply with the new requirements.

Licensed manning agents and their shipowners have been required the sole obligation to pay all board and lodging expenses of seafarers held in quarantine after repatriation to the Philippines. These additional quarantine costs translate to an estimated $700 incremental cost for each repatriated crew.

With about 35,000 Filipino seafarers expected to come home every month as global borders open up and commercial flights start operating, the additional cost to the manning agents and shipowners will be staggering, seafaring industry officials said.

What appears to be forgotten by the government is the importance of supplying replacement crew. “Our principals might be compelled to look for replacements in other manpower source countries such as Eastern Europe, Vietnam, Myanmar, Indonesia, India, and China, where repatriation quarantine costs are shouldered by their government and not passed on to the shipowners/principals,” private manning industry and seafarers unions told Department of Labour and Employment Secretary Silvestre Bello III in a letter.

To help the Filipino seafarers stay afloat, the industry appeals to the DOLE chief “for your reconsideration, stop the implementation of DO 211-A,” the new DOLE provision that imposes crew quarantine-related expense upon the employers.

“Losing even just 30% of these ratings and cruise personnel to other nationalities will translate to about 140,000 jobless Filipino seafarers,” according to manning associations and maritime unions. Manning agents are of the opinion that the Philippine government should be the one who should shoulder the costs just like in other countries.

The crewing associations include the Joint Manning Group (JMG), Filipino Association for Mariners’ Employment (FAME), International Maritime Association of the Philippines (INTERMAP), Philippines-Japan Manning Consultative Council (PJMCC), Masters and Mates Association of the Philippines (MMAP), and the Philippine Assembly of Marine Engineers (PAME).

They pointed out that the department order is a “man-made yet (an) avoidable calamity that will have a devastating impact on our economy and on allied businesses that depend on manning activities.” These allied businesses are training centres, medical clinics, banks, licensed manning agencies, and even government agencies such as SSS, Philhealth, PAG-IBIG and OWWA which are all dependent on contributions from the members.

They said the tremendous impact of the sea-based job losses will be to the 700,000 Filipino families relying on the seafarers. “Equally important, the Philippines will lose the respect of the foreign shipowners/principals who are much concerned why our government imposed on them DO 211-A which stand on weak legal grounds if not outright confiscatory.”

The industry also requests DOLE to allocate PhP6.52 billion, a supplemental budget from Congress to cover the PhP2.8 billion reimbursement to the manning agents for the seafarers’ board and lodging expenses during quarantine, and the estimated PhP3.72 billion quarantine cost of repatriating seafarers for the next three months.

To address other issues related to saving the seafaring industry, the manning sector in a recent virtual press conference also called on the government to issue policies that would ease backlog on crew repatriation and deployment.

This recourse aims at increasing the current passenger cap of 3,000 for departures and arrivals in the country’s airports and open additional ports where crew change can take place. Subic Freeport and a port in Bataan have been established as alternative venue for crew change from the congested...
port of Manila, where more than 700 ships have deviated for the sole purpose of crew change over the last three months (ending August).

To help Filipino mariners travelling or joining ports abroad, the industry also requests the Department of Foreign Affairs to help arrange for the relaxation of visa requirements for seafarers. They said the DFA can reach out to their foreign counterparts, in Europe for instance, “we call for Schengen visas to be issued once the seafarer arrives at the destination country.” They’ve lamented the difficulty of securing these visas as consular offices closed and travel restrictions complicated things resulting in further delays.
Crew change timeline

Below is a timeline leading to the resolution and appeal of maritime unions led by ALU, AMOSUP and APSU-TUCP to President Rodrigo Duterte to help save the Philippine seafaring industry through the needed directives from the Inter Agency Task Force (IATF) and other state agencies involved in ensuring necessary crew protocols for seafarers to board their ships on time.

• 16 March 2020 – President Rodrigo Duterte declares a national emergency in the Philippines because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

• 27 March – The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) issues a circular letter that called on governments to recognise seafarers as “key workers”.

• 23 April – The Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) issues a board resolution recommending that seafarers be recognised as key workers and pledging to establish crew change protocols.

