Insulted, intimidated and isolated. Bullying, sexual harassment or any kind of abuse can happen anywhere, of course, but for seafarers confined to a vessel out on the ocean, the impact can be particularly devastating. What can seafarers do? And what are employers doing to help them?

‘Standing up to bullies’ was the title of the message from the chief executive in Anglo-Eastern’s recent newsletter. Bjorn Hojgaard wrote: “I am glad to say that it is largely on the fringes only, but we do get occasional reports of abuse exercised by shipboard management over more junior members of the team on board. Such behaviour is unacceptable, and anyone exercising their powers in this manner should bow their heads in shame.”

He urged all seafarers to call out a bully when they see one. “Don’t be a victim – and don’t accept it when you see others bullied”, he wrote. “We should all call out improper behaviour when we see it and hold each other accountable to an acceptable standard for workplace interaction.”

Everyone working in Anglo-Eastern has a right to be treated with dignity and respect, he emphasised. “It is the responsibility of the leaders in the organisation to set the tone, and that tone needs to be one of civility and high standards for ethical behaviour.”

The recent headlines around Maersk facing sexual assault at sea charges in New York has refocused attention on the whole topic of bullying and assault on board ships.

Talking to The Sea, Hojgaard says: “It is a reality in all workplaces but at sea it is probably worse because of the relative isolation.” The nature of shipping “creates islands where things can go on without oversight of other people and go too far”.

He also thinks the hierarchical system on board, with greater power distance between people – “the hierarchical steepness of the pyramid” – can lead to an environment where it is easier for bullies to thrive.

However, he doesn’t think that the increased publicity around the issue means that things have got worse.

“One thing I would say, many of the youngest on board, the cadets, seem to be more vocal than they would have been in bygone times – and that is a good thing. They seem to push back, enough is enough, they have a shorter fuse – and that surprises the bullies.”

There are people who have the mentality “that is how I was treated when I was young, I have to treat people the same”, says Hojgaard. “It is almost like a rite of passage for some but that is just silly. We don’t have to suffer to get somewhere in life.”

Calling out bad behaviour
Seafarers need to be empowered to speak out against bullying

By Felicity Landon

Senior crew need to be aware of the ‘ease of bruising’ the young and inexperienced
What can victims do if they are ‘trapped’ on board with the perpetrator? “Speak up. If you can’t do so on board, talk to a superintendent ashore or DPA. We have hotlines that people can call to report anything. They must speak up, because that’s the way we can help.”

**More attention**

Lena Dyring is cruise operations director of the Norwegian Seafarers’ Union and women’s representative in the International Transport Workers’ Federation seafarers’ section. She is leading work with the section and affiliated unions to establish an online hub for women seafarers and their unions to share views and resources.

Harassment and abuse at sea have always been there, but now it is getting more attention because it is becoming less acceptable, she says. “In the industry before, there was always this trope that you have to be tough to work at sea – accept it and that’s the way it is, whereas it is becoming less acceptable, which is good. But yes, definitely it is still a big problem.”

Research in Norway has shown that the younger generation – men and women – are much less willing to accept a working environment where bullying and harassment is accepted, says Dyring. Employers that handle such issues in a professional way, and address them as they should, will be more attractive to potential employees, she says, while those that still accept the ‘old ways of working’ will end up at a competitive disadvantage when it comes to attracting seafarers.

Seafarers are already vulnerable, and this is exacerbated in situations where there is only one woman on board. “Seafarers work in very isolated conditions. If there are no options to report, whether it’s lack of internet access or of ways to report, then you are in this very confined environment, stuck with your bully or harasser with no escape. Being on a ship for months on end with nowhere to go puts people in a very vulnerable position.”

There can be friction on board cruise ships because so many people from different backgrounds and cultures are working together, but the upside there is having more people to talk to, and employees will likely have better access to the internet and ways to report, says Dyring.

The Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) sets out requirements for employers to have grievance procedures and provide ways for seafarers to report problems. The expectation is that a seafarer should try to follow the chain of command and report to whoever they normally report to, says Dyring. “However, often that person can be the problem. Then you are allowed to skip a step in the chain of command or report directly to shoreside. Or you can go ahead and go to your union, to the ITF, or even to the flag State, which also has a legal requirement to intervene. But the most efficient and effective way is to try to address it on board if that feels safe.”

