Volume 8 - Issue 32

June 2021

SAILING FORWARD

The Official Publication of the Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines

VACCINES ARE HERE!

MARITIME ACADEMY OF ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

KAMAYA POINT BRGY. ALAS-ASIN, MARIVELES, BATAAN, PHILIPPINES
TEL. NO. **(02) 784-9100** FAX **(02) 741-1006** MOBILE NO. **(0917) 533-8263**
Website: **www.maap.edu.ph** E-mail: **info@maap.edu.ph**

COURSES OFFERED:

BSMT	**BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN MARINE TRANSPORTATION**
BSMARE	**BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN MARINE ENGINEERING**
BSMTE	**BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN MARINE TRANSPORTATION AND ENGINEERING**

CENTER FOR ADVANCE MARITIME STUDIES

COURSES OFFERED:

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN MARINE TRANSPORTATION (MARINE SUPERINTENDENT)

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN MARINE ENGINEERING (TECHNICAL SUPERINTENDENT)

TESTING ASSESSMENT CENTER OF TESDA

MAAP Profile

Geographic destiny has given the Filipino the innate talent to ba 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 Seafarer's Union, the International Maritime Employers' Committee, the Danish Shipowners' Association, the Norwegian Shipowners' Association, and the Japan Shipowners' Association.

From the President

Welcome. In the midst of this pandemic our work goes on – our mission to fight for the rights and welfare of our seafarers never ends.

But in spite of the many challenges, as we reach this stage of the global health crisis, we acknowledge our government's efforts to bring collaborations into fruition amongst stakeholders in our call to launch a vaccination program for seafarers. Indeed, we must be aggressive in carrying out the inoculation of our seafarers – the lifeblood of the global shipping industry and our country's economic front liners.

We at AMOSUP stand by our commitment to work in solidarity with the government, the private sector and our social partners to ensure the safety and overall wellbeing of our seafarers.

Extending the Union's hospital services and facilities to the state-led vaccination programme of our officers and crew is just one of the ways we can help.

In this issue, we also tackle the plans and demands of other entities worldwide – both government and private – on the COVID-19 vaccination of merchant mariners. From the IMO to key shipping organisations, the maritime industry has voiced out the call for the inoculation of our seafarers as key workers who have their own needs, constraints and requirements for international travel.

Travel restrictions remain an issue in many parts of the globe that worsened the crew change crisis. We hope that the newly launched Human Rights Due Diligence Tool by the UN would keep owners and charterers from demanding the inclusion of the "no-crew change" clauses in charter parties or voyage instructions, which further delay crew changes.

We also reveal a new study on the so-called "remote rotational workforce" highlighting a number of signs that include high level of suicidal thoughts, clinical depression, impacts on physical health (such as diet) and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the workforce.

Our feature on the efforts of crew managers collaborating in handling such cases reveals a platform of counselling distressed seafarers using specialists to listen up and help crews to get their emotional wellbeing intact.

Our follow through on the worsening pirate attacks in the Gulf of Guinea provides us some sort of a firm conviction into ending the violence in that part of Africa. The largest shipping association's "declaration" to suppress piracy and the recent homecoming of our compatriot crewmen, who were kidnapped last March, provide some of the good news.

More of the good news comes in, with our school taking the second prize in the recent First Philippine HEIs Internalisation Award. The Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific's getting into the top-two amongst the more than 40 competing major universities and colleges nationwide is a testament to our competency in the provision of quality and globally competitive maritime education and training to our cadets as future ship officers.

Competency, which is a hot issue in management system in the maritime industry, leads us to a group of distinguished and knowledgeable professionals who talked all things competency management in a coverage of their panel discussion. Asked how competency management can help prepare people and organisations for tomorrow, the panel shared to us how to successfully implement a competency management system.

Keep on Sailing Forward!

Dr Conrado F [illegible]ca

Sailing Forward is an in-house publication of the Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP)

Leandro G. Dalisay
Editor

Camille A. Simbulan
Deputy Editor

Anna Liza Ibarra
Editorial Coordinator

Ros Veluz
Graphic Artist

Philip Gayag-a
Photographer

Editorial Office
Seamen's Centre
Cabildo cor. Sta Potenciana Sts.
Intramuros, Manila

Tel. Nos. 527 8491 to 98
Email: s_center@amosup.org

www.amosup.org

AMOSUP Board Officers and Members

Dr. Conrado F. Oca
President

VAdmiral Eduardo Ma. R. Santos, AFP (ret.)
Executive Vice President

Capt. Felixberto I. Rebustes
Vice President

Atty. Emmanuel E. Partido
Business Agent

Johnny M. Oca, Jr.
VP for International Affairs

Atty. Jesus P. Sale, Jr.
VP for Internal Affairs

Members (Officers)
Capt. Januario L. Lansang, Jr.
Capt. Emilio T. Saavedra
3/E Emilio T Sevilla, Jr.
C/O Winston S. Concepcion

(Ratings/Unlicensed)
O/S Edilberto I. Tanayan (deceased)
A/B Restituto S. Santillan
PMAN Jerome T. Panim

CONTENTS

6 From the Crow's Nest

9 First vaccination on board ship

10 Victim once again

13 IMO's on fair vaccine distribution for seafarers

14 A vaccination roadmap for seafarers

15 Vaccination for Filipino seafarers to sail again

20 Study unveils the mental health of the remote rotational workforce

22 Dealing with demographics

24 New tool launches to ease crew change crisis

26 UN task force should probe why gov'ts failed to fulfill obligations to seafarers during pandemic

28 DNV targets crew wellbeing

29 Hext on 'No-crew Change' Clauses

ITIC warns on the importance of checking crew for COVID-19 tests

8 Ensure seafarers can get access to COVID-19 vaccine: ILO tripartite

12 Netherlands to vaccinate Filipino seafarers on Dutch-flagged ships

30 Taking care of crew wellbeing

31 Ship, crew managers strengthen their voice in recruitment drive

32 Collaboration on data sharing for a 'human reliability model'

34 A slap in the face for pandemic heroes

36 Social media and recruitment platform for seafarers launches

37 Maersk Etienne crew awarded

17 AMOSUP hospitals to administer COVID-19 jabs for seafarers

38 Queuing up on Suez Canal

40 Do large vessels cause poor reliability?

42 Industry launches 'Declaration on Suppression of Piracy'

44 Ship abandonment on the rise

46 Competency management system: a tool for transformative change?

49 Industry sees more berths on board to train cadets

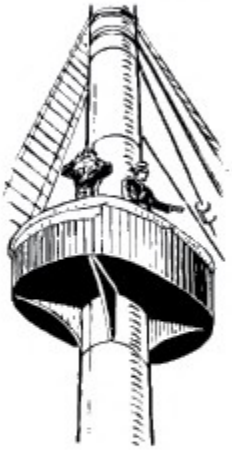
50 MAAP bags award on HEIs Internationalisation Award

52 Members get vaccine on Day of the Seafarer

50 Quote in Action

Cover
Filipino seafarers receive their first jabs against COVID-19 at the launch of nation-wide vaccination for ship officers and ratings on the 'Day of the Seafarer' on 25th June 2021. (Images courtesy of Jesus Sale Jr and Camille Simbulan)

From the Crow's Nest



Shore-to-ship delivery via drone arrives

Eleven industry players showed up at the MDE launch showcasing their cutting-edge drone technologies, engineering systems, additive manufacturing, and communication services that can provide innovative drone solutions for the maritime sector

Image: Singapore Maritime and Port Authority

Shore-to-ship deliveries of maritime essentials via drone technology have arrived in the maritime industry. It will be the next big thing crew managers, ship agents and crewmembers alike may look forward to in terms of quicker response, preventing risks of crew accidents, and lower delivery costs in some ports.

At the world's busiest port of Singapore, for instance, its port authority officially launched the first Maritime Drone Estate (MDE) located near Marina South Pier with close proximity to the anchorages.

The MDE launch last 19th April, which coincided with the Singapore Maritime Week, provided a conducive space to test-bed and develop drone technologies for maritime applications such as shore-to-ship deliveries and remote ship inspections.

At the launch event, Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Transport, Mr Chee Hong Tat, loaded a 3D-printed part into a drone carriage and witnessed the drone deliver its package from the MDE to a vessel at the nearby anchorage.

"Technology has played a pivotal role in helping the maritime sector remain resilient during the COVID-19 pandemic. The launch of the Maritime Drone Estate marks an important milestone in advancing Singapore's journey towards the use of emerging technologies in the maritime sector," Mr Chee said in a statement. He looks forward to "supporting industry partners and growing more start-ups to build a thriving maritime innovation ecosystem."

Eleven industry players showed up at the launch showcasing their cutting-edge drone technologies, engineering systems, additive manufacturing, and communication services that can provide innovative drone solutions for the maritime sector.

The companies present included Airbus, Avetics Global, F-drones, Garuda Robotics, M1, Nova Systems Asia, Skyports, ST Engineering, Thyssenkrupp, Wilhelmsen Ships Service, and Volocopter.

The Maritime and Port Authority (MPA) of Singapore said drone technologies have the potential to transform traditional maritime operations such as shore-ship deliveries and remote inspections of ships and container cranes.

"Innovative applications of drone technologies can bring benefits such as increased productivity, reduced need for manpower and lower costs," MPA stated.

The MDE supports the development of drone applications in the maritime context,

through the provision of a sandbox for the test-bedding of technologies and operations. This sandbox, MPA points out, "is part of their Sea Transport Industry Transformation Map to invest in new port capabilities through harnessing emerging technologies, to build a thriving maritime innovation ecosystem and strengthen Singapore's position as an international maritime centre."

Nine companies have conducted trials at the drone estate during the launch. These included shore-to-ship use cases by companies such as Wilhelmsen and Airbus, Foodpanda and ST Engineering, and F-drones.

Wilhelmsen, which last November launched its autonomous drone delivery of parcels from shore to ship, targeted OSV (offshore supply vessels) and bulk carriers from shore at the Eastern Working and Eastern Holdings with deliveries included spare parts, parcels from shipowners, documents and marine products (e g cutting nozzles, coupling screws, gas hose, welding cables, welding rods, grinding discs).

Wilhelmsen said the unmanned aircraft technology has proven its ability to speed up deliveries, slashing the lead times they typically see on traditional forms of last mile delivery. "With a quicker response rate and turnaround time of up to six times, it has the potential to lower shore-to-ship delivery costs by up to 90% in some ports," the company said.

It added that by replacing launch boat with unmanned autonomous deliveries, the risks of crew accidents to board vessel are significantly mitigated.

During the MDE launch, CWT Aerospace carried out trials using drones for surveillance whilst Avetics Global trialed beyond-visual-line-of-sight (BVLOS) drones for surveillance and remote ship inspection.

In other innovative applications, Airbus and M1 with the support of Infocomm Media Development Authority, are conducting 5G network and technology trials to enable safe and robust maritime drone operations, while Nova Systems Asia tested the use of an unmanned aircraft traffic management system to enable large-scale drone operations. SF

Image: Singapore Maritime and Port Authority

Sing for seafarers' initiative

♫ "I am sailing, I am sailing
Home again, 'cross the sea.
I am sailing stormy waters
To be near you, to be free. ♫

♫ ♫ Can you hear me, Can you hear me?
Through the dark night, far away.
I am dying, forever crying
To be with you, who can say? ♫

Those solitary lines are from the song "Sailing" that was made iconic by British rock-pop singer and record producer Rod Stewart.

Ince, the international commercial law firm, is creating a global choir to record this 1975 hit soft-rock to pay homage to the thousands of seafarers serving on merchant shipping.

"We are excited to launch our 'Sailing: Sing for Seafarers' initiative", by creating a global virtual choir to raise awareness of the critical role seafarers play in all our lives," the law firm said.

Ince's global officers are collaborating with a number of leading maritime charities for the project such as Stella Maris Org, Sailors' Society, The Seafarers' Charity and The Mission to Seafarers, with additional support from Royal Museums Greenwich, International Chamber of Shipping and the UK Chamber of Shipping.

Apart from raising awareness and money to provide ongoing support, the project has included access to vaccine for those stranded seafarers at sea during the pandemic.

It said: "Hundreds of thousands of the world's 1.7 million seafarers and their families continue to be dramatically impacted on a daily basis by the COVID-19 pandemic. With the enormous dawning challenge of offering all seafarers the vaccine, and when some seafarers have been stranded at sea for 21 months or unable to get home to their families for two years, now more than ever we have to make sure our seafarers are not forgotten."

International maritime companies and crews, multi-platinum producer George Shilling, the Ince in-house band and award winning film director Athena Xenidou are also joining the project. SF

Ensure seafarers can get access to COVID-19 vaccine: ILO tripartite

The committee noted that the requirements of the MLC, 2006 apply at all times and that there is no provision that allows them to be suspended under any circumstances

Image: ILO

The International Labour Organisation's Special Tripartite Committee has called for member states to ensure that seafarers are provided with access to COVID-19 vaccination at the earliest opportunity.

A resolution adopted by the Tripartite Committee of the MLC 2006, also mandates members of the mutual acceptance of vaccine certificates including the place and date of issue when in transit to or from their ships and when taking shore leave to protect their health and safeguard their ability to carry out their duties as key workers. The resolution concerns the implementation and practical application of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 during the COVID-19 pandemic adopted in 23 April 2021 after a week-long virtual committee meeting.

It also calls on Members, shipowners and seafarers' and organisations to work jointly to ensure the promotion and respect for seafarers' rights under the MLC, 2006.

Article XIII of the Convention provides that the Governing Body keeps the working of the MLC, 2006 under continuous review through the Special Tripartite Committee. It requests members to consider temporary measures including waivers, exemptions or other changes to visa or documentary requirements that might normally apply to seafarers in accordance with applicable national laws and regulations.

The tripartite committee also requested the ILO to "renew its call on Members to designate and threat seafarers as key workers" and also to call on Members to take all necessary steps to ensure that seafarers: (i) can travel to and from their country or place of residence and their place of work, (ii) can transit between regions and States and within countries for the purposes of taking up employment, being repatriated, or for medical

Image: V Group

care including dental care ashore, (iii) are exempted from quarantine requirements, if any, upon arrival in the jurisdictions in which they join or leave their vessel, except where they test positive for COVID-19.

Other call of renewal of necessary steps to be taken are: That seafarers (iv) can obtain medical care including dental care ashore when required, (i) can obtain shore leave and access to shore-based welfare services, (ii) are permitted to access training necessary for their employment, where it is available, (iii) are not required to stay on board a vessel longer than the period specified in their seafarer's employment agreement without their consent, and under no circumstances for longer than the maximum period of service stipulated by the MLC, 2006.
The tripartite committee also has noted that national requirements for COVID-19 testing and quarantine measures implemented by governments have been applied to seafarers, in many cases disproportionately.

"The ability of shipowners to fulfil many of their duties to seafarers that are imposed on them by the MLC, 2006 depends on the cooperation of States and, in particular, their facilitation of seafarer repatriation, shore leave, transit and access to shore-based welfare services, and medical care including dental care," the resolution said.

It noted that the requirements of the MLC, 2006 apply at all times and that there is no provision that allows them to be suspended under any circumstances.

"In spite of the severe toll that the pandemic has taken on seafarers, they have continued to keep supply lines operational, ensuring the movement of essential food, fuel, medicines, medical equipment, vaccines and all other goods and commodities," they said.

Hundreds of thousands of seafarers have remained impacted more than a year after the declaration by the WHO of a pandemic. Many have lost their employment as a result of the pandemic and the consequent reduction or cessation of their employers' operations, whilst others have suffered poor health or deprivation, leading some to rethink the choice of career, which has implications for the future of shipping.

Many of the control measures by the WHO have caused seafarers all over the world have prevented from exercising their rights to repatriation, maximum periods of shipboard service, shore leave, medical treatment ashore and access to shore-based welfare facilities to which they are entitled under the MLC, 2006, the tripartite committee asserted. SF

Image: V Group

First vaccination on board ship

One of the leading global shipmanagers, V Group, has successfully carried out its first crew COVID-19 vaccination on board ship.