• 05 May – The IMO calls on governments through circular no. 4204/Add.14 to establish crew change protocols to release tired crew from their ships and replace them with new ones.

• 13 May – The IATF-EID issues a resolution recognising the plight of OFW – seafarers included – by directing all government agencies to fast-track the processing of their employment documents during the health crisis.

• 13 May – The International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) and the Joint Negotiating Group (JNG) highlight the seriousness of the crew change situation through a joint statement welcoming the IMO initiative, and thereby calling all states to act promptly, and set a deadline of 15 June for the transition to new crew change protocols.

• 22 May – The secretary generals of International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), International Labour Organisation (ILO) and IMO send joint statement seeking to ensure that seafarers, marine personnel, fishing vessel personnel, offshore agency, aviation personnel, service providers personnel at airports and seaports are designated as key workers regardless of nationality, to exempt from travel restrictions to ensure their access to emergency treatment, and if necessary, to facilitate emergency repatriation.

• 29 May – The Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) reports to the House Committee on OFW Affairs that the country had established crew change protocols pursuant to a MARINA Board Resolution.

• 12 June – The spokesman for the United Nations general secretary likewise issues its own call on all countries to formally designate seafarers and other marine personnel as “key workers” and ensure key changes that crew change can safely take place.

The maritime unions reported the difficulty in effecting crew change despite the designation of seafarers as “key workers”, which should have the effect of granting seafarers the necessary and appropriate exemptions from national travel or movement restrictions to facilitate their joining or leaving ships.

The unions include the Associated Labor Unions President Gerard Seno, AMOSUP President Dr Conrado Oca, Associated Philippines Seafarers Union-TUCP President Michael Mendoza, and Port Workers Union of the Philippines President Roberto Oca. SF

Source: ITF affiliated unions’ resolution to help save the Philippine seafaring industry

First for TORM. Copenhagen-based tanker owner and operator TORM is proud to receive its first nine Filipino crew in the Danish capital for crew change during the pandemic last August. The Filipinos, who were welcomed by their colleagues from TORM’s office in Copenhagen, stayed at a designated hotel for seafarers before signing on to one of TORM’s vessels to relieve colleagues.
The International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) and its affiliated unions work together to fight for the rights of all seafarers around the world.

To support seafarers the ITF has a global network of more than 130 inspectors and contacts in 57 countries, who can be called upon to deal with any problems seafarers face. For those areas of the world where no inspector is available, the ITF Seafarers Support team based in the ITF Head Office in London can be contacted.

The Contact details are:

Email  seafsupport@itf.org.uk
SMS  +44 7984 356 573
WhatsApp/Viber  +44 7523 515 097
Facebook  www.facebook.com/itfseafarerssupport

Please remember that when contacting the ITF Seafarers Support team or the ITF Inspectors, you should provide the Name and Flag of the vessel, the IMO number, your current location and full details of the problem or problems you have.

In addition to these contact details the ITF has developed a FREE iOS and Android app called ITF Seafarers. Using this app you can look up vessel details taken directly from the ITF system, find and contact an ITF Inspector or ITF Maritime affiliated union plus much, much more.
The ITF Seafarers’ Trust has launched the “Still At Sea” photography competition for seafarers. Open to currently serving seafarers and with a 1st prize of £1000, the competition invites seafarers to submit digital photos of their lives at sea during the pandemic.

With around 90% of global trade transported by ships, seafarers have continued working throughout the pandemic. However, the impact of travel restrictions, quarantine requirements and the lack of flights have trapped some 300,000 seafarers aboard ship, with many not having been ashore for months on end, let alone going home.

The competition aims to give a voice to these forgotten keyworkers, and show the world the realities of their lives aboard ship as they supply the world with the raw materials, fuel and consumer goods that keep hospitals running and power stations pumping.

Dave Heindel, ITF Seafarers’ Trust Chair of Trustees said, “As Covid-19 has ravaged nations, seafarers have continued working uninterrupted. Many of them have not been ashore for months on end, some for well over a year. A photograph needs no translation to share its story and the Still At Sea competition is a platform for seafarers to show the wider world the realities of life stuck on board.”