**Zero tolerance**

Lloyd’s Register and Lloyd’s Register Foundation recently launched ‘Shining a light on seafarer wellbeing’, a report which highlights the links between wellbeing and safety and stresses the need for structural support for seafarers and improved assessment of mental wellbeing.

Philippa Charlton, LR’s chief marketing officer, says: “There is so much more awareness now about mental health and wellbeing, especially in this industry, precipitated by Covid, with seafarers away from home and family for months and months. Despite all the difficulties they face, the positives that come out of that are that they have been recognised as key workers, mental health and wellbeing have been recognised and ship management companies are investing resources and time in improving and responding to that.

“Zero tolerance” is the key when it comes to bullying and harassment, she says. She agrees that if the issues are not addressed, the industry will face a significant challenge when it comes to recruiting and retaining seafarers. “How do you encourage people to go for a job at sea, if they are likely to face sexual harassment, etc.?""

She says there should be protocols in place for seafarers and these should be made clear as part of any training for new employees.

“When you join a company, you ask about pay and conditions. Organisations should make it part of the onboarding and training – this is what we expect from you on board our ships, this is what we do to support you, and this is what to do if you are not being treated with respect.”

Shipping should not differ from any other industry in how it assesses leadership candidates, she insists.

“Whether you are a bank, a supermarket, onshore or at sea, if you recruit leadership, you should be using baseline psychometrics to understand that person’s character and attitude.”

Also some red flags should be picked up at interview, she added.
Charlton believes the industry is going in the right direction, particularly with recognition and understanding of how challenging the past two years have been for seafarers. Dealing with bullying and harassment is an essential part of the drive for overall wellbeing.

“Not that it wasn’t important before, but it has accelerated the desire by the industry to really address these concerns – recognising that if you are not in a good physical and mental state, that is the biggest risk to safety and cause of accidents. The more evidence we have of the impact of mental health on people’s ability to do their job safely, the more that is informing owners that they need to address this if they want to avoid problems in the future.”

**Increased openness**

Natalie Shaw, director of employment affairs at the International Chamber of Shipping, says the issue of harassment and bullying has been there for centuries; part of it is the way that ships are run, with a militaristic, naval tone to the command structure. “What is new is that people are more willing to be open than they were in the past,” she says. “One could argue that is a sign of things getting better on board, because we now have complaints procedures, systems whereby people can start to call things into account. The problem is where you have someone on board who doesn’t actually take care of these things, and where there isn’t a good enough system at head office to follow up on them. We are starting to move in the right direction, but we are not totally there.”

“The pandemic had an impact, she adds, with seafarers stranded at sea for months and officers under increasing pressure too. “This has understandably made tempers fray a bit more than they would have done two years ago.”

Shaw says there used to be a culture whereby if you went on board, you had to understand your place – ‘if you want your job, take it or leave it’ – but that is now unacceptable. People are much less accepting of bad behaviour where previously it would have been ‘that’s the way it is’.

The issue of harassment and bullying, and what can be done better, will come to the fore in MLC discussions at the IMO later this year, particularly after the headlines in the US around the treatment of cadets on board, she says.

**Correction or criticism?**

But here’s a question: where do we draw the line between firm words of instruction or correction in an environment where carrying out a task incorrectly can be catastrophic, and a perception of harassment? In some cases, that depends on the people involved.

“It is difficult – one person’s perspective is they are being harassed; another’s is that they are being supervised. When does being told you need to buck up a bit become harassment? It is difficult to rule what is and what isn’t.”

Work is under way at LR to produce a ‘diversity tool kit’ that will consider how all cultures, genders, ages and abilities interact on board and how those relationships can be enhanced. “We believe that’s a more appropriate way to look at how you can enhance teamwork and creativity and acceptance on board – focus on the positive rather than the negative,” says Shaw. “Sometimes people can misunderstand what’s said. Lots of words can be taken two ways, depending on intonation; something that might be meant perfectly well in one way could be perceived differently in another culture.”

Hojgaard says there is a risk that if someone professionally corrects a junior who is learning on the job – explaining what they did wrong and what they should have done – some juniors would take that instruction from a superior as bullying.