The inoculation of 13 officers and crew of the company's managed vessel, the bulk carrier Cabrera (pictured, left), at the Port Everglades in the USA was the first vessel to give vaccine on board, according to V Group.

"We are grateful to the USA and in particular to the Port Everglades authorities, for identifying the necessityfor seafarers to be vaccinated," the company said in a statement.

It recently wrote to its seafarers explaining that the shipmanager fully supports the vaccination programmes being rolled out by nations across the globe and believes that vaccinations are an important step in restoring a level of normality post COVID-19.

"We are working closely with Industry Associations to ensure seafarers are recognised by UN bodies as 'key workers' and as such, countries should vaccinate seafarers at the earliest possible opportunity," it said.

V Group is also encouraging all its seafarers and colleagues to continue to strictly follow COVID-19 protocols, even after having the vaccine. This means that public health measures, such as safe distancing, mask wearing and the use of safe transport and good hand hygiene, are still mandatory.

V Group said it will be following the global situation closely and will share with colleagues any new developments on the vaccination roll out. SF

Victim once again

International efforts have not been sufficient in recognising the importance of the vaccination of seafarers - InterManager

Once again seafarers fell victim to the lack of focus and joined-up thinking of government leaders in vaccination, which has become apparent during the crew change crisis.

The trade association of international ship and crew managers, InterManager, expressed its disappointment in the slow pace of obtaining the vaccines for seafarers. Likewise, the INTERCARO in the "vaccination lottery" in the dry bulk shipping sector.

InterManager vowed to obtain independently much-needed COVID-19 vaccines to protect the world's more than 1.5 million seafarers to ensure keeping international trade routes open.

Lack of progress and slow pace

Such pledge by InterManager came out as a result of their frustration by the lack of progress and slow pace in obtaining and vaccinating their ship officers and crews worldwide.

"Global organisations have talked their way round in circles and still we are no further forward in providing a vaccination programme for seafarers who are vital in ensuring that world trade and aid continues to be delivered," declared Mark O'Neil, the president of InterManager.

InterManager said "enough is enough," realising that the international efforts have not been sufficient in recognising the importance of the vaccination of seafarers.

"We will now work on sourcing vaccinations separately through legitimate channels to enable our members to vaccinate their seafarers as soon as possible and to support others within the maritime industry to do the same," InterManager said in a statement.

The United Nations has designated seafarers as "essential workers," but so far, only 58 countries followed this directive and are prioritising seafarers by allowing them to travel to and from vessels. In addition, vast numbers of seafarers originate from developing countries where the official rollout of vaccinations are hampered by the shortage of vaccines, thus compounding the problem.

O'Neil stressed that InterManager will continue to collaborate and give full support to the International Maritime Organisation and fellow shipping industry NGOs in sourcing vaccination for seafarers.

However, he expressed his disappointment at the slow speed of international efforts, saying: "The IMO is hampered by having to negotiate through the United Nations, World Health Organisation and others. Sitting back and waiting for these bureaucratic institutions is only part of the solution."

He said, "The world's seafarers need our help and as ship and crew managers we must work together to do all we can to ensure that their lives and livelihoods are protected."

Vaccination lottery in dry bulk

INTERCARGO, the international association representing the world's dry bulk shipowners, said this vaccination lottery has led to "a number of port states suggesting that all crew on board a vessel must be vaccinated as a pre-condition of entering their ports, and indeed insisting on a particular brand of vaccine."

"This is of course a very serious problem for the industry as a whole, when we consider the high proportion of seafarers that come from developing countries with no access to any vaccine at all," says Dimitris Fafalios, the chairman of INTERCARGO.

He said in a statement that the dry bulk sector is bearing the brunt of this uncertainty due to the nature of its business. "Bulk carriers on tramp trading call at many more ports than

Image: INTERCARGO

INTERCARGO's Dimitrios Fafalios

other shipping sectors and are at the mercy of the nationalised vaccination policy, applying at the port of call."

Fafalios conceded that "a very real crisis has been unfolding behind the scenes, unnoticed and ignored by the world's media. The IMO and global maritime organisations' efforts must permeate not only every area of the shipping industry, but in addition urgent action outside the maritime sphere is needed by all government leaders at the highest level."

Co-ordinating a worldwide vaccination programme for seafarers under World Health Organisation and making WHO approved vaccinations available to seafarers in their home country is an urgent priority, he suggested, adding that "universal commitments for collective action are imperative to resolve the humanitarian crisis at sea with crew change, and to keep global trade moving."

Workhorses of world trade

Dry bulk carriers are the workhorses of international shipping, delivering key basic goods and serving the world's essential needs to sustain life and welfare. The sector operates close to 12,000 vessels employing over 300,000 seafarers globally, calling at more than 1,500 ports around the world in non-regular (tramp) voyages to even the most remote areas of the globe.

INTERCARGO echoes the recent statements made by IMO Secretary-General Kitack Lim that the issues around vaccination need to be resolved and warning that the crew change crisis is far from over. Likewise, the group noted the statements of the heads of five UN organisations calling for maritime and air transport workers to be prioritised for COVID-19 vaccination, given their key role in supporting global trade and mobility, which is essential for a sustainable socio-economic recovery.

Whilst the numbers of seafarers requiring repatriation after finishing their contracts has declined in recent months there are still around 200,000 seafarers waiting to return to their homes and families. An equal number are waiting on shore to resume their livelihood and keep the world trade going.

Fafalios adds: "INTERCARGO is participating in a joint industry Vaccination Taskforce, led by the International Chamber of Shipping, aimed at providing clear solutions and practical guidance in the increasingly complex situation we currently face. The group has produced guidance on the legal, liability and insurance issues arising from the vaccination of seafarers and is also working on developing a preliminary list of vaccination hub ports.

He says, "Seafarers who have not yet been able to receive a vaccination should be permitted to travel to and from their country of domicile and their place of work without restriction."
INTERCARGO believes that world leaders should ensure that seafarers are designated as key workers and have access to a prioritised vaccination programme; that they do not miss out on vaccinations while travelling for work and that they are able to access the required number of doses within the timescales recommended by the WHO.
Government leaders must commit to collective action and take to task their counterparts who fail to appreciate that the welfare of seafarers is not only a humanitarian issue, but that the world's seafarers are responsible for keeping global trade moving. SF

InterManager's Mark O'Neil

Netherlands to vaccinate Filipino seafarers on Dutch-flagged ships

Dutch shipowners association KVNR is expected to play a central role in developing the logistics of the vaccination, which takes place in a number of the country's larger ports and at Schiphol Amsterdam Airport

Filipino seafarers serving on Dutch-flagged vessels are expected to receive their COVID-19 vaccines as the Dutch shipowners began their inoculation programme.

The Royal Association of Netherlands Shipowners (KVNR) said "all seafarers working on ships flying the Dutch flag are eligible for this COVID-19 vaccination so they could safely continue their work on board seagoing vessels around the world."

The plan of action to be taken is a tailor-made programme managed by the KVNR and established in close consultation with the Dutch government, the Dutch Association of Dredging Companies, the Dutch branch of the Pelagic Freezer-trawler Association and the trade union Nautilus International.

KVNR Managing Director, Annet Koster, said: "As shipowners, we are grateful that the Dutch government recognises the need to vaccinate seafarers through a tailor-made programme and has given us the confidence to implement this valuable vaccination."

Nautilus International Chairman, Marcel van den Broek, said: "As an employee representative organisation, we have drawn attention to the specific problems of seafarers during the coronavirus pandemic. We are happy and grateful for this recognition."

From mid-June this year, a total of 49,000 J&J/Janssen vaccines will be made available in instalments, whereby one vaccination per seafarer will be sufficient. KVNR recognises its importance as seafarers only spend a limited amount of time in the Netherlands such as during shore leave or to travel home to or from a ship.

Since all seafarers are never in the Netherlands at the same time, KVNR

> **"We are grateful that the Dutch government recognises the need to vaccinate seafarers through a tailor-made programme and has given us the confidence to implement this valuable vaccination"**

said, the vaccination programme will be spread over the coming months in consultation with the participating parties and the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management.

KVNR is expected to play a central role in developing the logistics of the vaccination when it will take place in a number of the country's larger ports and at Schiphol Amsterdam Airport.
The vaccines will be made available free of charge by the Dutch Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport, whilst the costs of organising the logistics and the actual vaccination will be covered by private parties in the maritime sector.

The fact that seafarers, regardless of their nationality, can be vaccinated allows shipping companies to comply with their duty of care. This approach means that seafarers will be helped optimally.

On a global scale, seafarers have faced enormous challenges in carrying out their work. Seafarers often could not be relieved for months at a time and have continued to suffer the consequences of international travel restrictions.

"We must now move ahead of those problems. The risk of an infected ship is too great; after all. Acute medical care is not immediately available at sea," Koster said.

Through this vaccination, she said the continuity of the service provided by ships flying the Dutch flag or managed from the Netherlands can also be guaranteed. SF

IMO's Kitack Lim urges fair vaccine distribution for seafarers

Image: IMO

International Maritime Organisation Secretary-General Kitack Lim has called on all IMO Member States to support a fair global distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, beyond fulfilling their national needs, to ensure seafarers can access vaccines.

In a statement, Mr. Lim reiterated his call for seafarers and marine personnel to be designated as "key workers" and noted that some key maritime labour supply countries are reliant on the COVAX initiative of the World Health Organization (WHO) to access vaccines.

"To ensure access to vaccines of those countries, I call on all IMO Member States to work together towards a fair global distribution, beyond fulfilling their national needs. No seafarers should be left behind or forced to forgo their careers because of limited resources in their home country", Mr Lim said.

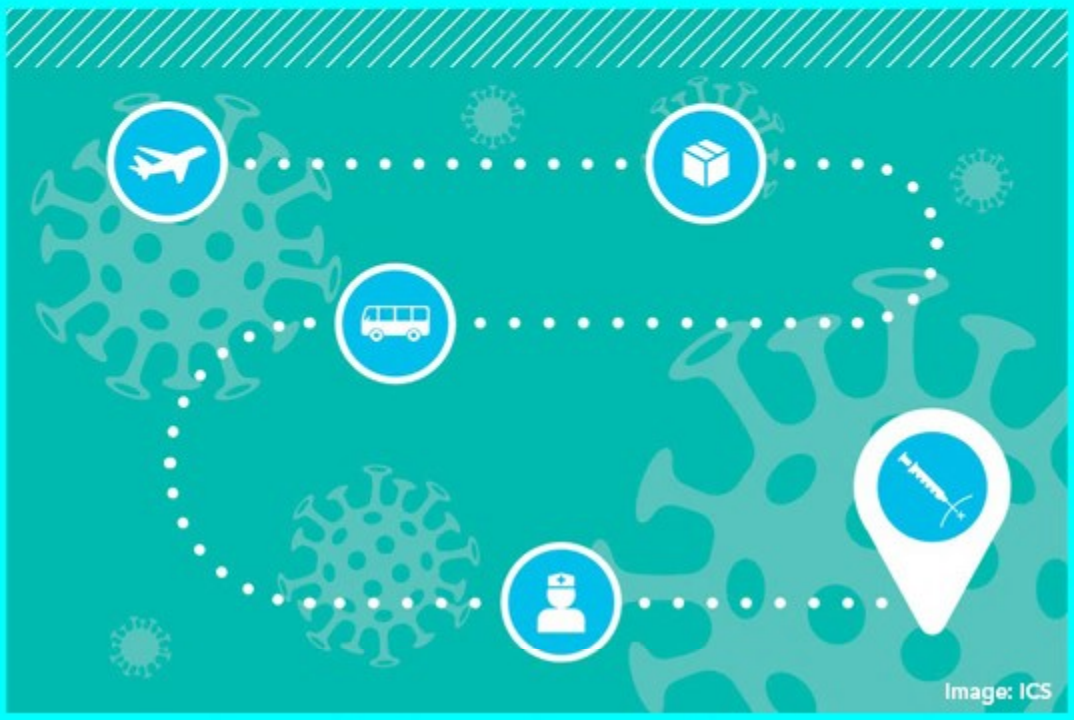
"The health of the world's seafarers and the safety of their workplaces has to remain one of our main priorities and can only be guaranteed if industry and Member States continue to provide all necessary measures such as testing, appropriate PPE, access to medical care and sanitation facilities to prevent the spread of the virus", Mr. Lim said.

"We cannot afford to be complacent when it comes to addressing the ongoing humanitarian crisis at sea. I therefore reiterate my call to all Member States to designate all seafarers and marine personnel as "key workers" providing an essential service. To date only 58 of our 174 Members have notified me that they have done so. The designation of seafarers as "key workers" will facilitate their access to vaccination, since most States are prioritising essential workers in their national COVID-19 vaccination programmes, in accordance with the WHO SAGE Roadmap", Mr. Lim said.

Seafarers' lives and work have been affected dramatically by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the last quarter of 2020, the estimated number of seafarers globally waiting to either be relieved or join their ships stood at 400,000. Now, in May 2021, thanks to the collaborative efforts of IMO Member States, the shipping industry, social partners and IMO's sister UN agencies, the number is currently estimated to be about 200,000.

"However, this figure is still unacceptably high and the humanitarian crisis at sea is by no means over. Seafarers still face enormous challenges concerning repatriation, travelling to join their ships, proper access to medical care and shore leave. Despite these challenges, the seafarers on board ships have continued working, providing an essential service for the global population", Mr. Lim said. SF

A vaccination roadmap for seafarers



Seafarers can be considered a unique population with their own needs, constraints and requirements for international travel. Therefoe, a roadmap that provides a framework to establish a local vaccination programme has to be worked out and released for these key workers at sea.

This roadmap sets out procedures for a programme that can be implemented by all stakeholders concerned to facilitate safe ship crew vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), which released the guide last May.

To protect the health of seafarers, passengers and the general public, and to minimise disruptions to trade and global supply chains, vaccination of seafarers is considered highly preferable.

The roadmap can be used by shipping companies (their agents and representatives, including crew agencies), maritime administrations and national health authorities, in liaison with other authorities (such as local customs, immigration, border control, seaport and civil aviation), seafarers unions and welfare providers, during the planning and roll-out stages of the vaccination programme.

.

Some countries have already deployed mass vaccination campaigns, which can take place in large off-site vaccination centres set up in car parks, stadiums, commercial centres, etc. The roadmap envisions a programme for seafarers that can specifically enable vaccination for the shipboard personnel who:

- Need to leave their vessels and return home;
- Emanate from countries which currently do not have vaccination available to seafarers; or
- Emanate from countries which currently have not prioritised seafarers in their vaccination campaigns.

The 22-page document proposes a framework dedicated to seafarers for the establishment of vaccination centres in hubs, such as in places easily accessible to seafarers (ports or airports); and describes aspects to consider in a vaccination programme for seafarers, such as: Planning, setting up and operating a vaccination centre, including vaccine logistics and distribution; Rostering seafarers and associated documentation; and Legal/liability considerations.

It's been advised that shipping companies should ensure that they follow national requirements with regard to vaccination and quarantine.

Vaccination of seafarers in their home countries remains the preferred option but measures should now be taken to permit access to vaccination for seafarers from all countries. While industry bodies are working with authorities at national, regional and international levels to prioritise rapid access to vaccinations for seafarers as key workers in all countries, it became apparent that a roadmap dedicated to seafarer vaccination would help to achieve global immunisation.

To protect the health of seafarers, passengers and the general public, and to minimise disruptions to trade and global supply chains, vaccination of seafarers is considered highly preferable. SF

With vaccination, Filipino seafarers are looking to sail again

Seafarers are elated when the Philippine government finally included them in the priority list of people to be vaccinated against the novel coronavirus, writes Liz Lagniton

Filipino seafarers Earl Warren Maramba and Dean Flores Bacobo were among the 497,000 Filipino seafarers who were deployed overseas last year, but are now grounded by the uncertainty of the pandemic and hope to be vaccinated soon so they can resume their livelihoods.