Katie Higginbottom, Head of the ITF Seafarers’ Trust said “At the beginning of the pandemic seafarers were relatively safe at sea but worried for their families. However, months have passed, and hundreds of thousands of seafarers are still stuck at sea, their contracts extended well beyond terms that can be considered humane. Still At Sea is a chance for seafarers, hidden but vital global keyworkers, to share a glimpse of their lives to the people who unknowingly rely on them.”

Seafarers are invited to submit their photographs on the competition’s website between now and 30 September 2020. The winning photographs will be announced on the Trust’s Facebook page on 30 October 2020 and digital and physical exhibitions of submissions are planned to follow.

For more information visit the competition website: https://www.itfseafarers.org/en/photo-competition
STILL AT SEA
PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

SHARE WITH US YOUR EXPERIENCE ONBOARD DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

1ST PRIZE: £1,000

OPEN TO ALL SEAFARERS AT SEA

Register and submit your entry here: https://www.itfseafarers.org/en/photo-competition

Closing date: 30 September 2020

Seafarers’ Trust
Ship registry gets its own seafarer welfare app

Isle of Man will be the first flag state to launch the mobile care system that can be accessed by thousands of crews sailing under the Manx register.

The Isle of Man (IoM) Ship Registry is launching its own seafarer welfare app. IOM Ship Registry Director Cameron Mitchell said the app is in the final stages of development and will be available to around 11,000 seafarers sailing on more than 400 ships under the IOM flag.

The introduction of the app is being accelerated to tackle the immense challenges facing seafarers caught in the coronavirus pandemic, said Mitchell, who served as a marine engineer on merchant ships for 17 years.

The app provides structured welfare support for the seafarer from nutritional advice to live interactive support sessions for mental health and fitness. It is an apparent response to shipowners call to find better ways to help and protect seafarers as they embrace digital innovation, said Mitchell, who hopes the app to be “a step forward for the industry.”

IOM, as the first flag state to launch a mobile care system, knew that something was needed to be done to support the crew while at sea even before the pandemic, according to Mitchell, who noted incidents of suicide on board as a result of mental health crisis. “Even before Covid, we recognised that something had to be done that delivered tangible results to help seafarers in the wilderness of the sea.”

Maritime training organisation Tapiit assisted IOM in developing the software and will live stream its support and training sessions via the app.

Tapiit CEO Richard Turner, who has offices in Liverpool and the Isle of Man, said the functionality of the app will be ground-breaking and the range of services and support greater than any app currently available to seafarers.

Turner, who also worked with Shell, said that mental health, in particular, has “always been the key problem area we have sought to tackle, so we are very much on the same wavelength as the IOM.” IOM also got a number of large organisations partnering the app, which it will announce, and as a result will be able to offer support through the app to crew worldwide both on-board ship and in port. He said the app is designed to make seafarers’ lives easier and happier, so it is not a one-off download. Furthermore, he explained that the app can be useful and supportive so it can become part and parcel of what they do each day.

Even before Covid, we recognised that something had to be done that delivered tangible results to help seafarers in the wilderness of the sea.
TO ALL SEAFARERS
FOR DEPLOYMENT
AND MANNING AGENCIES:
PLEASE ALWAYS REMEMBER
AND PRACTICE

S E A

Strictly observe the 14-day Stay-Home Notice (SHN) or Quarantine before deployment
Ensure to undergo the proper COVID-19 RT-PCR test
Always wear PPE while traveling from place of domicile to country of embarkation

Let's work together
to keep our industry safe, and
to keep the jobs of our seafarers.

In cooperation with
ITF Asia Pacific Regional Office

“Need someone to talk to?”

Call AMOSUP Mental Health Hotline
(02) 8241-9465 or (02) 8241-9463

for FREE psychiatric consultation and assessment
Seafarers as key workers: Vital to shipping, to the world

In celebrating the Day of the Seafarer, AMOSUP pays tribute to the contribution of mariners for their crucial role in the flow of goods amidst global pandemic.