“There are ‘snowflakes’ out there that just melt for nothing. But firstly, it is the seniors who need to be aware of the ease of bruising the young and inexperienced. One way of dealing with that is to understand that you can correct someone without raising your voice or being angry or sounding scolding – ‘I am going to talk to you from a professional viewpoint about what is good/bad about what you did, to help you develop and learn’.”

That can be difficult for people who have been ‘raised to be scolded’ and now do the scolding, he says. “But it is all about creating awareness and an environment where there is that natural respect for people’s boundaries and listening as much as speaking.”

Anglo-Eastern does the pre-sea training for its cadets in-house, and an important part of this is instilling company values and talking about leadership, says Hojgaard. “We say to our seniors – think about other people, perhaps the juniors on board, as your children. Why would you bully your children? You want them to be the best they can be, so try to build them up rather than bring them down.”

As for the habitual bully, he says: “People who don’t respect other people usually don’t respect themselves.”

The problem, he says, is that the dominating go-getters can be the really efficient workers who get things done – “but also the ones to create the most power distance and who can be pretty rough with their subordinates”. You have to take the line and say they can’t be on the team if they don’t change behaviour, he says.

It would be dangerous to ‘not notice’ such behaviour because you are happy with the positive, he warns. “We say, as a leader you have to be clear – you can be a star performer but not if it means terrorising the team.”

Hojgaard says companies must make sure there are ‘clear rules of engagement’ and show through their actions that they are serious about protecting minority interests. “If you want an inclusive environment, you have to give space for any minority in a way that is respectful,” he says. “At the end of the day, don’t be any different to how you would be in a normal setting at home – treat people how you want to be treated yourself. Just because it’s a ship, don’t think there is a different set of standards – there really isn’t.”

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Delivering on seafarers’ rights – one year on

Progress has been made, but there is still more to be done to reach parity on conditions at sea and on shore

By Francesca Fairbairn and Andrew Stephens

In the last two years, seafarers’ rights have been stretched to breaking point – beyond the systemic issues that make life at sea far more challenging. They have been stretched to the point where many are choosing other careers, and shipowners and operators are potentially heading towards a recruitment crisis.

In addition to dealing with the threat of poor labour conditions, the crew change crisis (triggered by the Covid pandemic) led to hundreds of thousands of seafarers being stuck at sea, sometimes many months beyond the end of their contracts, with no idea when they might be able to return home. An equivalent number were unable to get to sea to fulfil their contracts and earn a living. Even now, two and a half years after the pandemic first struck, 4.2% (July 2022) of seafarers are on board beyond the 11 month maximum mandated by the Maritime Labour Convention.

The (thin) silver lining of the crew change crisis is that the world has begun to realise the extent to which global trade relies on these seafarers, and to understand that their working conditions and welfare must be protected and respected to ensure a sustainable shipping industry and resilient supply chain for the delivery of medicines, foods, fuels, raw materials, and goods we all take for granted each and every day.

In October 2021, the Sustainable Shipping Initiative (SSI), the Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB), and the Rafto Foundation launched a Code of Conduct for charterers and a self-assessment questionnaire for shipowners, managers, and operators that cover the full spectrum of seafarers’ rights and welfare. These tools are not intended to be a one-time snapshot or expected to trigger overnight change, but rather to provide a shared baseline for the industry and for individual companies to understand and take action across the scope of their seafarers’ rights and welfare obligations. Ultimately, we hope this work will increase accountability and enable demonstrable progress over time with the goal of securing lasting and positive change for seafarers.

The Code of Conduct is voluntary, and the accompanying self-assessment questionnaire for shipowners and operators is, at this stage, just that – a self-assessment; one that is not externally verified. For RightShip, however, which hosts the online Crew Welfare Self-Assessment Tool, it is just the beginning. For example, RightShip has begun carrying out trials where crew welfare is added as part of their on board ship assessment, and they are keen to work with partners to discover the best ways to implement this permanently.

Meaningful improvement

As we come up to the first anniversary of the launch of the Code of Conduct, it is time to reflect on its uptake and adoption, to what extent it has delivered on seafarers’ rights, and what more needs to be done. The Delivering on Seafarers’ Rights initiative – which produced the Code of Conduct – was conceived as a journey, with all stakeholders playing their part to ensure effective implementation and, ultimately, meaningful improvement in seafarers’ rights.