Dean, who was on board a Holland America cruise ship when the pandemic broke out, was among the more than 8,000 cruise ship crew members who were repatriated due to the pandemic in June 2020.
"We appreciate the government for including us in the COVID-19 vaccination's priority list. I'm glad that they care and recognise the kind of sacrifices we make to support our family," said the 43-year-old Dean, who has been waiting for a new ship assignment for 10 months.

Filipino seafarers remitted more than $6 billion in 2019 and the government was hoping to see the number grow by 30 percent each year, but more than 300,000 seafarers have been jobless for months.

Twenty-four-year-old Earl, who has been working on tankers since 2016, found a nine-month contract early this year and was raring to report to his new vessel in February when he learned that he had contracted COVID-19.

"I did a swab test on the same day of my flight because it was one of the protocols before leaving," he said. But he tested positive and his departure was postponed.
But with the government's decision to vaccinate seafarers, Earl said, the Philippines will be able to keep its position as the top seafaring country in the world because seafarers are already inoculated and can join a ship anytime.

"I'm happy that they recognised us as essential workers too," said Earl, who is undergoing training in Manila

Dr Conrado Oca

in preparation for his next ship assignment.

A concerted effort to push for seafarers' vaccination

Over 80 percent of global trade is moved by maritime transport and the global economy counts on the world's two million sailors who operate the global fleet of merchant vessels.

Because of the importance of their hazardous tasks, many shipping companies prefer their crew to be inoculated against the coronavirus to ensure that their operations will remain smooth and unhampered.

This prompted the manning agencies and seafarer groups to ask the Philippine government to prioritise the vaccination of the seafarers citing the latter's vital role in sustaining global chains and of course the local economy.

The nation's biggest union of Filipino seafarers, the Associated Marine Officers and Seaman's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP), was among the groups who called on President Rodrigo Duterte to prioritise seafarers in the vaccination programme that began on March 1.

"We welcome the (government's) decision to grant our request to upgrade the classification of seafarers in the government's vaccination priority list from priority group B3 and B5 to priority group A4 along with the other frontline personnel in essential sectors," AMOSUP president Dr Conrado Oca told Maritime Fairtrade.

"This is certainly good news to our seafarers who have been working nonstop to keep the world trade moving and to contribute to the Philippine economy while braving the risk of getting infected," Oca said.

"This development is one step towards our goal of having all our seafarers vaccinated before their deployment to protect them from COVID-19. We hope for the timely arrival of our country's vaccines and that the government efficiently and swiftly carries out the inoculation of our seafarers to ensure their health and safety as they venture out into the sea."

AMOSUP, an affiliate of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), was founded by Dr Oca's late father, Captain Gregorio Oca.

The association has been at the forefront of improving welfare for its more than 114,000 members and has established a Seamen's Hospital, Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific, Seamen's Village, and AMOSUP Training Center. It has two training ships in support of maritime education in the Philippines.

Maintaining number one status

Government agencies like the Department of Transportation (DOTr) and the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) likewise welcomed the reclassification of seafarers.

"It was a great relief for me as MARINA administrator to secure the upgrade in priority for vaccination of seafarers to A4," Vice Admiral Robert Empedrad, MARINA administrator, told Maritime Fairtrade.

"It is a very welcome development because this is very relevant to our goal of maintaining our status as the number one seafarer-producing country in the world."

Data of MARINA and the Philippine Overseas Employment Authority (POEA) showed that as of this year, there were around 549,000 active seafarers logged in their system, 497,000 of whom were deployed overseas.

For his part, Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade also said the reclassification was "a very good development for our maritime industry champions – our seafarers. Now, our Filipino seafarers will be given priority to be vaccinated. I have repeatedly described our maritime workforce as the silent workers of our country.

"They work silently, yet their contribution is crucial in keeping the economy thriving. Not only are they front liners, they are undoubtedly heroes too." SF

(This article by Liz Lagniton first appeared in the online edition of Maritime Fairtrade, 29 April 2021)

Vice Admiral Robert Empedrad

AMOSUP hospitals to administer COVID-19 jabs for seafarers

President Dr Conrado F Oca says the Union has the personnel, facilities and equipment readily available to conduct seafarers' vaccinations.

The AMOSUP chain of Seamen's Hospitals across the country is extending its services and facilities to the government-led COVID-19 vaccination programme for Filipino seafarers serving on the world's fleets.

As part of its mission to fight for the rights and welfare of Filipino seafarers, AMOSUP has been co-ordinating with the government's Inter-Agency Technical Working Group (TWG) in the Philippine government's effort to vaccinate Filipino seafarers to safeguard their health and wellbeing as key workers in its recognition of their vital role in transporting essential goods and keeping the global supply chain uninterrupted amidst the pandemic.
The Union has always expressed its strong commitment to work together with the government and maritime stakeholders to ensure that Filipino seafarers are given the priority to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

"AMOSUP has the personnel, facilities and equipment readily available to conduct seafarers' vaccinations. All that is needed are the vaccines," said AMOSUP President, Dr Conrado F.Oca.

In a meeting with MARINA Administrator Robert Empedrad and Vaccine Czar Secretary Carlito Galvez on the vaccination roll out for seafarers, Dr Oca offered to help the government through one of the Union's service units: the Seamen's Hospitals in Manila, Cebu, Iloilo and Davao.
Dr Oca's proposal was welcomed by the TWG, which is composed of key government agencies such as the DOTr-Maritime, Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA), Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), Department of Health – Bureau of Quarantine (DOH-BOQ), Department of Foreign Affairs – Maritime and Ocean Affairs Office (DFA-MOAO), as well as the MARINO Partylist, and maritime employers organizations Association of Licensed Manning Agencies (ALMA) and Joint Manning Group (JMG).

As agreed by the group, the master list of seafarers for the vaccination roll out will come from the database of MARINA and POEA, while the scheduling will be based on the deployment plan that ship operators and licensed manning agencies (LMAs) are required to submit to MARINA on a monthly basis starting June 2021. Seafarers will then be instructed to register through MARINA's seafarers COVID-19 vaccination platform.

The TWG has designated AMOSUP Seamen's Hospital

Manila to administer the vaccines for seafarers in Metro Manila (vaccination site: AMOSUP-JSU Sen'in No Ie "Seafarer House" in Intramuros, Manila); Gig Oca Robles Seamen's Hospital Davao for seafarers located in Davao; AMOSUP Seamen's Hospital Iloilo for seafarers residing in Iloilo; AMOSUP Seamen's Hospital Cebu for seafarers situated in Cebu; and their respective local government units (LGUs) for seafarers "whose residential location is more practical and convenient for their inoculation," a MARINA advisory read.

Ceremonial vaccination

To kick-off the mass vaccination of seafarers, AMOSUP and MARINA formally began vaccinating seafarers from different crewing agencies with the ceremonial jabs held at Seamen's Centre in Intramuros last 17 June 2021. The event was arranged simultaneous with MARINA's 47th anniversary that was graced by DOTr Secretary Arthur Tugade as the guest of honour.

The secretary, along with MARINA administrator Robert Empedrad, virtually witnessed the vaccination ceremony. Fifteen ship officers and ratings the TWG registered from different crewing agencies received the COVID-19 jabs of Sinovac for their protection before they embark on their respective ships in the next couple of months. Seafarers were initially categorised under B3 or "other essential workers" and B5 or "overseas Filipino workers" in the national vaccination priority framework. With the recommendation of the TWG – through the DOTr – it placed the country's merchant marine personnel under priority group A4 or "frontline personnel in essential sectors" and recently to A1 for those who are scheduled to depart.

The vaccinated crew extended their gratitude and appreciation for Secretary Tugade and the MARINO Partylist. One of the seafarers, a chief engineer who was bound to travel to his ship, encouraged his fellow mariners to register for the

> **"The government intends to start vaccinating seafarers as soon as the next batch of vaccines arrives and aims to inoculate 30,000 seafarers per month."**

vaccination programme, which is usually administered by the local government units. He said that this would significantly help to protect his family from potential infection as he is a frontliner.

The government intends to start vaccinating seafarers as soon as the next batch of vaccines arrives and aims to inoculate 30,000 seafarers per month.

All registered seafarers for vaccination will be required to present their Seafarer's Record Book and Overseas Exit Clearance or Sea Service Certification at the sites.

Acknowledgement

Dr Oca said the work continues and AMOSUP is all in. "We acknowledge the Philippine government's action to bring to fruition the collaborative efforts among all the maritime stakeholders to push for the vaccination of Filipino seafarers across the country."

Indeed, he stressed that "we must be aggressive in carrying out the inoculation of our seafarers who are the lifeblood of the global shipping industry and our country's economic front liners.

We at AMOSUP stand by our commitment to work in solidarity with the government, the private sector and our social partners to ensure the safety and overall wellbeing of our seafarers."

Prior to AMOSUP's involvement in the national vaccination programme, the Union has put up its own Molecular and PCR Laboratory for seafarers at the Seamen's Hospital Manila through the generous assistance of the International Transport Workers' Federation Seafarers' Trust (ITFST).

The DOH-accredited AMOSUP Seamen's Hospital Molecular and PCR Laboratory, which started operating in September 2020 and led to AMOSUP's collaboration with maritime stakeholders, such as the

International Maritime Employers' Council (IMEC), International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), Norwegian Shipowners Association and NYK, to establish the "Safe Corridor Quarantine and Testing Initiative" for seafarers.

The Safe Corridor Initiative, launched in October 2020, was accredited and cited by the Singapore-based SG-STAR Fund Task Force (SFTF) as CrewSafe for the "successful crew changes in a safe and responsible manner." SF

Condotel for Seafarers. A combination of condo units and hotel rooms for seafarers will be built in Manila following the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the government and AMOSUP. The condotel accord signed on MARINA's 47th anniversary last 17 June 2021, intends to serve as a temporary shelter for seafarers from the provinces who are processing their papers prior to departure for embarkation to their respective ships. The building will be donated by the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) as part of its support and care of the Filipino seafarers. Pictured below from left at the signing of the agreement are Marino Partylist Representative Sandro Gonzales, Department of Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade and AMOSUP President Dr Conrado Oca. Looking on are PPA General Manager Jay Daniel Santiago and MARINA Administrator Robert Empedrad. (Image: Noli Partido) SF

Global study unveils the mental health minefield of the remote rotational workforce

The research carried out by the International SOS provides in depth insight into the psychological impacts of this unique mode of working

A new study on the so-called "remote rotational workforce" has highlighted a number of signs that include high level of suicidal thoughts, clinical depression, impacts on physical health (such as diet) and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on this workforce.

A groundbreaking report released by the London-based International SOS Foundation and Affinity Health at Work found that 40% of all respondents experienced suicidal thoughts on rotation in "some or all the time (compared to average of 4-9%). One in five are feeling suicidal all or most of the time." It said 29% met the benchmark for clinical depression whilst on-rotation.

The study reported that 52% of the respondents had a decline in mood, and their mental health suffered whilst on rotation, whilst 62% had worse mental health than would be the norm in a population. In off rotation, this remains at a high of 31% experiencing lower mental health than the general population.

International SOS's 'Mental Health and the Remote Rotational Workforce' provides in depth insight into the psychological impacts of this unique mode of working. It concedes that the work and lifestyle of a remote rotational workforce is "unique", saying it has long been associated with a high impact on mental health and wellbeing.

"There is an urgent need for increased focus, understanding and strategies to mitigate mental ill health and promote better mental health of the remote rotational workforce," said Dr Rodrigo Rodriguez-Fernandez, the medical director for Non-Communicable Disease and Workplace Wellness for International SOS.

He noted in a statement that the COVID-19 environment has also added "increased stress on this already pressured working arrangement.

The study also exposed that almost a quarter (23%) of the remote rotational workers surveyed experienced emotional exhaustion on a weekly basis. 46% experienced higher stress levels whilst on rotation and over half (57%) were not engaged in their work. 23% reported that they received no psychological support from their employers.

"We would expect burn out to be between 2-13% in the general population, so the almost quarter that we see from the survey is particularly high," according to Dr Rachel Lewis, an occupational psychologist.

Burn out, she says, can have a serious impact both personally and professionally, on the ability of an individual to carry out their role. "Remote rotational work may come with the perks of higher pay, but with its propensity to be isolating at the best of times."

On and offshore, working pressures and varying shift patterns also add their weight. And this is not to mention the impact of the current pandemic, which has seen many remote workers unexpectedly away from family and friend networks for longer than anticipated."

Dr Rodriguez-Fernandez said, "Mental and physical health are intrinsically linked. Organisations and individuals with a Duty of Care to their remote rotational workers should have visibility and a plan of support for their workforce encompassing both."

The study also said:

- Over a third exercised less (35%)
- 38% experienced worse-quality sleep (38%)
- Over a quarter (28%) were less able to eat a nutritious diet whilst working

On the flipside, the majority of respondents felt that their health and safety was prioritised. They report a strong sense of community and support among co-workers and from managers. Many also felt that they could share their mental health concerns with colleagues.

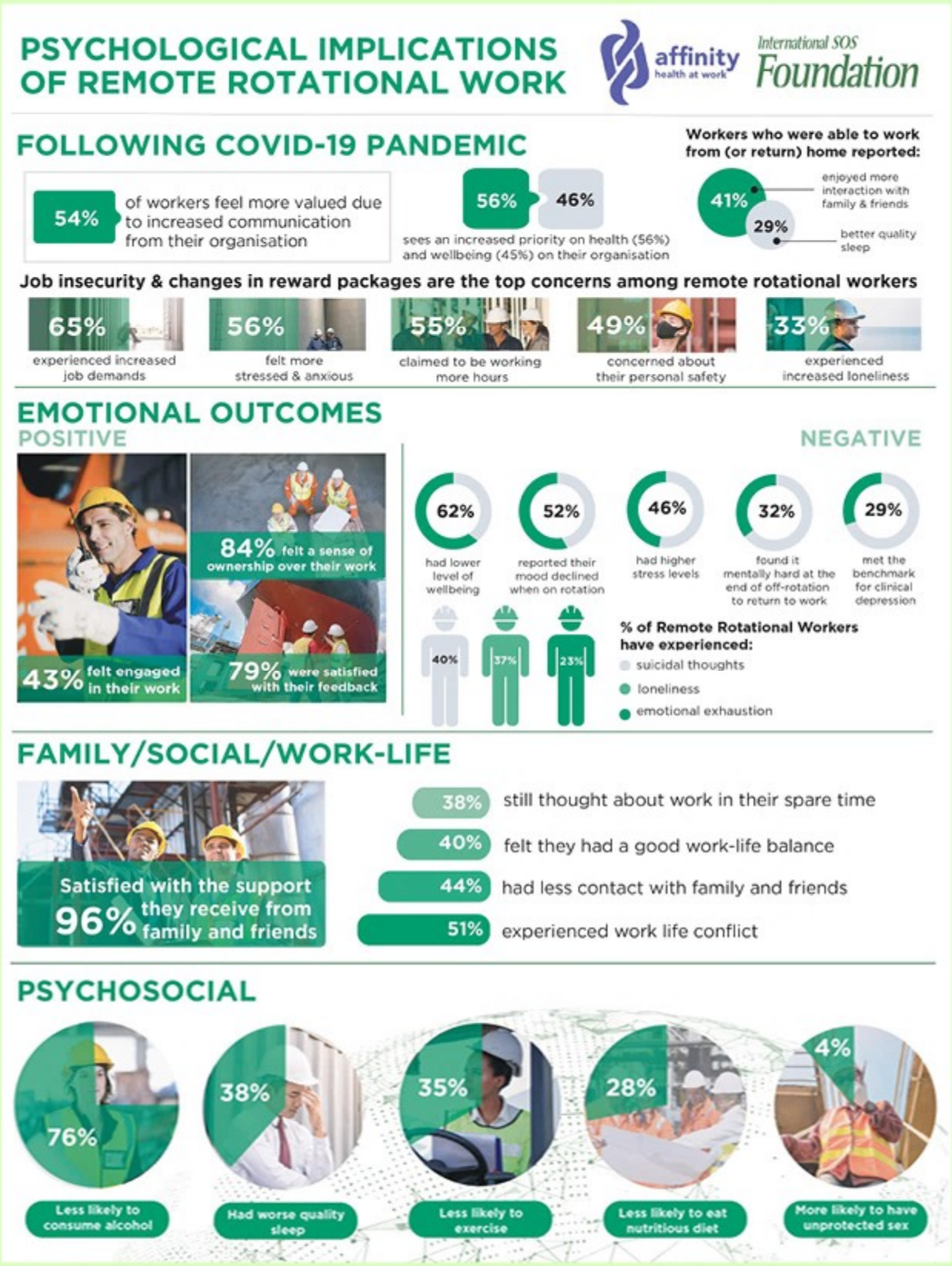
Practical recommendations

The study has provided practical recommendations on mitigation measures for companies:

Organisations are recommended to review flexible working polices and arrangements, offer on-site training for employees and develop programmes and resources to improve moral and work-life balance.