AMOSUP paid tribute to all the seafarers across the globe on the Day of the Seafarer, which the industry celebrates every 25th of June.

At the beginning of the ECQ, there were 500 seafarers under the Union’s care at the Sailor’s Home Main and Annex in Intramuros, Manila and over 400 more at the JSU-AMOSUP Mariners Homes (Annex 1, 2 & 3) in Ermita, Manila. Their accommodations and daily subsistence were provided for by JSU and AMOSUP.

“We are in one of the most challenging times of history as the Covid-19 pandemic caught the whole world off-guard. But amidst the crisis, we have witnessed how our seafarers soldier on to continue moving the world trade by transporting essential supplies such as food, fuel, medicines and medical equipment. Indeed, seafarers are key workers: essential to shipping, essential to the world.

This Day of the Seafarer, we want to magnify the invaluable contribution of our seafarers to the world amid the global pandemic as we echo the call of the International Maritime Organisation, the International Labour Organisation, the United Nations Secretary-General, the International Transport Workers Federation and various local and international shipowner and ship manager organisations to “recognise seafarers as key workers – and to provide them with the support, assistance and travel options open to all key workers during the pandemic.

We earnestly acknowledge the trials and tribulations our maritime workers are currently facing— from difficulties in crew changes due to strict lockdown protocols in different countries, unemployment, to the impact of these problems on our workers’ mental health.

We firmly stand with the seafarers in their struggle to overcome these obstacles and we respectfully call on the government, flag and port states, the private sector and all the stakeholders to work with us in solidarity to ensure that our seafarers’ rights are protected and their welfare and wellness prioritised during this time of crisis.”

“Mula sa AMOSUP, taos pusong kinikilala at pinasasalamin ang bawat Pilipinong mandaragat, at ang lahat ng mga marinero sa buong mundo.”

54 Sailing Forward
Seafarer education: What makes a competent trainer?

Dr Angelica Baylon, external relations director at MAAP and an associate fellow of the Nautical Institute Philippines, says there is no limit to the degree of knowledge, quality and experience that can be achieved as a trainer. It is dependent on the trainers’ attitude to move forward exponentially towards lifelong learning.

Seafarers learn that, in passage planning, you must appraise, plan, execute and monitor in order to navigate safely between two points. The same can be said in steering a course towards becoming a competent trainer. To ensure that the knowledge, quality and experience of seafarer trainers is continually moving forward, the maritime industry needs to:

1. **Appraise**: Trainers must know themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, along with any gaps in their knowledge and experience that need to be addressed for their students.

2. **Plan**: Trainers must create their learning and development plan.

3. **Execute**: Trainers must carry out the plan. This is the most difficult but part of the trainer’s responsibilities, however, they must deliver the course as planned.

4. **Monitor**: Trainers need to check the plan if accomplished and to reflect on what went well and what didn’t. They must find ways and means to build their competencies to move forward to being proficient, an expert and/or a master for their students.

“I was but the learner, now I am the master”

Experience and further quality learning are needed to build on a trainer’s competencies. For someone to become a good trainer, one first needs to be a good learner. As a trainee, the rules are given and followed without a sense of responsibility. Once trained as a mentor, the trainers develop the competencies required, and this is characterised by active decision-making when choosing a course of action. But these days just being competent isn’t enough.

IMO has identified minimum competencies as listed on the STCW Convention and Code, and to be promoted to the next level, someone must display greater proficiency above or beyond the minimum required competencies, be it STCW competencies or those related to management leadership. And as technology accelerates, it is very apparent that the competencies required today may not be the same competencies needed for tomorrow.

Based on accumulated qualifications, knowledge, competencies and experiences, a “competent” trainer will move forward from rigid adherence to rules to a more intuitive mode of reasoning. These will be transformed into a proficient trainer (competency + experience), an expert trainer and/or a master trainer. For the competencies of trainers to move to proficiency, expertise and mastery, it must form part of their aspirations, goals and plans.