SSI, IHRB and the Rafto Foundation are convening a roundtable in October 2022 in Singapore, hosted by Swire Shipping. It will bring together shipowners and operators, charterers,

“Beyond being ethically the right thing to do, wellbeing on board a ship is critical to ensuring a safe work and living environment for seafarers”
government, and, most importantly seafarers and their representatives, to discuss the overall performance of the Code of Conduct so far, and the uptake and aggregate data from the Crew Welfare Self-Assessment Tool. The roundtable will also look at other initiatives and research, and will focus on three specific issues that impact seafarers: recruitment fees, abandonment and security on board ships. In late October we will publish a progress report, which will chart progress thus far and the next steps for meaningful work to continue.

In the meantime, it is reassuring to note that the latest agreed updates to the ILO Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) will include elements already covered by the Code of Conduct. The MLC is an international treaty to protect the seafarers’ rights that came into force in 2006. It has now been ratified by more than 100 countries, representing over 90% of the world’s fleet. One of its provisions is a Special Tripartite Committee (STC) comprising government, shipowners, and seafarers’ representatives (Seafarers’ Group), which meets periodically to keep the convention constantly reviewed and updated. The latest meeting of the STC was held in Geneva in May 2022, with agreement on a number of changes including (among others):

- The right to mandatory social connectivity for crews – including internet access.
- Improved access to free drinking water, quality provisions, and balanced diets.
- Clarification on responsibilities for governments to provide information to seafarers on mandatory systems of protection that must be put in place by recruitment and placement agencies.
- Appropriately-sized personal protective equipment, in particular to suit the increasing number of women seafarers.
- Further State facilitation of the prompt repatriation of abandoned seafarers.

For more information on the MLC amendments, turn to the article from the ILO on page 6.

**More to be done**

The STC also adopted several resolutions that will guide the future work of the committee, including further work on the eradication of sexual harassment at sea, the sustainability of the financial security provisions provided by P&I Clubs and insurers, and the ability of seafarers to enforce seafarers’ employment agreements against shipowners.

However, there were improvements proposed by the Seafarers’ Group that were not agreed upon – including proposed changes to the MLC’s terms on repatriation. The Seafarers’ Group demanded that shipowners’ responsibility to repatriate seafarers at the end of their contracts be extended to the point at which seafarers land at their home location but this was rejected by shipowners.

Beyond being ethically the right thing to do, wellbeing on board a ship is critical to ensuring a safe work and living environment for seafarers. Many issues need to be addressed and it’s difficult to prioritise. For many of us, staying connected to loved ones and having access to nutritious and varied food that meets our dietary needs and preferences are things which contribute to our overall wellbeing and that we take for granted – yet these are not always available to seafarers. Working at sea should not require a seafarer to compromise on their labour and human rights. The industry needs to be more diligent about improving the way seafarers are respected and treated if it hopes to be an attractive career choice now and in the future.

For an industry like shipping that deals with so many complexities around jurisdiction and regulatory enforcement, some basic entitlements still need to be met. Better enforcement of human and labour rights regulations, such as the MLC, is needed. At the same time, transparency and communication around these rights can be a powerful tool to increase enforcement and wellbeing. Ensuring seafarers know their rights and, just as importantly, know where to go if things go wrong can go a long way to improving wellbeing of those working at sea – a seafarer’s workplace and home.

Both SSI and IHRB look forward to continuing ongoing constructive engagement with all actors committed to strengthening the protection of, and respect for, human rights in the maritime industry, and will continue efforts to ensure that seafarers’ rights are protected and respected. 🌍

Francesca Fairbairn is shipping and commodities manager at the Institute for Human Rights and Business and Andrew Stephens is executive director at the Sustainable Shipping Initiative. Click here to read and download the Code of Conduct and self-assessment questionnaire: https://www.ihrb.org/focus-areas/oceans/shipping/code-of-conduct-delivering-on-seafarers-rights.
Regulatory protection for seafarers

Amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention strengthen support for ships’ crews

By Brandt Wagner

In May, the Special Tripartite Committee of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006), adopted, by an overwhelming majority, eight amendments to the Code of the Convention. The amendments were transmitted to the 110th Session of the International Labour Conference, which approved them on June 6.