Evaluating existing health strategies and policies in partnership with a medical expert is recommended in order to ensure that necessary support structures are relevant to the local workforce and evidence based. Implementing a site wide wellbeing programme with an onsite wellness centre that equips employees with the resources and know-how to enable them to adopt healthy behaviours will not only result in a healthier workforce but in a sustainable business.

Source: International SOS Foundation



The pandemic has exacerbated potential health and safety risks, challenged productivity levels and increased the risks of accidents on site. Organisations should review their flexible working policies to ensure a suitable work-life balance can be achieved and employees receive the appropriate level of care during these unprecedented times.

Ensuring mental health resilience will continue to be challenged as the pandemic remains.

It is pertinent that organisations implement the appropriate preventative measures to ensure that their workforce is protected. This includes mechanisms that allow for monitoring of employee wellbeing while ensuring confidentiality, implementing a mental health programme that utilises technology such as TeleHealth to ensure all employees can be supported and educating the workforce with compulsory training and resources to drive awareness. SF

Dealing with demographics

ISWAN's Social Interaction Matters (SIM) project aims to help ship management companies encourage seafarers' social interaction and improve wellbeing on board using programmes with proven success. In this article, it explores the themes emerging from Phase One of the project, which examines the drivers and barriers to social interaction on board and identify which activities are most successful at engaging crew

Crew differences such as nationality, gender, and age can affect the success of social activities on board. Understanding the impacts of demographics can help in the design of inclusive, engaging activities for the whole crew to enjoy.

Multinational crews are now the norm within the global fleet and are broadly seen as an asset – the diversity and creativity they bring offers the opportunity to build stronger teams. However, it is important to be aware of different cultural preferences when bringing crew together socially to ensure that recreational activities suit the majority and maximise engagement.

More than a third of respondents in our Phase I survey of seafarers and other maritime stakeholders identified culture or language as a key barrier to social interaction on board. One seafarer we interviewed after the survey told us:

"If you're not able to speak your native language it creates a difficulty to communicate more freely … when I'm alone on board I find myself more confined to my cabin because I already speak English or another language in working hours and then after work, I just withdraw myself a little bit'.

If a seafarer is the only one of their nationality on board, there is a chance they may be marginalised. This can also apply to other minority groups on board such as women, ethnic minorities and those from the LGBTQ+ community. If there is no cohesion between different groups on board, cliques can form and minorities can be isolated. One seafarer respondent said: 'I was the only female [on board], so I felt segregated. I was also a cadet, so my opinion really didn't make it that far. In my off time I spent most times in my cabin watching movies or on deck looking at the ocean'

Good communication is crucial in combatting isolation on board. The hierarchical nature of the Merchant Navy means that the onboard culture is strongly influenced by the behaviour and example set by the captain and other senior officers, so strong leadership is key, particularly in the case of multinational crews.

Different nationalities can also have different responses to authority, as this respondent noted: "… some cultures are more free where you can openly ask questions, in other cultures the boss is the boss and he's always right, and that kind of culture we need to change the mindset of the senior staff. Juniors are coming in and they learn from us, so I think that must be the starting point."

A supportive company culture which considers diversity and gender and promotes inclusion is vital to establishing a safe, happy and productive environment on board. Diverse crews can bring different skills, viewpoints and creativity – illustrated by these observations from female respondents:

"I don't know if it is just because women are better at it, but normally on the ships where I go, I think that I am better at gathering people than a guy would have been. I always arranged movies nights, or football tournaments, and I go down and knock on people's doors or call them, and as my colleagues say, they don't experience the same with male colleagues"

'I think that men find it easier talking about the difficult stuff with women'.

The age of crew members may also have an impact on socialising among the crew. Our research found that 49% of respondents over 40 years old considered WiFi

Image: IMO/Makhosi Mbokazi

ISWAN welcomes a new CEO

Simon Grainge

The International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN) recently welcomed its new chief executive officer.

Simon Grainge takes on the CEO role on 14 June on the retirement of Roger Harris, who has led ISWAN since its establishment in 2013.

Simon has extensive experience in the charity sector and joins ISWAN from Emmaus UK (a federation of 33 homelessness charities/ social enterprises) that he has led since 2012. As its CEO, Simon represented and advocated for its members with Housing Associations, Government, HMRC and the Charity Commission and was responsible for managing relationships with donors and the delivery of a federation-wide strategic plan.

He was successful in increasing fundraising income and maintaining financial sustainability throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. He has experience in leading change and in the development of leadership, governance and high-quality membership services, including through organisational restructuring.

Simon also has international experience as Trustee and Vice President of Emmaus International (a Paris-based, international federation of 337-member NGOs) and was country director of Handicap International implementing and delivering HI's country strategy in Pakistan and overseeing the efficient and effective running of a post-earthquake programme.

Simon was also Overseas Development Adviser to VSO where he worked in Nepal to develop and promote the organisational capacity of organisations supporting disabled people. His first career was in the UK Police Service.
Ahead of joining ISWAN, Simon said: "Recent events have shown just how important the work of ISWAN is, I am really looking forward to the challenges that leading such a respected organisation will bring." SF

a barrier to social interaction, whilst only 12% of those aged 18-28 considered it an issue.

Younger generations have grown up with connectivity and internet access, whereas older generations may remember a time when alcohol and bars on board were focal points for social interaction. Engaging crew members of different generations with varying interests requires creative thinking – while activities involving social media and gaming may work for some, they will not necessarily suit everyone. SF

https://www.seafarerswelfare.org/news/2021/social-interaction-matters-dealing-with-demographics

Image: IMO/John Darrell M Jives

New tool launches to ease crew change crisis

The new guidance aims to ensure that seafarers have their rights safeguarded in areas such as physical and mental health, access to family life, and freedom of movement

Now that a human diligence tool has been launched, the world's biggest brands have no excuse not to be persistent enough across their supply chains to help resolve the crew change crisis.

The Human Rights Due Diligence Tool helps cargo owners and charterers ask the right questions to suppliers and business partners in their supply chains to ensure seafarers' human and labour rights are being upheld, maritime unions asserted.

Developed by the United Nations led by UN Global Compact, some of the world's largest corporates and maritime industry social partners – including the ITF, the new due diligence tool aims to help businesses uphold their responsibility to protect human rights at sea as new COVID variants threaten to further delay crew changes.

Blind spot for global brands

"For far too long, shipping has been a human rights blind spot for global brands. Responsible companies in today's world want to understand how their partners in the supply chains might be violating human rights," according to ITF General Secretary Stephen Cotton.

Photo: Noel Gabrido

In the midst of the crew change crisis, the launch of this tool couldn't be timelier, said Cotton, stressing that "upholding human rights within supply chains is a social responsibility of companies, and was increasingly a legal requirement for them."

The UN bodies are encouraging companies, also known as 'cargo owners', to work with maritime industry experts within the ITF or the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) to undertake supply chain health checks. These health checks will assist companies to understand their human rights due diligence obligations and address violations in their supply chains.

Seafarers' mental wellbeing

The new guidance aims to ensure that seafarers have their rights safeguarded in areas such as physical and mental health, access to family life and freedom of movement. Whilst recognising the importance of the maritime industry in transporting more than 80% of global trade goods, UN agencies have expressed concern at reports of seafarers working beyond the 11-month maximum limit of service on board indicated in the ILO Maritime Labour Convention (MLC).

"The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the fragility of global supply chains as seafarers continue to endure tremendous, and yet largely invisible, hardship and suffering," said Sanda Ojiambo, executive

director and CEO of the UN Global Compact, in a statement.

She said mental and physical wellbeing of seafarers must be a priority and this tool is an important step in building awareness on how to address human rights abuses in the maritime sector. "It sends a powerful message of the importance of incorporating maritime workers in due diligence mapping to ensure that adverse human rights impacts are identified, prevented, mitigated and addressed."

International Chamber of Shipping Secretary General, Guy Platten, cited the recent Suez Canal incident as a reminder to governments and the markets the importance of global shipping to the supply chains.

"Seafarers are continuing to work to maintain global trade through exceptional circumstances, and the Suez incident has only exacerbated the already dire crew change crisis," said Platten, reminding that "seafarers must not be forgotten now that the canal is open again, and we call on businesses to urgently adopt these important recommendations."

Margi Van Gogh, head of supply chain & transport industries at World Economic Forum says, this pandemic continues to highlight the central role that transport workers and seafarers play in enabling global trade and recovery.

"Supply system resilience requires collaboration across the private and public sector. Such resilience can only be achieved through assuring the safety, well-being and human rights of those responsible for moving the essential goods and food we all rely on," she said.

Van Gogh added: "The Forum applauds the collective action that resulted in development of a valuable guidance tool, comprising practical checklists that cargo owners, charterers and logistics providers can reference to ensure human rights impacts for our seafarers, and indeed all essential transport workers are addressed, and future risks can be mitigated. Keeping people and goods moving safely is not only an obligation, it is vital for business continuity and a sustainable global recovery."

Brands can ban "no crew change" clauses

ITF is still being alerted to charterers and sub-charters using "no crew change" clauses and other more sophisticated means to avoid performing crew changes, said David Heindel, chair of the ITF Seafarers' Section. Cargo owners needed to set out their expectations to maritime transport suppliers, he said.

"Sadly, money is still getting in the way of human needs when it comes to shipping. Many shipowners' revenues are at all-time highs, and cargo-owners have barely noticed any change to their business as usual, despite 200,000 seafarers still trapped working aboard what amount to floating prisons, unable to get home."

Heindel said, "We want to see as many companies as possible taking concrete action, committing to use the due diligence tool, and helping to stamp out human rights abuses in their supply chains and the wider shipping industry. We're standing by to help them do that."

Throughout the pandemic, he stated. "the world's seafarers have been set adrift, stranded by COVID-19 restrictions with hundreds of thousands forced to work against their will. Responsible players in the supply chain have acted, but many companies, whose goods haven't stopped moving, have either been caught unaware or have chosen to ignore this humanitarian crisis." SF

UN task force should probe why gov'ts failed to fulfill obligations to seafarers during pandemic

The call for an investigation came in a resolution adopted at the 4th session of the ILO Special Tripartite Committee of the MLC, held virtually on19-23 April 2021

Shipowners' and seafarers' representatives have asked the United Nations to establish an interagency task force to examine the implementation and practical application of the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), 2006 during the pandemic, including its impact on seafarers' fundamental rights and on the shipping industry.

The crew change crisis peaked at over 400,000 seafarers trapped on ships working beyond their contracts because of local COVID-19 restrictions and the failure of governments to cooperate and coordinate to address the crisis.

In a landmark ruling in December 2020, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) found that governments have failed to protect seafarers' rights as set out in international law under the MLC, 2006. The UN agency called on states to recognise seafarers as key workers "without delay".

The number of seafarers still stranded is around 200,000 and is on the rise again as authorities respond to new variants and explosions in cases like the devastating second wave currently tearing through India.

Some governments have responded well, designating seafarers as key workers and facilitating their travel. However, some countries have yet to act urgently, as ship's crews are unable to get home in a situation that is tantamount to forced labour.

The call for a UN investigation came in a resolution adopted at the 4th session of the ILO Special Tripartite Committee of the MLC, held virtually on19-23 April 2021, where ITF representatives, shipowners and governments met to keep the Convention under review.

Photo: Noel Gabrido

Article 94, which is included in the MLC, is from the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea, 1982, which governs how all activities in the oceans and seas should be carried out, and Article 94 of the Law of the Sea establishes the duties and obligations of a flag state with respect to labour conditions, crewing and social matters on ships that fly its flag.

"The Maritime Labour Convention is an international treaty designed to protect seafarers and contribute to the provision of decent work," said Mark Dickinson, Seafarers spokesperson at the ILO and vice chair of the ITF Seafarers' Section.

The committee also agreed in a separate resolution that transport workers should be prioritised for COVID-19 vaccination, backing ITF's public call for governments to stop ignoring WHO's advice and prioritise vaccines on humanitarian and economic grounds.

"The governance and structure of the industry was brutally exposed during the pandemic. The industry is fragmented despite the requirements of the UN Law of the Sea and this massively contributed to the chaos," the Tripartite Committee noted.

The major flag states are paper tigers – zero visibility, zero ability, zero interest in the welfare of their crews. In 2020, the three leading Flags of Convenience are Panama, Liberia and the Marshall Islands,

which together represent a third of the value of the world fleet and 42% of its carrying capacity.

Furthermore, Dickinson stressed, the 97 governments who have ratified the MLC have a duty to make sure crew can get home at the end of their contracts. "It's there in black and white. There are no get-out clauses or special conditions." He said, "Governments that failed to ensure seafarers are repatriated or prevented crew from getting home, denied them medical care ashore, and who failed to cooperate internationally to guarantee seafarers their rights are in clear breach of the MLC and thus their international obligations."

Travel bans ill thought through

The STC meeting noted that, in spite of the pandemic, seafarers have continued to keep supply lines open, ensuring that essential food, fuel, medicines and medical equipment can get to where they're needed.

However, governments have had 13 months to get their acts together and still too many impose ill-thought-through travel bans that are preventing seafarers' ability to sign on and off of ships.

Photo: Stefan Lindberg

"If seafarers are designated as key workers globally and allowed to move freely, it will not go a long way to resolving this huge human rights problem," said Fabrizio Barcellona, ITF Seafarers' Section Coordinator. Fabrizio said, "There are a range of measure that authorities must put in place to stop the disease spreading to protect seafarers and port communities including testing and prioritising vaccines for seafarers and dock workers."

The meeting also recommended better co-operation between nations, temporary waivers to allow travel and international recognition of crew documents. All these things would help the crew crisis without significantly impacting governments' ability to control Covid-19.

"Many seafarers have lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic and as a consequence of the way governments are handling the crisis many more are reconsidering their choice of career," said Dickinson.

"That's had an impact on the shipping business with some companies unable to continue operating owing to crew shortages. That's affecting the whole world economy. Governments must act urgently to prevent the situation becoming even worse."

The resolution sets out how governments should make vaccinations available for seafarers and recognise other countries' vaccinations. It suggests setting up hubs in key ports for the vaccination of ships' crews. SF

DNV targets crew wellbeing

Even ship classification societies have their own protocol addressing challenges to crew health and wellbeing in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The pandemic has in many cases made crew repatriation difficult, posing challenges to the mental health of seafarers working and living in relatively confined spaces for extended periods," said Georg Smefjell, head of Maritime Management Systems (MMS) Services at DNV Maritime.

"The whole value chain of shipping has its role to play in supporting the ongoing plight of the seafarers," said Knut Ørbeck-Nilssen, CEO of DNV Maritime. "Safety at sea is at the heart of everything DNV does and the health and wellbeing of crew is vital to upholding safety standards.

"With the support of experts throughout DNV, we have established a separate audit protocol addressing challenges to crew health and well-being."

The new DNV audit protocol is grounded on the International Safety Management Code (ISM) and the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) of 2006. With the overall objective to ensure safety at sea by requiring companies to provide, among other things, a safe working environment through assessing all identified risks to ships and personnel and establishing appropriate safeguards.