For success, attitude is equally as important as ability

Based on my observations, experience, and analysis of the
various reading materials found in GlobalMET, IMarEST and Nautical Institute magazines, the following techniques have been summarised for trainers to build up their “COMPENTENCIES”:

C: Complete MET studies, sea experience, training courses, COCs (Minimum requirements) and any related higher level of maritime studies available to build up one’s qualifications.

O: Observe colleagues and take inspiration from others. Be open to new things and learning like the Online-resources (NI, IMAREST, GlobalMET, IMO, AMEA etc.) free manuals, journals, video tutorials, books etc) and/or ask mentors or assessors for feedbacks.

M: Monitor new developments in technology and regulations and prepare to use them effectively in mentoring or in teaching new trends.

P: Plan using various tools such as SWOT analysis and other techniques.

E: Engage in drills and hands on Training to hone proficiency.

T: Train the trainers, by teaching, you will learn more.

E: Encode or document goals and learning activities in a journal so you won’t forget what you have learnt, it is also useful for performance review, reflecting and for future planning for professional development.

N: Never give up even if you fail, learn from the experience and do it better the next time.

C: Create new knowledge through the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Scheme by GlobalMET, NI and IMarEST.

I: Involve and Interact with various like-minded people, experts and role models by being an active member of professional international associations like NI, IMarEST and GlobalMET.

E: Execute the good learning activities. Practice makes perfect.

S: Share your knowledge.

While knowledge and skills will allow the trainers to progress, it is essentially the Trainers’ attitude to act and apply his knowledge, skills and abilities (competency) for the common good. Continuous learning through education (CPD trainings) is a must for trainers regardless of age (young or old) and rank (OS or Captain/Master/Chief Engineer). There is no limit to the degree of knowledge, quality and experience that can be achieved as a trainer. It is dependent on the trainers’ attitude to move forward exponentially towards lifelong learning.
“...It was a stroke of luck that our ship was going there for drydock.”

Chief Engineer Mark Philip Laurilla, upon signing on his next ship in Istanbul since the Turkish capital was one of the few key cities that allows crew change at the time.

“Papasok sa isip mo: paano kapag naging positive ka? Paano ang pamilya mo?” (Sometimes it bothers me: What if I end up positive? What will happen to my family?)

Sailor’s Home Receptionist Merriame Alea, on her anxiety of acquiring the coronavirus while attending to the needs of union members trapped in the union’s dorms on lockdown.

“We’ve seen governments shamefully shutting their doors to seafarers as port states, transit countries and even their home countries, when governments should have done everything within their power to get seafarers on cargo and cruise ships home.”

ITF Seafarers’ Section Chair Dave Heindel, on the grand contrast between governments and employers/unions as the latter’s tried their hardest for their seafarers in these difficult circumstances.

“Crew change is not only about getting crew home, but sending crew safely to their assignments.”

C.F. Sharp Crew Management President Miguel Rocha, on what appears to be lost from the Philippine government departments and agencies which is important in supplying replacement crew.

“Ang sarap ng feeling na alam mong may uuwing tao at mayayakap muli ang kanilang pamilya.” (It feels good knowing you sent somebody home and will hug their families again.)

AMOSUP Legal Officer Henry Zamora, on his experience that moved him assisting seafarers travelling home especially the ones left abandoned by their employers.

“When up to date information isn’t available, it can instill a false hope among the crew.”

V Ships Captain Maria Kristina Javellana, on one of the biggest problems trapped crewmembers face on board while about to go home during this pandemic.

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- Slop Chest - Manila (+63 2) 527 2109
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- Sailor’s Home - Cebu (+63 32) 236 9928
- Slop Chest - Cebu (+63 32) 236 9928
- Seamen’s Hospital - Iligan (+63 33) 321 3523
- AMOSUP-JSU Multi-Purpose Center - Davao (+63 82) 234 7185
- G.O.R. Seamen’s Hospital - Davao (+63 82) 234 7184

Other welfare Facilities in Partnership with Affiliated Union
- JSU-AMOSUP Mariners’ Home Annex
- JSU-AMOSUP Maritime Museum & Sports Complex