The amendments will be deemed to have been accepted unless more than 40% of the ratifying Members, which represent not less than 40% of the gross tonnage of the ships of the ratifying Members, indicate their formal disagreement before June 23, 2024. As this is highly unlikely, the amendments are expected to enter into force on December 23, 2024.

The amendments drew upon the lessons learned during the Covid-19 pandemic and its negative impact on all too many seafarers, with hundreds of thousands unable to leave their ships, an equal number stuck ashore and unable to replace them, experiencing excessive periods of service, facing challenges communicating with families, being denied urgent medical care ashore and being unable to disembark bodies of deceased shipmates.

The first amendment relates to Regulation 1.4 (Recruitment and Placement) and is intended to ensure that seafarers are informed of their rights in relation to the obligation of recruitment and placement services to maintain a system of protection to compensate seafarers for monetary losses.

The second amendment relates to Regulation 2.5 (Repatriation) and is intended to further facilitate the prompt repatriation of seafarers, including when they are deemed abandoned, and to safeguard seafarers who may be placed on ships where seafarers have recently been abandoned.

The third set of amendments relates to Regulation 3.1 (Accommodation and Recreational Facilities) and is intended to ensure that seafarers are provided with appropriate social connectivity by shipowners and that States provide internet access in their ports.

The fourth set of amendments relates to Regulation 3.2 (Food and Catering) and provides that drinking water of suitable quality shall be made available for seafarers free of charge and highlights the importance of balanced meals on board.

The fifth set of amendments relates to Regulation 4.1 (Medical Care On Board Ship and Ashore) and provides that States shall ensure the prompt disembarkation of seafarers in need of immediate medical care from ships in its territory, and access to medical facilities ashore for the provision of appropriate treatment. It is further intended to facilitate the repatriation of the body or ashes of a seafarer who has died on board.

The sixth amendment relates to Regulation 4.3 (Health and Safety Protection and Accident Prevention) and is intended to ensure that seafarers have appropriately-sized personal protective equipment.

The seventh set of amendments also relates to Regulation 4.3 (Health and Safety Protection and Accident Prevention) and provides that all deaths of seafarers shall be adequately investigated, recorded and reported annually to the ILO to be published in a global register.

The eighth set of amendments relates to Appendix A2-I (Evidence of financial security under Regulation 2.5, paragraph 2) and Appendix A4-I (Evidence of financial security under Regulation 4.2). They intend to facilitate the functioning of the system of financial security by accepting a reference to the name of the registered owner of the ship when it is different from the shipowner.

The amendments demonstrate once again that the MLC, 2006 is a living instrument that can be adapted to meet the evolving needs of the shipping industry and those who serve at sea.

Brandt Wagner is head of the Transport and Maritime Unit at the International Labour Office.

“By sharing your views, you could help to make a difference to the delivery of welfare services to seafarers”
Social interaction makes real sense

*ISWAN project finds there are many benefits to be gleaned from a more cohesive crew*

By Dr Kate Pike

The International Seafarers’ Welfare and Assistance Network’s (ISWAN) Social Interaction Matters (SIM) phase two report was published this June. Funded by the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and the Red Ensign Group (REG), the project delivered a unique insight into modern seafaring, reflecting the experiences of seafarers on 21 vessels from 10 different shipping companies. They demonstrated that social interaction facilitates a mental reset and rest from work and promotes the development of stronger relationships between crewmates.

Additionally, benefits from social interaction include improved mental and physical health; improved awareness of the wellbeing of crewmates; helping to integrate new joiners quickly; building strong teams, good relationships, trust and familiarity; improved mood and morale; and development of an improved safety culture.

Alongside new data findings, the report provides guidance and recommendations to aid social interaction on board. Seafarers, shipping companies, charterers, and other maritime stakeholders can benefit from activity suggestions categorised by sports, food, technology, other entertainment, and relaxing and calming forms of recreation.

The guidance can be used to help promote a varied programme of social events, tailored to different crew needs and diversities, and different voyage plans and vessel specifications. The guidance also takes into account the conditions required to undertake different activities (such as weather and sea state), the space needed, facilities required, and preparation time required to organise them.