We believe that increasing our focus on the risks associated with seafarer fatigue in our safety management audits will help support safer operations at sea," he added.

Focusing on relevant ISM objectives and implementing appropriate safeguards for risks related to the pandemic will enable DNV Document of Compliance (DOC) holders to better handle the ongoing challenges, according to Smefjell.

DNV has recently revamped its MMS audits around the fit-for-purpose concept, where auditors assess the effectiveness of management systems in meeting customer and regulatory objectives based on analysis of customer performance and needs.

"Our customised safety management service will help our DOC holders deal with risks to seafarers associated with the pandemic and take proactive measures to alleviate them," said Smefjell. "The health and well-being of seafarers is of interest not only because of the need to prevent the spread and consequences of COVID-19 and comply with industry standards, but also because it is key to companies meeting their objectives and goals for safe and effective operations." SF

Hext on 'No-crew Change' Clauses. Richard Hext, the committee chair of the Ship Insurance and Liability at the Asian Shipowners' Association (ASA) strikes out at many of the world's top charterers for their stubborn stance on crew changes. At ASA's virtual general meeting last 18th May, Hext expressed his disappointment, seeing "cases of prominent ship charterers, including some who have publicly voiced support for seafarers, demanding the inclusion of 'no-crew change' clauses in their charter parties or voyage instructions. Such clauses go against the human rights of seafarers and are in clear contravention of owners' responsibilities under MLC 2006." ASA held its 30th annual general meeting amidst an air of increasing frustration at the lack of progress being made to get seafarers vaccinated and reduce the number of those stranded at sea. ASA Seafarers' Committee Chairman, Han Chao, urged all governments to implement the UN Resolution on key worker status for seafarers and provide them with access to vaccines. "Now is the time that the whole world recognise the importance of seafarers who are the unsung heroes always exposing themselves to all kinds of adversities to make the world trade go round," Chao said. SF

Image: ITIC

ITIC warns on the importance of checking crew for COVID-19 tests

The importance of thoroughly checking the results of crew COVID-19 tests has been highlighted following a recent case of costly delays and disruption in crew change.

The case involved a ship manager arranging a crew change in Manila, in which the manager's appointed port agent undertook the change, and all relevant COVID-19 protocols were followed. With the new crew on board, the vessel resumed its voyage and sent its port entry and free pratique documentation to the discharge port.

However, both the agent and the local authorities at the discharge port discovered in the documentation that one of the crew who signed on at Manila had tested positive for COVID-19. Unfortunately, the positive test result has been missed by the shipmanager, the port agent at Manila, the health immigration authorities and the shipmaster.

As a result, the vessel was ordered to return to Manila to test the entire crew and make replacements as necessary. Additionally, the ship had to be disinfected. The delays totalled six days in Manila plus five additional steaming days.

International Transport Intermediaries Club (ITIC), the world's leading provider of professional indemnity insurance to transport professionals, said the shipowners put in a claim to the ship managers for around $350,000.

However, through negotiation, the claim was eventually settled at $175,000 as a number of parties had failed to spot the positive test, including the owners themselves, not just the shipmanager.

ITIC reimbursed the shipmanager but encourages all parties to remain vigilant and to check documentation thoroughly. It said COVID-19 testing is likely to be a feature of seafaring life for some time to come, and a simple oversight such as this can result in costly delays to the vessel and its cargo as well as causing unwelcome disruption for the crew. SF

Taking care of crew wellbeing placed under one roof

The partnership of Synergy Marine and PTC has developed a platform in counselling distressed seafarers using specialists to listen and help round the clock

This pandemic has highlighted seafarers' struggles, putting the spotlight on their feelings of uncertainty and anxiety about the changing demands of the sea-based profession.

To keep their emotional wellbeing intact, shipmanagement firms Synergy Marine Group and Philippine Transmarine Carriers have collaborated to bring the seafaring community under a single team.

Called as the We Team, Synergy's and PTC's partnership developed a platform in counselling distressed crews using specialists to listen and help them round the clock.

"It is a faith neutral service that is absolutely confidential, free and available in 14 languages and open to every seafarer across the globe," said the companies in a joint statement.

We Team's "maritime specialist counselors are here for you; they are here to listen and help," it said.
Synergy founder and CEO, Captain Rajesh Unni, said the wellbeing of seafarers has been their main concern since its inception, noting that "this pandemic has only exacerbated matters therefore calling for people to recognise the urgency and to act now."

WeTeam is a progression from Synergy Marine's iCall in India, which is a psychosocial helpline that offers counseling services by telephone, email and chat to individuals in emotional or psychological distress.

> **"We see the numbers growing alarmingly on high levels of stress related concerns and the concern for their safety and wellbeing has proportionately risen too"**

"Having started almost three years ago with iCall in India, we at Synergy have the experience to understand the seafaring community and their challenges from up close. We see the numbers growing alarmingly on high levels of stress-related concerns and the concern for their safety and wellbeing has proportionately risen too," said Captain Unni.

"With 25% of the seafaring community coming from the Philippines, it is impossible not to be there. We could not ask for a better partner than PTC to embark on this journey to help the seafarers and build the next generation too," Captain Unni added.

PTC CEO, Gerardo Borromeo, said the Manila-based company appreciates the opportunity to come together to develop a platform for the total wellness and care of seafarers. "Like Synergy, PTC has always felt that it is the people themselves on these vessels who do the amazing heavy lifting that moves the world."

"To all our valued seafarers, you are the heart and soul of a ship, the beating heart that enables the maritime industry to move the world. Through WeTeam, our maritime specialist counselors are here for you; they are here to listen, and help." Borromeo said.

Reflecting further, Captain Unni said, "Coming together with PTC is amazing because it has a very longstanding and trusted footprint in the Philippines, which very few organizations have. More than anything, we are totally aligned in our values and in how we value our seafarers."

Borromeo extended thanks to Synergy for its "leadership and vision in bringing this together. With what Synergy has done in its impressive growth and what PTC has been able to do in its 42 years, it feels like a 2+2 = 5 situation. We are excited about the possibilities that we can bring forward together to make a positive impact for our global maritime professionals." SF

Image: PTC

Image: InterManager

Ship, crew managers strengthen their voice in recruitment drive

InterManager stresses that its membership is open to all crew management firms regardless of size as long as they meet the standards

Together we are stronger! That's the message delivered to ship and crew managers across the globe by the international trade association for the shipmanagement sector, InterManager.

The association, which celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, is on a recruitment drive to raise industry standards and to strengthen its voice on the international stage under its new president, Mark O'Neil of Columbia Shipmanagement.

"We are actively recruiting ship managers to join our ranks and enable our industry to speak with one strong voice," declared Mr O'Neil. "Together we can deliver a real body-blow on the important matters that affect the shipmanagement industry."

InterManager said the campaign, which launched last March following the go-ahead of its Executive Committee members, is already bearing fruit. Shipmanagement giants Synergy Marine Group and OSM Maritime have come on board and Mr O'Neil says he is having talks with other leading companies interested in joining InterManager.

"It's no longer a question of 'why join'," said O'Neil in a statement, stressing, "now it's a question of 'why wouldn't you?' If you aren't in InterManager how can you demonstrate you are meeting the industry standards?" he asks.

Central to Mr O'Neil's plans for the future of shipmanagement is "an industry standard with teeth" to give confidence to ship operators that employing an InterManager member company for ship or crew management meets their expectations. That standard is being drafted with collaboration from InterManager members, making now the ideal time to sign up."

InterManager is the crucial interface between ship management companies and a range of maritime organisations and legislature, particularly the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) where it enjoys consultative status.

Mr O'Neil said members are encouraged to play an active part in InterManager campaigns and activities but will not be burdened with additional work. "There will be no paralysis by analysis," he said, "We are not adding an administrative burden and will be discriminatory in what we address within the shipping industry," he added.

InterManager stresses that its membership is open to all ship and crew managers regardless of size, as long as they meet its standards. Mr O'Neil observed: "While large companies benefit from economies of scale, for many clients, the smaller, boutique enterprise is the right answer for them."

InterManager also continues to welcome applications for associate membership from related businesses who want to benefit from direct interaction with the shipmanagement sector.

For more information visit the InterManager website: www.intermanager.org. SF

Shipping companies collaborate on data sharing for a 'human reliability model'

Those taking part in the model's proof of concept are enabling HiLo Maritime Risk Management to develop a system that will ultimately make working at sea safer across the industry

A number of the industry's biggest names are cooperating in sharing human data to quantify crew behaviour and reduce risks at sea.

HiLo Maritime Risk Management says its collaboration with nine of the leading shipping companies will test its groundbreaking Human Reliability Model project.

The companies sharing their data with HiLo, which is revolutionising the way data is shared and analysed within the maritime industry to improve safety for mariners, are Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement, Shell Shipping, Maersk Tankers, Scorpio, Optimum and Zenith (Scorpio Group), Northern Marine, Stolt Tankers and Gaslog.

HiLo said the project was made possible with funding from the Lloyd's Register Foundation. The Foundation is investing in safety across different industries and improving the lives of people worldwide. HiLo added it is grateful for the support of the Lloyd's Register Foundation in developing the Human Reliability Model.

The model, HiLo said in a statement, will be the first-ever "predictive model" to be used in the industry quantifying human behaviour. The risk management outfit is helping shipping companies to make the most of their human-related data to reduce risks to their crew.

Data leading to incidents

HiLo says it uses data to pinpoint issues that may lead to incidents in the future that enables its subscribers to develop long-term strategies to reduce real risks.

Data such as how long crew members are working, work/rest numbers, and training levels can be transformed into invaluable risk reports, it says, pointing out "the ability to highlight the issues that are likely to lead to an incident will change the way the industry thinks about safety, saving lives at sea for years to come."

The last decade alone has seen 24,000 casualties at sea, which HiLo looks at working to reduce the risks to those who work at sea. It sees the Human Reliability Model as the next step in the journey to empower shipping companies to react to risks swiftly and in the right way.

Furthermore, the model's analysis will enable companies to channel their resources into the right parts of the company and to prioritise actions for every ship in their fleets. The model offers direct visibility of the way in which companies manage their employees and highlights the areas in need of improvement.

Vital to the industry

HiLo admits to have conducted years of in-depth research into the physical and emotional wellbeing of crew members. It says there are all kinds of factors that have a mental or physical impact on seafarers.

"Going too long without visiting loved ones, long working hours and the worries around the current pandemic can all have a real impact on crew. Similarly, environmental factors such as poor lighting or inappropriate procedures can make even simple on-board tasks more challenging."

HiLo's CEO, Manit Chander, stressed that anything that impacts the mental or physical capabilities of a crew member has the potential to lead to human error, with consequences that can be fatal.

Human error is responsible for 70% of maritime incidents, and HiLo's Human Reliability Model strives to reduce the risks of mistakes being made at sea. He says the lower the risk of incidents, the safer the seas

are for everyone who works on them.

Chander said: "Human error is the biggest driver of maritime incidents. HiLo is revolutionising the way we approach human behaviour. Using psychological expertise and statistical analysis, we are predicting where humans are likely to impact safety. With that vital information, we can set seafarers up for success."

The companies taking part in the model's proof of concept are enabling to develop a system that will ultimately make working at sea safer across the entire industry, HiLo said.

The Human Reliability project is currently in the proof of concept stage. A spokesperson told Sailing Forward: "We are working with shipping companies to understand what data they could share to create the most accurate analysis."

HiLo claims to be "the only risk management company which collects shipping companies' full data sets, so we see leading indicators missed by other systems." It has advanced mathematical modeling to develop the Human Reliability Model. As shipping companies share their vessels' data with the model, it enables HiLo to analyse it against the criteria contributing towards the likelihood of mistakes occurring.

An industry first

The Human Reliability Model has the potential to change the way

Image: Noel Gabrido

shipping companies approach their human data and internal risk management. HiLo's subscribers will receive a custom analysis of their own human data. The analysis highlights any points of weakness within the organisation, creating the opportunity to make changes and improvements where they are needed.

"We understand that knowing how to react to risk isn't always simple, and so HiLo's subscriber forum – CUPID – is on hand for maritime experts to share best practices with others in the industry," it said.

Many shipping companies are still reluctant to share their data due to concerns about how it will be used and who will have access to it. But it boasts that the process of data sharing with HiLo is completely secure and all submissions are anonymised, so subscribers feel free to share their entire data sets. The aim of the Human Reliability Model is simply to improve the safety of crew members and to reduce the risk of incidents at sea.

Its focus has always been to navigate the industry towards higher safety levels for everyone, and they need to work together to achieve it. With some of the industry's leaders proudly sharing their data with HiLo to test out the Human Reliability Model proof of concept, it is one step closer to safer seas. SF

X-Press Burning. A mixed crew of Chinese, Filipino, Indian and Russian seafarers were swiftly evacuated from this three-month old, 2,700 TEU ship when the X-Press Pearl (pictured) caught fire off Colombo, Sri Lanka. The vessel was carrying around 25 tonnes of acid amongst the 1,486 containers on board when the Singaporean-flagged ship caught fire last 25 May 2021. Splash reported that poor packaging was responsible for the acid leak, which the crew had detected while in the Arabian Sea thousands of kilometres away from Sri Lanka. Debris from the containership had washed ashore and locals have been warned not to touch any of it as this could be contaminated with harmful chemicals. SF (Image: Sri Lanka Navy)

A slap in the face for pandemic heroes

Shipowners and seafarers failed to agree on a revised minimum wage as unions chided result of the pay freeze is "a pay cut in real terms"

Seafarers unions have taken the extraordinary decision to shut down negotiations over the future of mariners' minimum wages with national shipowners represented in the pay deal.

The unions said they would prefer to tackle the shipping companies 'head-on' to set wages unilaterally rather than risk decades of established ILO practices by agreeing to employers' demands to ditch the objective of ILO minimum wage calculations.

In the long history of the negotiations with the shipowners, represented by the International Chamber of Shipping, and the seafarers have failed to agree a revised minimum wage for the second time.

Mark Dickinson, seafarers' group spokesperson at the ILO and vice-chair of the Seafarers' Section of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), blamed the shipowners for their "astounding lack of self-awareness and a lack of respect for the sacrifices of seafarers" – especially in the time of the coronavirus pandemic.

Mark Dickinson

Dickinson said: "By initially holding to ransom any kind of pay rise – even a dollar – to their plan to blow up the ILO formula, the shipowners expose their long-term strategy to undermine the social dialogue that has been so critical to the success and stability of this industry for years, and in doing so threaten the cooperation that we've seen throughout the global pandemic."

The formula puts the minimum wage at $683 per month with effect from 1st January 2022, a $1.40 per day increase on the current rate of $641, which was set following discussions at the ILO in 2018. The wage rise represents less than the price of a cup of coffee in most countries.

The formula is just about retaining the purchasing power of seafarers in a standard currency so that their real wages don't go backwards, as well as sharing a small portion in the productivity gains of the industry that seafarers' skills and hard work is generating.

He disclosed that a new research from the ITF showed a quarter of seafarers were considering quitting the industry already due to the ongoing crew change crisis and another 23% of seafarers were unsure about their future, suggesting a seafarer supply crunch was looming. COVID-era travel, transit and border restrictions meant a prospective seafarer might not see their family for years, he said.

Pushing wage cuts now or in the future represented a 'total own goal' for shipowners, stated Dickinson, revealing that companies were increasingly sharing their private concerns about labour supply to union officials behind closed doors.

"Sadly the result of the shipowners' pay freeze is a pay cut in real terms – accelerating an industry labour shortage. It's hard enough for these companies to recruit seafarers with the crew change issue. I would have thought now would be the time to be investing in your people and making this an industry more attractive to join – not less," he said.

Shipowners have repeatedly claimed that they care about the seafarers, that seafarers are 'vital', and 'critical' to our industry and the global supply chain. But the moment it comes to recognise the contribution of seafarers and value

Image: Noel Gabrido

them practically by respecting institutions most fundamental to seafarers' welfare and delivering a modest real wage increase, Dickinson says, the shipowners show their true colours.