**Social ambassadors**

Volunteer social ambassadors on board each project trial vessel facilitated and recorded a variety of entertainment activities including (but not limited to) darts, table football, quizzes, computer games, swimming, karaoke, sundowners, hair cutting, film nights, fishing at anchor and ‘swap the cook’ nights. Establishing some activities as competitions encouraged more crew to take part, and also provided the opportunity for different vessels to compete against each other and feel part of a wider social community.

The appointment of a voluntary Social Ambassador on board every vessel to help convene social activities and promote crew engagement is a key recommendation.

The role should include ensuring crew preferences for their recreation time are reflected in the activities offered; encouraging a range of activities which promote a healthy balance of mental and physical stimulation; proactive planning of events, responding to varying workloads; ice-breaker activities for newly joined crew; and consideration of the safety of activities and the ongoing maintenance of associated facilities and equipment.

Recommendations also address some of the barriers to social interaction identified by the research, including:

- Leadership on board and on shore should actively and empathetically engage in the promotion of social interaction.
- Shipping companies, charterers and crew managers should support their seafarers to relax and interact with each other during their rest time.
- Free wi-fi services should be made available to all crew to stay in touch with family and friends.
- Recreation facilities available on board should be regularly reviewed by the company to ensure their compatibility with the crew’s preferences.
- Further research into the impacts of fatigue and tiredness on seafarer mental health is required.

The project has shown that crew should be encouraged to interact daily, and even small amounts of social time make a significant difference to overall wellbeing. Greater emphasis on separating the boundaries between work and rest time is needed, along with promotion of social activities which help crew to relax together, have fun and take some respite from their working day. Vessels that supported their crew in this were able to mitigate the effects of long hours, numerous port calls and other factors that otherwise lowered mood, indisputably showing that social interaction matters.

Dr Kate Pike is the SIM Project’s research lead, director of project at Field-Research and associate professor emeritus at Solent University. Work on SIM continues with the development of the activities’ guidance and recommendations to be a long-term resource for the sector. If you would like to contribute to this development, please contact Georgia Allen, Projects and Relationships Manager at ISWAN, at georgia.allen@iswan.org.uk. The full SIM Phase Two Report can be downloaded here: https://www.seafarerswelfare.org/resources/publications/social-interaction-matters-sim-project-report-phase-two
Moving beyond minimum wage requirements

Fighting for fair pay for seafarers

By Martyn Gray

Never before has it been so important to support and retain our seafarers. Over the past two years, throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, they have worked tirelessly to keep supply lines open across the globe, bringing food and medicines and other vital supplies to our shores. And they did this under extremely difficult and stressful conditions.

P&O Ferries unlawful mass-sacking of 786 loyal and dedicated seafarers was one of the darkest days in the UK’s more recent maritime history. Those people saw their livelihoods cruelly snatched from them in the space of a three-minute pre-recorded video call. This awful situation was made even worse by P&O Ferries’ chief executive Peter Hebblethwaite’s appearance before a committee of Parliament where he made a futile attempt to defend his actions, even saying he would take the same unlawful action again.

After sacking most of their crew, P&O Ferries then replaced them with agency workers recruited from abroad, some paid significantly less than the UK national minimum wage. Some agency workers were employed on tours of duty that P&O Ferries’ own research told them was unsafe. Quite simply, P&O Ferries sacked their existing crew to implement a crewing model based on the exploitation of workers.

The UK Government quickly recognised this and within days of the mass-sacking vowed to take action to “force P&O Ferries to rethink and ensure this can never happen again”. Government actions, through the Seafarers’ Wages Bill, have focussed on extending minimum wage coverage to seafarers operating regularly in UK waters. This is a welcome move; any effort to enhance the rights of seafarers should be applauded.

P&O Ferries strategy, which goes beyond just lack of minimum wage coverage, was rich enough, you can buy your way out of the laws of this country. Only strong and effective action from government will reverse this. Action on minimum wage is welcome but it will not be the antidote to the race to the bottom P&O Ferries have exacerbated. Our Fair Ferries Strategy, which goes beyond just minimum wage, creating decent pay conditions for ferry workers, would, in the words of the Transport Secretary, “force P&O Ferries to rethink and ensure this can never happen again”, an aim we wholeheartedly support.

Martyn Gray is executive officer at Nautilus International.