The shipowners' arguments that the industry had suffered financially during the pandemic was not rooted in reality, according to the vice chair of the ITF Seafarers' Section. "especially compared to the strain and turmoil experienced by seafarers battling the Covid-19 pandemic, a lack of crew change, and its impacts on seafaring sectors such as cruise."

International shipping rates were at all-time highs and most shipowners had done well out of the pandemic despite earlier predictions of falls in revenue and profitability, he said. "The seafarers made a strong case to the ILO meeting as the final report will show. The heroes of the pandemic have sacrificed time and again. They have literally risked their lives so that these companies could survive COVID-19 and its economic effects."

Now the thanks they get is a slap in the face from the shipowners who are essentially making them choose between pay cuts now or pay cuts later. It's disgraceful," stressed Dickinson.

Failing to agree means the ITF now must unilaterally determine the ILO minimum wage rate, but unlike the shipowners, the unions will respect and keep faith with the ILO formula, which is fair and objective.

The formula is just about retaining the purchasing power of seafarers in a standard currency so that their real wages don't go backwards, as well as sharing a small portion in the productivity gains of the industry that seafarers' skills and hard work is generating.

The ITF maintains that the revised ILO minimum wage for an able seafarer is a minimum of $683 per month from the first of January 2022. It said they will advise affiliates and the ILO Governing Body accordingly.

Dickinson said, "Our door remains open for further talks should common sense prevail." SF

Image: Noel Gabrido

Social media and recruitment platform for seafarers launches

With difficult times on the horizon for the maritime industry, the emergence of Propel hopes to help both seafarers and those looking for maritime talent alike

A free social media and recruitment platform designed for seafarers has been launched after a successful crowd funding campaign.

The recent roll out of Propel 2.0 includes many new and exciting features designed to benefit seafarers and those looking for maritime talent, according to Captain Fraser Matthew, one of the three co-founders of the platform and an active-serving shipmaster.

The platform aims to provide better data security and recruitment opportunities for seafarers in the midst towards digitalisation accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We are really excited to be sharing the ownership of Propel with so many seafarers. For us, it is real validation that Propel can achieve what it was set out to do – bringing seafarers together, allowing them to manage their career and helping them to find their dream job," said Captain Matthew in a statement.

He believes that the set of guarantees the platform has made is behind the strong number of sign-ups and successful crowd funding.

"Propel has made a set of pledges that are the bedrock of the relationship between the platform and its users. We pledge that we will never charge users to access PROPEL or apply for any job," Capt Fraser assured, saying, they will "always respect and protect their data and we are committed to having their voice heard."
The crowd funding campaign saw many seafarers invest and become shareholders in the platform, which aims to assist seafarers in managing their career and obtaining their dream job whilst driving conversation and positive change within the industry.

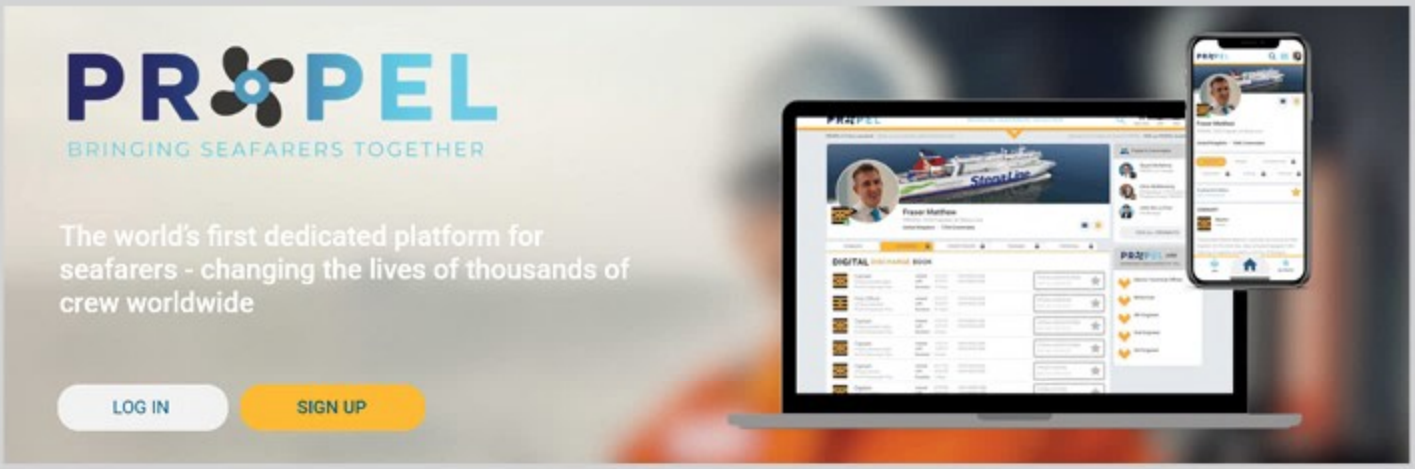
A revamped user interface and new features such as an upgraded 'Digital Discharge Book', a new way of securely sharing documents called 'PROPEL check' and unique discussion groups known as 'Cabins' are now available to new and existing members at www.propelme.io
With difficult times on the horizon for the maritime industry, Capt. Fraser hopes that the emergence of Propel will help both seafarers and those looking for maritime talent alike.

"We are currently in a strange environment where despite there being a well-documented shortage of seafarers, there are thousands of seafarers struggling to find jobs due to COVID-19. Propel will bridge that gap – enabling those looking for maritime talent to find and select the best crew, and empowering seafarers looking for work to manage their digital CV and apply for jobs via PROPEL – a win-win for the industry," he stated.

The shipmaster says corruption and the uncontrolled sharing of seafarer data is also a traditional problem facing the maritime recruitment industry. The platform vows to address this, too.

"Seafarers are continually sharing their personal data through the outdated process of sending their CVs (curriculum vitae) to often unverified email accounts, frequently receiving no acknowledgment or reply back. With PROPEL you build your Digital Discharge book once and apply for unlimited jobs via PROPEL!" Capt. Fraser explains.

In regard to the top tip for getting that dream job, Capt Fraser had this to say: "Be yourself, be confident and make sure your PROPEL profile is up to date!". SF



Maersk Etienne crew awarded

The Danish shipowner said the award will ensure that what the rescued persons and the crew went through is not forgotten, especially in a time where the need for action remains

Image: Maersk Tankers

In recognition of their outstanding and admirable seamanship, the officers and crew of the tanker Maersk Etienne have received the Shipping Award 2021 from the association Danish Shipping..

The award follows the rescue of 27 people in distress at sea and their handling of later situation due to a political stalemate that left the vessel stranded at sea for 38 days. The 27 refugees the Etienne rescued in Tunisian waters in August 2020 were forced to remain on board as authorities dragged their feet in finding solution to the migrants.

"Captain Yeroshkin and his crew went above and beyond their duty in an unprecedented situation," said Christian Ingerslev, the CEO of Maersk Tankers, in a statement. "The award is a recognition of their seamanship, and the values and empathy they embody. Having the stamina to cope with the situation for 38 days, while at all times caring for the people they rescued, is admirable."

The 38-day standoff, which is said to be the longest in European maritime history, ended when a charity rescue vessel took the refugees and disembarked in the Italian port of Sicily.

Captain Yeroshkin said he and his crew are honoured to accept the award, which is being given for outstanding seamanship. "Receiving the Shipping Award is a great honour. We did our duty as seafarers and human beings, and it means a lot to me that our care for the rescued and our seamanship are being recognised," he said.

The Etienne shipmaster said he is "sure my colleagues at sea would have done the same if they had found themselves in a similar situation – it just happened on our watch."

Many months have passed since Maersk Etienne was called upon to assist people in distress in the Mediterranean Sea – and still the shipping industry awaits a political solution that will ensure a safe and quick disembarkation of those in distress to avoid a repeat of the Maersk Etienne ordeal.

Shipowners and maritime unions have called on the European Commission for an assurance that EU Migration Pact should be complemented by a measure to ensure that merchant ships are with "prompt and predictable disembarkations for persons rescued at sea."

CEO Ingerslev said the award will ensure that what the rescued persons and the crew went through is not forgotten, especially in a time where the need for action remains. He added, "It will continue to be a risk for people in distress at sea and the shipping community until this situation has been resolved politically. A captain should be able to save those in distress at sea with the confidence that relevant governments and authorities will assist in quickly disembarking the rescued." SF

Queuing up on Suez Canal

Mark Philip Laurilla shares his crew's experience in transit along Egypt's narrow channel

Image: Seabird Marine

It is the maritime gateway between Asia and Europe. The waterway shortcut between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. For over 150 years it has facilitated the movement of billions of tonnes of cargo and to this day, it remains one of the world's most heavily used shipping lanes.

I just received a phone call for end of sea passage, and our ship will be arriving shortly at the northern entrance to Suez Canal. Our ship has been crossing the Mediterranean for about two days and here we are approaching Port Said, the northern entrance to Suez Canal.

Transiting in convoy

We have just finished our maneuvering and we now reached the anchorage area. The usual convoy schedule is around 2300H and 0300H. We still don't know the time of our convoy, so we await here at the anchorage. Until further notice, we had to stay anchored for a few hours while waiting for our schedule. Soon enough, the pilot came on board and we started maneuvering towards the entrance.

Ships transit the canal in convoys carefully to maximise the number of ships passing through the narrow channel each day. It is arranged in such a way to be able to facilitate the northbound and southbound transits.

Since most segments of the canal are only wide enough for a single lane, an average of 50 ships passes through the Suez Canal daily, which covers a distance of around 120 miles. The northbound and southbound ships will eventually meet at the Bitter Lake, which is roughly around the midpoint of the transit.

As we are transiting Suez Canal, it's been around six hours since we entered from the north side and currently, I'm on watch. Shortly, our ship will be anchoring for the next convoy sequence before we can proceed southwards and eventually exit the canal after about three hours.

I'm not sure until what time we will be staying at the anchorage area. Right now, it's 0600H, I think it's already daylight so I'll take a look outside.

Although a number of ancient canals were dug up in this region since the time Egypt was under the rule of the pharaohs and then eventually the Romans, it was only during the French occupation of Egypt in 1798 when Napoleon ordered the first survey across the Isthmus of Suez.

Further studies were made in the 1800s and construction began in 1859. The waterway was completed in the span of 10 years and the Suez Canal was opened on 17 November 1869.

Originally, the canal consisted only of a very narrow channel of about 8m deep and 22m wide at the bottom. In the first 15 years of its operation, around 3,000 ships went aground. Continuous improvements in the canal were carried out in the first 90 years until it was blocked in

1967 during the Arab-Israel War. It remained inoperative until 1975, when it was finally reopened and improvements were made – its first full year of operation resumed.

In 1870, there were only 486 transits, which moved a total of 444,000 tonnes of cargo. In 2019, approximately 19,000 ships carrying 1.2 billion tonnes of cargo transited the Suez Canal.

The Bitter Lake

Our ship just dropped anchor here at the anchorage area of Suez Canal. This is called the Bitter Lake. Don't ask me why. Anyway, we will be waiting here for a few hours until the pilot comes on board to resume our convoy all the way out of Suez Canal as we head to our discharging port.

The Great Bitter Lake is more or less the halfway point of the transit. It's where the convoy interchanges in using the northern and southern channels. So every time ships pass through the canal there's a riding team or riding crew, electrician and boatmen who will come on board the ship and stay. They will stay on board until the ship leaves the canal.

Now, these guys usually bring business on board. They sell a lot of stuff such as souvenirs and SIM cards that the crew might be interested in, Egyptian figurines, papyrus paper and a lot of other stuff. I bought a SIM card and a speaker cable because I needed them.

We stayed at anchor for a few hours. One by one, we watched the northbound ships pass us by. From the bridge wing you can get a view of the Great Bitter Lake. Though there is nothing much to see beyond but sand, the calm waters and the clear skies still offer the beautiful backdrop for the ships anchored on the Bitter Lake.

I got a call that the pilot is approaching our ship and we're getting ready to heat up the anchor so we can finally exit Suez Canal. As the pilot came on board, we made the ship ready and resumed our transit.

When the canal first opened, transit time averaged around 40 hours as ships would stop in bays to allow other ships from the opposite direction to pass by. The convoy system was adopted in 1947 which greatly reduced transit times. For the past 150 years the Suez Canal has undergone numerous dredging, expansion, and improvement in facilities and management.

Saving time and fuel

At present, the transit time ranges between 11 to 16 hours. Now, the Suez Canal has given ships plying the routes between Asia and Europe the option to save time and fuel if they are willing to pay the toll, which is calculated based on the ship's tonnage.

I don't know how much our ship's transit cost is. But based on the Suez Canal toll calculator which can be found online, the estimate is around $230,000.

As our ship approached the southern end of the canal, the boatmen and the other members of the riding gang prepared to disembark.

It took us a total of 16 hours including the time at anchor to complete the southbound transit. As we finally went through the exit – the pilot disembarked – and our ship resumed its voyage. SF

The Captain in UN Geneva Photo Exhibit. Captain Jasmin Labarda was featured in a photo exhibit by the United Nations in Geneva. As "captain of especially-equipped and sophisticated ships, Jasmin (pictured) leads international teams of seafarers and engineers as they lay oil and gas pipelines and cables beneath the world's oceans. Trained in the Philippines, she brings the finest credentials of the country's renowned maritime workforce to this highly-technical industry, as she pursues her childhood dream to conquer the sea," the exhibit described Captain Labarda. SF

Do large vessels cause poor reliability?

Image: FleetMon

Analysts at Sea-Intelligence look at this aspect of service quality to see whether ultra large container ships are dependable

That is the question for those in the industry in the wake of the accidental Ever Given blockage of the Suez Canal.

The sentiment persisted across some shippers or cargo owners – that larger containerships lead to poor service quality. Considering the size impact of +22,500 TEU vessels compared with, say 10,000 or 15,000 TEU box ships in the Asia-Europe trade, it has long been a debated issue in the industry, which once again floated following the Suez Canal blockage.

Sea-Intelligence noted that the figure indicates "the assumption that larger vessels are unreliable is incorrect.

Sea-Intelligence, a leading provider of research and analysis within the global supply chain industry, looked at one aspect of service quality – schedule reliability – to see whether larger vessels are indeedmore unreliable than the smaller ones.

It compared a schedule reliability on a per vessel-size group for both 2018 and 2019 on the Asia-North Europe trade lane (See Fig 1). Sea-Intelligence noted that the figure indicates "the assumption that larger vessels are unreliable is incorrect."

In fact, the graph shows, the +22,500 TEU vessels that were deployed on the trade lane from September 2019, had the highest schedule reliability of 95.1% across all vessel-size groups in that year. In 2018, however, it provides a slightly different trend, with the 10,000-12,499 TEU vessels the most reliable with 84.4% schedule reliability.

The vessel-size groups from 15,000 TEU upwards see decreasing schedule reliability with increasing vessel size. However, both 15,000-17,499 TEU and 17,500-19,999 TEU vessel groups had higher schedule reliability than the 12,500-14,999 TEU vessel group.

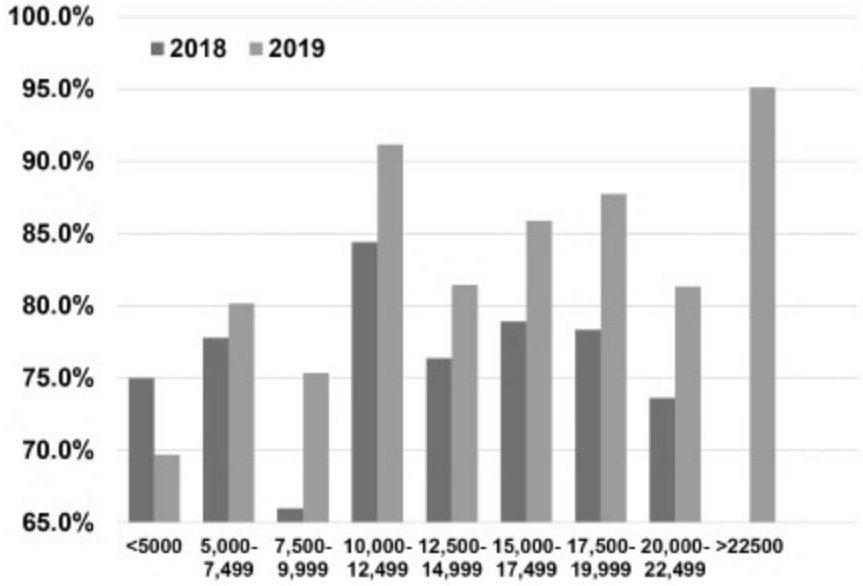
On Asia-Mediterranean trade in 2019, when looking at vessels of over 10,000 TEU, schedule reliability increased with increasing vessel-size groups, with both the 20,000-22,499 TEU and the 23,000 TEU vessels recording perfect 100% schedule reliability. Even in 2018, the two largest vessel-size groups in deployment – 17,500-19,999 TEU and 20,000-22,499 TEU – had the highest schedule reliability of 85.2% and 84.2%, respectively.

While the ultra-large container vessels are only consistently deployed on Asia-Europe, Sea-Intelligence also extended their analysis to the Transpacific, for

World's Largest Container Ship. Container vessels have grown in size over the past ten years, with major shipping companies now owning or operating ultra-large ships in their fleet. The ultra-large container ships (ULCS) operate mainly on the key trade routes between Asia and Europe. These ULCS types are on a range of 20,000-22,500 TEU in capacity. But the largest containership currently in service is the HMM Algeciras (pictured), which can carry a maximum of 24,000 containers, making it a bit bigger than the previous record holder, the MSC Gülsün with 23,756 TEU.

The Algeciras is currently owned by the South Korean shipping line HMM, which was previously named Hyundai Merchant Marine. For their operators, these giants of the sea have lower costs per container and are better for the environment, but they also give significant logistic challenges for the port. When the Algeciras made its maiden call at the port of Hamburg early last year, for instance, the giant vessel was said to have required around 3,800 lorries and 50 freight trains, 48 hours before and after its arrival. SF

Fig. 1: Schedule Reliability per Vessel Size (Asia-NEUR)



reference. On Asia-North America West Coast, both the 7,500-9,999 TEU and 12,500-14,999 TEU vessel-size groups had similar schedule reliability in both 2018 and 2019, whilst the 10,000-12,499 TEU group had a higher schedule reliability in 2019 of 73.3%. The only variation on Transpacific was on Asia-North America East Coast, where the largest vessel-size group had the lowest schedule reliability. SF

Industry launches 'Declaration on Suppression of Piracy' in Gulf of Guinea

BIMCO maintains the attacks can be suppressed with as little as two frigates with helicopters and one maritime patrol aircraft that actively combat piracy in the area

Danish anti-piracy frigate

The attacks on merchant ships in the Gulf of Guinea by Nigerian pirates must end.

That was the firm resolve of the world's largest international shipping organisation, BIMCO, when they signed the "Gulf of Guinea Declaration on Suppression of Piracy" launched last 20 May 2021.

"We hope that all parties with an interest in a safe Gulf of Guinea will sign this Declaration," says Sadan Kaptanoglu, BIMCO president and shipowner, who personally had a ship hijacked and crew kidnapped in the Gulf of Guinea.

Last year, 135 seafarers were kidnapped from their ships globally, with the Gulf of Guinea accounting for over 95% of the victims. This has happened in international waters in an area less than 20% of the size of the sea area dominated by Somali pirates a few years ago. The pirates launch their attacks from the Niger Delta, where they also subsequently hold their hostages.

BIMCO welcomes the positive steps taken by regional states, especially Nigeria. However, in reality, the shipping organisation says it will take some years before these states can effectively manage the problem.

In the interim period, the best solution, BIMCO suggests, "is to have capable military assets from able and willing non-regional states to actively combat piracy in the area in support of the efforts by countries in the region."

The Declaration signatories firmly believe that piracy and attempts at kidnapping are preventable through active anti-piracy operations and that the number of attacks by pirates can be reduced by at least 80% by the end of 2023.

During its session from 5-14 May 2021, the Maritime Safety Committee of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) discussed the Gulf of Guinea piracy. Although development of related IMO resolutions on this topic is constructive and welcome, they say much more remains to be done, particularly in the short term. BIMCO states the launch of the Gulf of Guinea Declaration on Suppression of Piracy is therefore a timely expression of the maritime industry's call for further action,

through a wide range of collective efforts, to end the menace urgently. Two frigates and one aircraft BIMCO maintains that the piracy can be suppressed with as little as two frigates with helicopters and one maritime patrol aircraft, which actively combat piracy in the area.

"It is therefore imperative that non-regional countries provide the necessary assets on a rotation basis, and that one or more states in the area support the effort with logistics and prosecution of arrested pirates."

The Declaration does not aspire to provide the long-term solution to the piracy problem but to help make seafarers safe today.

It insists that, "The root causes of the piracy problem in the Gulf of Guinea can only be solved by Nigeria. An estimated 30 million people live in the Niger Delta, many under difficult conditions, and it would be naïve to think that anyone other than Nigeria can address the roots of the piracy problem."

However, suppressing piracy will help our seafarers, just like it did off Somalia a few years ago, according to the group's safety and security committee.

"It will also establish security at sea and enable regional blue economies to prosper. Without security, there can be no development," says Carlo Cameli, the chair of BIMCO's Maritime Safety & Security Committee.

The 'Declaration' aims to speak plainly about the piracy problem in the Gulf of Guinea and get all the stakeholders involved to address the real problems, with effective solutions, on behalf of our seafarers. SF

GoG's unacceptable state

Shipowners and operators lament the situation in the Gulf of Guinea as unacceptable for five reasons:

1. The human toll is unacceptably high for seafarer victims either directly affected by attacks, e.g., through kidnapping, psychological trauma, or death, as well as indirectly affected by periods of stress because of the constant threat.

2. The attacks are preventable taking place in a relatively small area (less than one fifth the size of the area affected by Somali piracy in 2010). An active naval force with very few assets conducting effective law enforcement could deter and suppress piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

3. Stakeholders in the region – including individual consumers, governments, and businesses – pay increased costs for shipments due to the increased cost of security for visiting merchant ships.

4. Continued reliance on locally sourced commercial protection services that are under the control of the coastal States undermines incentives to carry out effective law enforcement and therefore is not a model that will genuinely repress the actions of the pirates in the region.

5. The poor security situation impedes regional economic growth because it puts off investments in the ocean-based economy whereby a significant contribution to the regional economies is forfeited. SF

Kidnapped Crew Get Home. Ten Filipino crewmembers kidnapped from the Maltese-flagged oil/chemical tanker Davide B arrived in Manila last 19 April. The seafarers were part of the 15 officers and crew abducted from the De Poli Tankers-owned ship in the Gulf of Guinea last 11 March 2021. They were deployed by the crewing agent Elburg Ship Management. Six other Filipino crewmen who were spared from the kidnapping were repatriated safely on 03 April. The Department of Foreign Affairs said the safe return home of the 10 seafarers was made possible through close coordination between the Philippine government, through its Embassies in Abuja and The Hague, the Dutch tanker owners and Elburg Ship Management. SF

Ship abandonment on the rise

Flag States are supposed to ensure that ships flying their flags are paying seafarers on time, repatriating them at the end of contracts, and providing the necessities of life

It has become the scourge of modern-day shipping that needs to be eradicated. Ship abandonment cases are growing with seafarers bearing the brunt of the high cost of struggle – both financial and emotional burden.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) abandonment database represents hundreds of seafarers who were owed wages, repatriation flights, or both. In 2020, the ILO received a record number of ship abandoned cases which the ITF sent from various ports worldwide. Of the 85 cases lodged, 60 appeared in the abandonment database last year.

ITF Inspectorate Coordinator, Steve Trowsdale, said the number of cases officially reported and recorded by the IMO/ILO "is just the tip of the iceberg" when it comes to instances of abandonment and owed wages. "Owed wages" are usually pay, bonuses or entitlements that are unpaid by a shipowner or their agent for the work already done by a seafarer.

The Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) defines abandonment as when "a shipowner fails to cover the cost of the seafarer's repatriation; or has left the seafarer without the necessary maintenance and support; or has otherwise unilaterally severed their ties with the seafarer including failure to pay contractual wages for a period of at least two months".

When this happens ITF Seafarer Support and its team of inspectors, which includes Nautilus/ITF inspectors, will try to repatriate the crew and recover any outstanding wages from shipowners.

New figures released by the ITF show that $44.614 million of owed wages were recovered for seafarers by the ITF's network of inspectors across the world last year.

Trowsdale, who leads the global union's federation of 134 coordinators, inspectors and contacts, said the owed wages figure was "substantial considering how difficult it has been for inspectors to board ships due to COVID-19 restrictions imposed by governments, health and port authorities."

However, the pandemic restrictions have not affected inspectors' support to seafarers with 7,476 cases in 2020, or more than 6,000 vessels boarded.

"Despite there being fewer inspections that we were able to undertake due to coronavirus social distancing requirements and restrictions, our inspectors actually recovered almost the same amount of owed wages for seafarers as we did last year," said Trowsdale in a statement.

> **"The number of cases officially reported and recorded by the IMO/ILO "is just the tip of the iceberg"**

ITF inspectors often carry out their duties to ensure the health and safety of the crew, and that seafarers on board are fed, supported and paid in accordance with all relevant contractual and legal entitlements. They help seafarers stand up for their rights to stop working and get home at the end of contracts.

Four Years on Abandoned Ship. It's "like I finally got out of prison. I'm finally going to be re-joined with my family. I'm going to see them again." Those were Mohammad Aisha's (pictured) response to BBC when asked how he felt minutes before his plane was due to take off, ending a four-year battle where he was forced to live on an abandoned ship in the Suez Canal as their vessel waited to be sold. Aisha was the chief officer just two months yet on board the Bharaini-flagged M/V Aman when Egyptian authorities detained the ship due to expired safety equipment certificates. When the owner abandoned the ship, an Egyptian court designated Aisha as the vessel's "legal guardian" – preventing him from leaving Aman until the ship was sold or a replacement guardian found. Without power and with swarm of insects and rodents aboard, the ship was home for the Syrian national except that he had to swim ashore (pictured, right) to charge his phone, and for food and water. It's been one of the most frustrating abandonment cases the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) worked on, and much more desperate for Aisha for too long. His suffering could have been avoided if the shipowner and the other parties with obligations to him and the ship did the right thing from the start, said Mohamed Arrachedi, the ITF Arab World and Iran network coordinator. So when the global union federation put forward one of its contacts to take Aisha's place, Arrachedi reported, the court accepted it and the ITF were then able to advance the necessary immigration processes and arrange the COVID-19 PCR tests to start to get him home on 22 April 2021. Aisha lost four years of his life. His home in Syria could be unrecognisable. Some of his family died years ago. The delays mean he will never see his mother again. Arrachedi said the overjoyed but very tired Aisha cannot quite believe that his nightmare trapped aboard the Aman has finally come to an end. SF

Image: ITF

But with the pandemic, in-person inspections have become difficult in some countries. "Being unable to visit vessels in many places, our inspectors and contacts have had to work remotely and engage more than ever before with seafarers through digital channels like social media. The result has been the ITF holding the line for seafarers and their rights during the pandemic," explained Trowsdale.

The ITF insists that every dollar they recovered is income that seafarers and their families rely on, which they need and deserve. "Seafaring can be hard, challenging work that requires much skill – and months away from your loved ones. The ITF family won't let employers rip seafarers off if we can stop it."

Steve Trowsdale (Photo ITF)

Apart from recovering wages, Trowsdale stressed that the ITF had been involved in helping hundreds of seafarers who were abandoned by shipowners, helping seafarers get access to food, water, fuel and flights home.

The high-profile case of a Syrian seafarer who was forced to live on their abandoned ship for four years was one of them. Mohammad Aisha, a chief officer of the Bharaini-flagged MV Aman, was forced to live on the cargo ship whilst Egyptian authorities tried to sell the ship to pay the owners' debts. When the ITF got involved in December 2020, it took just five months to get Aisha home last April (see Aisha's captioned story).

Ship abandonment is on the rise, which holds Flag States accountable to their responsibilities to seafarers. "Flag States are supposed to ensure that ships flying their flags are paying seafarers on time, repatriating them at the end of contracts, and providing the necessities of life," said Trowsdale. With 122 inspectors in 58 countries, Trowsdale conceeded that the ITF leads the fight against rogue shipowners who would treat their seafarers like modern-day slaves. SF

Can competency management system be a tool for transformative change?

A group of distinguished and knowledgeable professionals talked all things competency management during a panel discussion courtesy of Ocean Technologies Group (OTG), the global learning and tech company.

The panel, which was asked how competency management can help prepare people and organisations for tomorrow, discussed how to successfully implement a competency management system that was covered far more in an hour.

With competency management being such a hot topic right now, OTG shares its valuable contributions from the panelists.

Panelists included, --Dr Phillip Belcher, Marine Director, INTERTANKO;
-Yvette De Klerk, Head of Training, Ship Management, Wallem Group
-Adam Lewis, Head of Training & Operations, International Maritime Employers' Council (IMEC)
-Captain John Lloyd, Chief Executive, The Nautical Institute
-Captain Sanjeev Soni, Managing Director, Ocean Technologies Group

The discussion last 28th April 2021 was moderated by Raal Harris, the creative director at OTG.

On behavioural competencies

Behavioural competencies and the role they will perform in ensuring people are equipped for today, and for the future, was a topic that got a lot of airtime during the discussion.

Dr Phillip Belcher first praised the high level of work and standards mariners have maintained throughout the pandemic and emphasised the need to provide seafarers "the tools to manage situations that are not just technical side, which is often covered in STCW (Standards of Training, Certigication and Watchkeeping), but in the wider remit of looking after people and working with others".

BCAV brings another dimension to what has traditionally been included and measured within competency management. All of the panelists agreed that the development of 'soft skills' will be critical to our seafarer's continued growth and effectiveness.

"We need to embrace a range of skills. Some of those are personal skills about empathy and how people approach critical thinking, and so on. A whole range of life skills [need to be considered] around how people communicate, how they collaborate" Captain John Lloyd said.

Behavioural competencies are still a new idea in many organisations. Those that have embraced BCAV or developed their own behavioural competencies are certainly seeing the rewards, but there is still a way to go before the measurement and management of 'soft skills' becomes the norm in the industry.

On new vessels and technologies driving skill shortages

The speed at which increasingly technologically advanced vessels and processes are entering service is driving a need for businesses to move faster and to ensure their people are equipped with the knowledge, skills and mindsets that are necessary to work in today's environments.

Yvette De Klerk and Adam Lewis both emphasised that STCW is the minimum standard we expect of our seafarers. With more advanced vessels coming on stream and a higher reliance on technology, there is an increasing requirement for higher levels of competency in areas not included in the current form of STCW. Yvette said there was already a need for "more technologically skilled people for the operation of more technologically advanced vessels".

What an advantage competency management offers is that it supports an adaptive approach.

The flexibility a competency management system (CMS) offers, enabling companies to define and design competencies in the areas they deem critical to achieving their goals, means competency management can move faster.

Image: Ocean Technologies Group

"Competences are moving ahead a lot quicker than STCW allows so company requirements or industry requirements are moving much quicker", said Adam.

On supporting and growing seafarers

When posed the question, "Where do you see CMS playing the biggest role in your organisation?" in a poll ahead of the event, crew career and succession planning tied with "operational efficiency" for the top spot. This reflected both the discussions OTG had with their customers, and the views of the panel.

"We do need to continue to support seafarers, continue to build on their competence, so that seafarers have the right tools for them to succeed both in their job as professionals, and in their ongoing career", said Dr Belcher.

Adopting competency management benefits an organisation and the people within it. By supporting and growing employees, you have a happier, more motivated workforce and one that is able to help your business thrive in the future. Over the course of the session, the panelists repeatedly made the point that competency management supports the seafarer.

On how not to use competency management

Both Captain Lloyd and Captain Sanjeev Soni made points around ensuring that competency management was brought in to benefit employees and warned against using it as a tool to reprimand underperforming crew.

"[Competency management] isn't about if you fail this assessment you're sacked; it is about finding out what development needs there are, and how they can be better prepared for their role on that ship", said Captain Lloyd.

If someone sees competency management as a tool that will help them to be recognised for the excellent work they do then they are more likely to invest in it personally.

Captain Lloyd's view, and one echoed by comments from the rest of the group, is that competency management is "about making sure that our colleagues and our seafarers are capable for now and for the future".

On where to start with a competency management system

"Start small with CMS, get it established and then grow organically," according to De Klerk.

The advice from all involved was that starting small with competency management, either by implementing an existing standard or by starting with a few competencies and then growing the number as buy-in and results grow.

The internal resources, expertise and manpower all play a part in considering where to start with a CMS.

(OTG is providing a copy of the free guide, if one wants to dive deeper into what is involved in implementing a CMS)

On getting buy-in and making a success of competency management

The ultimate key to the success when bringing a new system or process or system into a business is always getting buy-in from the stakeholders.

De Klerk believes that transparency on the process and the purpose of competency management is key to ensuring buy-in from mariners and ensuring that it is considered a benefit rather than a burden.

"We can get the buy in if it is a transparent process. If it is clear the objectives of what a company is trying to achieve by having this is clear and clearly communicated the outcome", said De Klerk.

Whilst the seafarers are undeniably the main stakeholders for competency management, Capt Sanjeev also noted the importance of getting buy-in and understanding from the management. In his experience, he said that the senior management needs to understand the resources required to implement and manage a competency management system; and that competency management is an ongoing and evolving process that requires an ongoing commitment.

For both mariners and managers, communication and clarity of objectives are key to getting buy-in and ensuring the success of competency management. SF

Image: Kongsberg

THE ITF SEAFARERS SUPPORT

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.

Industry sees more berths on board to train cadets

The crewing sector has proposed a solution to ease the lack of training berths for cadets on merchant ships, which maritime higher education institutions (MHEI) require in their programme.

The shortcoming was highlighted in a recent virtual workshop the MARINA carried out in addressing the issues identified by the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA).

The chairman of the Joint Manning Group (JMG), Ericson Marquez, suggested that deck cadets just undergo six months of structured training, as they serve as ratings on an account of four hours daily to complete the required 12-month seagoing service.

Engine cadets, on the other hand, would also spend a structured six-month watchkeeping duty in the engine department on board and the next six months for workshop skills training in an accredited training facility on shore.

Marquez said this would open an opportunity to train 20,000 cadets. Whilst another 5,000 can be trained on board since the schools would just require six months as another batch undergoes training in the second half of the year.

"It is estimated that MHEI churn out 25,000 cadets eligible for shipboard training yearly but only 5,000 could find berths", he stressed.

"A little bit of imagination without violating the STCW (Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping) Convention. That's all we're asking from MARINA, to use its discretion to expand the interpretation of the 12-months (required seagoing service)," Marquez said.

MARINA Administrator VAdm. Robert Empedrad seems to have agreed with the crewing sector's proposal. "I think it's the right position," he conceded.

Empedrad adds that he will give JMG and MARINA the chance to act on the proposal. SF

MAAP graduates Class of 2021

Ninety-five senior cadets of the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) Alegions Class of 2021 received their diplomas virtually last 21 st May after successfully completing their courses at the academy even amidst the pandemic.

Among the first batch of finishers this year, 50 earned their degree in Bachelor of Science in Marine Transportation (BSMT), while 45 successfully completed all the requirements for Bachelor of Science in Marine Engineering (BSMarE). There were five women in the batch – 4 from BSMT and 1 from BSMarE. 33 cadets, (18 BSMT and 15 BSMarE) were sponsored by the International Mariners Management Association of Japan (IMMAJ).

The second batch of the academy's Class of 2021 graduates will obtain their certificates in December. SF

MAAP wins second prize in higher education institutions internationalisation award

The First Philippine HEIs Internationalisation Award highlights the importance of universities' and colleges' transnational and transcultural dimensions in expanding the quality of education within and beyond national borders. This inspires their community to adapt and compete on the regional and global stage

The Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) won the second prize at the recently concluded First Philippine Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) Internationalisation Award.

MAAP's partnership with Constanta Maritime University in Romania through their "Gender and Equality Cultural Awareness in Maritime Education and Training" (GECAMET) coupled with the "Sustainable Development Goals in Maritime Education and Training (SDiMet)" propelled the AMOSUP-run, Mariveles-based academy in getting this award.

Organised and spearheaded by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in collaboration with UP Open University (UPOU), the first prize for the Philippines HEI Internationalisation Award went to Philippine Normal University and the third place to St Paul University (Cagayan).

MAAP, along with 17 HEIs, initially qualified amongst the finalists out of the 44 aspirants for the award on 12th May 2021. There are 2,300 HEIs (not included are the satellite campuses nationwide). And MAAP was the only maritime school that made it out of 17 awardees.

During the virtual awarding ceremonies at an hour-long coverage on 19th May via Zoom and Facebook live – emceed by UPOU's Dr Imee Martinez and Dr Wendell Capili –MAAP was proclaimed the 2nd place winner.

CHED Commissioner, Dr Aldrin Arenas Darilag, praised the Academy for the award, saying: "Our country's pride in the maritime programme promotes exemplary gender sensitive academic programmes giving equal opportunities for women in the field, which is traditionally for men."

He said, MAAP internationalised its inspired designed-curriculum in terms of inclusivity, supporting responsiveness and relevance to SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals)," which MAAP signed with Constanta Maritime University (CMU) in Romania in connection with the issue of gender equality and cultural awareness.

Dr. Cristina Dragomir led CMU's GECAMET project and Dr. Michael Ekow Manuel headed the SDiMET initiative, which are both funded by IAMU (International Association of Maritime Universities) and Nippon Foundation, with MAAP External Relations Director, Dr Angelica Baylon as research partner.

Dr Baylon, who represented MAAP in behalf of its president Vice Admiral Eduardo Ma R Santos (AFP, Ret) during the award ceremonies, stressed that: "Being the first [to be held] in the Philippines, the award made history for IAMU in having its members such as MAAP, CMU and World Maritime University (WMU) in Sweden getting collaborated for this internationalisation award."

Dr Baylon extended their gratitude to CMU President, Dr Cornel Panait and WMU President, Dr Cleopatra Doumbia-Henry for their support.

The Philippine HEIs Internationalisation Award is meant to give due recognition to local institutions that courageously and passionately treaded through uncharted waters in education. It also highlights the importance of HEIs transnational and transcultural dimensions in expanding the quality of education within and beyond national borders by inspiring its community to adapt and compete on the regional and global stage.

From IMEC

Image: MAAP Productions

UPOU Chancellor, Dr Melinda DP Bandelaria, said the internationalisation awardees were evaluated using the following criteria: innovativeness and creativity, impact, responsiveness, inclusivity and sustainability.

She noted that over the past five years, several HEIs developed and implemented projects towards the internationalisation of their institutions. Thus, Dr Bandelaria continued, "improving the quality of education they offer and nurturing the learners and graduates who can adapt and compete to the fast and changing demands of workforce at both regional and global environment."

CHED Chairman, Prospero 'Popoy' de Vera III, underscored the pandemic that made it difficult to implement internationalisation efforts but schools, universities and colleges have continued to strengthen their links with universities and institutions abroad.

"Internationalisation is one of the major components in the construction of quality education. We believe that much creativity and innovativeness go into the design of internationalisation initiatives," he said.

De Vera asserted that this award hopes to "inspire our schools, colleges, and university administrators and our fellow educators to continue improving and innovating in their internationalisation programmes as we continue to pedal our way toward a higher education system beyond this pandemic."

Other awardees include Aklan State University, Ateneo de Davao, Ateneo de Manila University, Cebu Technological University, Central Bicol State University of Agriculture, Central Luzon State University, Capiz State University, Iloilo Science and Technology University, Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, Our Lady of Fatima University, St. Louis University, Samar State University, San Pedro College and UP Manila-College of Public Health.

The five eminent members of the Board of Judges include: UPOU Chancellor Dr. Melinda DP Bandalaria (Chair), CHED Technical Panel Chair for Transnational and Distance Education Prof Grace Javier Alfonso (Co-Chair), SEAMEO Director of Bangkok Thailand Dr Ethel Agnes P Valenzuela (Member), CHED Consultant on Internationalisation Dr Carolina S Guina (Member) and Section Chief of EISD-UNESCO Dr Libing Wang (Member). SF

From IMEC

AMOSUP celebrates 'Day of the Filipino Seafarer' with members' vaccination

Inter-agency Technical Working Group, AMOSUP collaborate on the event to launch simultaneous nationwide inoculation for over a thousand seafarers. Taguig city gov't jabs more than 500 mariners

Over 1000 seafarers were inoculated on the Day of the Filipino Seafarer, as the Inter-agency Technical Working Group launched a nationwide vaccination drive for mariners, while Taguig City conducted its own vaccination dedicated to seafarers.

Health workers of AMOSUP Seamen's Hospital and the City of Manila administered Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 jabs to 550 seafarers at AMOSUP-JSU Sen'in No Ie (Seafarer House) in Intramuros, Manila. Dr. Conrado F. Oca, President of the Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) acknowledged Manila City Mayor Francisco "Isko Moreno" Domagoso for providing the personnel and vaccines, and for including seafarers in the city's vaccination rollout. Dr. Oca also extended his gratitude to World Health Organization Philippines for its involvement in the program.

One of the seafarers who got vaccinated, 35-year-old Master Mariner, Capt. Jasmin Labarda, expressed her gratitude to the government for finally prioritizing maritime professionals. "After 3 contracts, about 20 countries and numerous port calls, 13 RT-PCR and 1 Antigen tests, 6 NAIA international departures and arrivals, napabakunahan na rin," she said.

"Now that I am vaccinated, I want to spread the word and help… If this would be the way for us to gain freedom in life, let us do it together for our country," Capt. Labarda added.

Concurrently, 150 mariners were vaccinated at Gig Oca Robles Seamen's Hospital in Davao, 93 at AMOSUP Seamen's Hospital in Iloilo and 25 at AMOSUP Seamen's Hospital in Cebu. The Maritime Industry Authority also held simultaneous inoculations of domestic and overseas seafarers at MARINA regional offices in the country. Senator Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go, Chairperson of Senate Committee on Health, attended the program in Manila as Guest of Honor. Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr., Vaccine Czar and Chief Implementer of the National Task Force against COVID-19 (NTF), Vice Admiral Robert Empedrad AFP (Ret), Administrator of the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), and Vice Admiral Villena Medina AFP (Ret), Executive Director of the STCW Office of the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), accompanied Senator Go.

The COVID-19 vaccination drive that jabbed the biggest number of seafarers on a single day to date, was made possible by the Technical Working Group (TWG) composed of the Department of Transportation (DOTr), Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA), Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), Department of Health – Bureau of Quarantine (DOH-BOQ), Department of Foreign Affairs – Maritime and Ocean Affairs Office (DFA-MOAO), as well as the MARINO Partylist, maritime employers organizations Association of Licensed Manning Agencies (ALMA) and Joint Manning Group (JMG) and the Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP).

Meanwhile, Taguig City jabbed more than 500 seafarers at the Glass Hall of Lakeshore 2 in Taguig.

City Mayor Lino Cayetano, Vice Mayor Ricardo Cruz, Senator Pia Cayetano, Former Speaker Allan Peter Cayetano, Congresswoman Lani Cayetano welcomed AMOSUP President, Dr. Conrado F. Oca as Special Guest at the LGU-led vaccination program for sea-based workers. Secretary Vivencio "Vince" Dizon, Deputy Chief Implementer of the National Task Force against COVID-19 (NTF) was also in attendance.

Dr. Oca thanked Taguig City for "graciously recognizing the seafarers who are essential key workers," he said. The president of the 60-year-old maritime union also appealed to all the Local Government Units across the country to follow suit. "We hope other LGUs will follow Manila and Taguig's example of vaccinating seafarers – our country's economic frontliners," he said.

In his "International Day of the Seafarer" and "Day of the Filipino Seafarer" Message, Dr. Oca honored all the Filipino seafarers serving onboard ships across the world, "We honor and recognize all of you. I know that it has been extraordinarily difficult for you as we continue to battle the worst health crisis of our generation… We at AMOSUP are with you at this challenging time and we acknowledge how all of these affect your physical and mental health, and overall wellbeing."

Dr. Oca reiterated his commitment to continuing AMOSUP's efforts to ensure that all seafarers are safe and protected against COVID-19. "I would like to take this opportunity to reassure you that we are doing our best to help and see you through," he concluded. SF

QUOTE IN ACTION

"The world's seafarers need our help and as ship and crew managers we must work together to do all we can to ensure that their lives and livelihoods are protected."

InterManager President Mark O'Neil, on the slow speed of international efforts from the UN, WHO and others having to negotiate vaccination of seafarers.

"Sadly the result of the shipowners' pay freeze is a pay cut in real terms – accelerating an industry labour shortage."

Seafarer's group spokesperson at the ILO and Vice Chair of the Seafarers' Section of the ITF, Mark Dickinson, on pushing wage cuts now or in the future.

"Our work continues despite the pandemic, and AMOSUP is all in. All we need is the vaccine."

AMOSUP President Conrado Oca, on providing the services and facilities of AMOSUP Seamen's Hospitals across the country to the government-led vaccination programme of Filipino seafarers.

"Seafarers are continually sharing their personal data through the outdated process of sending their CVs to often unverified email accounts, frequently receiving no acknowledgment or reply back."

Propel Co-founder, Captain Fraser Matthew, on the traditional problem facing manpower recruitment in the maritime industry.

"...it is the people themselves on these vessels who do the amazing heavy lifting that moves the world."

Philippine Transmarine Carrier CEO, Gerardo Borromeo, on the company's opportunity in developing a platform, in tandem with Synergy Marine Group for the total wellness and care of their seafarers.

"The ITF family won't let employers rip seafarers off if we can stop it."

ITF Inspectorate Coordinator, Steve Trowsdale, on every dollar the ITF inspectors' team recovered – income seafarers and their families rely on, which they need and deserve.

JSU - AMOSUP

MARITIME MUSEUM & SPORTS COMPLEX

SPORTS COMPLEX

MUSEO MARINO

AMOSUP

PTGWO-ITF

814 J. Nakpil corner P. Hidalgo Lim Streets, Malate, Manila
Telephone : +632 353 8180 E-Mail: museomarino@yahoo.com

LOOKING BACK... SAILING FORWARD!

60

1960-2020

Pagkilala at Pasasalamat sa Bawat Pilipinong Mandaragat

M/V Kapitan Felix Oca

M/V Kapitan Gregorio Oca

Capt. Gregorio Oca
Founder, AMOSUP (1926-2010)

ASSOCIATED MARINE OFFICERS' AND SEAMEN'S UNION OF THE PHILIPPINES

CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

• AMOSUP Seamen's Center (+63 2) 527 8491-98 / 527 3535 • Maritime Academy of the Asia and the Pacific (+63 2) 741 1024 / 527 2110 • Seamen's Training Center (+63 2) 741 1024 • Professional Career Development Center (+63 2) 527 2110 / 528 0954 • Seamen's Hospital (+63 2) 527 8116-20 • Sailor's Home Manila (+63 2) 527 3605 • Slop Chest - Manila (+63 2) 527 2109 • Seamen's Village (+63 46) 973 0370 • JSU-AMOSUP Mariners' Home - Manila (+63 2) 521 5180 / 400 0461 / 400 0463-64 • Seamen's Hospital - Cebu (+63 32) 346 2598 • Sailor's Home - Cebu (+63 32) 236 9928 • Slop Chest - Cebu (+63 32) 236 9928 • Seamen's Hospital - Iloilo (+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

Seamen's Hospital

Sailors Home

Seafarers House

Seamen's Center

Slop Chest

PCDC

MAAP

Provident Fund