This is a comprehensive and concrete framework that, if implemented, would create minimum standards in both pay and conditions for workers in the ferry industry, reflective of local conditions – not international minimums. This would be enforced, and built upon, through collective bargaining agreements allowing for a truly collaborative approach between employers and unions creating a genuine level playing field for both operators and employees in the ferry industry. This proposal would allow for a modern thriving ferry industry that is competitive and delivers decent local jobs.

P&O Ferries sent a message that seafarers are expendable and if you are rich enough, you can buy your way out of the laws of this country. Only strong and effective action from government will reverse this. Action on minimum wage is welcome but it will not be the antidote to the race to the bottom P&O Ferries have exacerbated. Our Fair Ferries strategy, which goes beyond just minimum wage, creating decent pay and conditions for ferry workers, would, in the words of the Transport Secretary, “force P&O Ferries to rethink and ensure this can never happen again”, an aim we wholeheartedly support.

Martyn Gray is executive officer at Nautilus International.

“While we welcome this legislation and will work to improve it, we cannot forget that P&O Ferries exposed more than just lack of minimum wage coverage”
Shipping remains a male-dominated industry, with men making up 98% of the world's estimated 1.6 million seafarers. There are industry initiatives to bring more women into seafaring, but change is happening slowly. There are still many barriers to a life at sea for women, and there simply isn’t yet enough support, opportunity, or guidance in the maritime industry to help women overcome the issues they face.

The Mission to Seafarers created the 2022 Women Seafarers Report to reflect on what a life at sea looks like for women and how organisations can better support female seafarers. The following are some of the key takeaways.

Education and training:
Discrimination against female seafarers is rife within maritime education and training. In certain countries, women are discouraged from enrolling on nautical courses, and when they do, training staff can be dismissive or contemptuous. Employers can also be hesitant about hiring female cadets or qualified seafarers, having a knock-on effect on college admissions, as organisations don’t want to jeopardise their statistics on being able to place cadets at sea.

Lack of respect: Female seafarers often feel animosity from their male colleagues. Attitudes range from hostility to discriminatory comments framed as jokes, all of which can undermine the confidence of women on board and leave them feeling isolated and ostracised. Women in senior positions also face insubordination from male seafarers who refuse to take orders from a woman.

Sexual harassment: Some of the worst issues women seafarers face are sexual harassment and intimidation. This can take many forms – from inappropriate remarks or threats to physical violence and sexual assault. Female seafarers may take extra precautions to protect themselves from sexual harassment. This can include withdrawing from on-board social situations, or if they do attend, they may choose to leave events early.

The report offers guidance on how to better support women at sea.
Described as the Spotify of the maritime training space, Seably shook up the digital training space in 2020 when it was launched. The brainchild of the Swedish Shipowners’ Association, Seably was created in 2017 to find a better way for seafarers to conduct their mandatory and general training. The platform was launched in 2020 after three years of development.

Two years on and chief executive Andrea Lodolo and his team are working to push Seably to the next level and encourage ownership in its online learning communities. Andrea understands the needs of the seafaring world well. Once the chief executive of a large manufacturing company, he swapped the commercial world for a cadetship at Warsash Maritime School. It was during his time here that he began to realise just how much digitalisation was needed in the maritime industry. Through Seably – the first independent maritime digital marketplace – he is acting on that finding.

Andrea describes Seably as “a game-changer”. The platform engages learners through content delivered using an app, PC and mobile device, online or offline. Complex and highly technical material is presented in various learning styles including 3D and video, aiming to eliminate cultural barriers to learning.

“Classroom based learning has its place, but doesn’t work for everyone,” he says to The Sea. Simply taking old training and putting it online misses the point – and the opportunities – of online digital training. “This is why I am always pushing my team: what more can we do to engage our learners, how can we make it more relevant to them? I am always demanding we go further, looking at how we can add other forms of learning, including virtual reality and digital simulation, into our training offering by encouraging the best in these fields to add their content into the marketplace.”

From seafarers for seafarers
Seably is pitched as from seafarers for seafarers. The e-Learning library covers over 500 courses developed by industry specialists and practitioners, with many free materials, and a mix of short and advanced training. It gathers specialised content, immersive experiences, virtual training, cutting-edge technology and teaching skills from experts, all the while providing access to the latest training for real-life learning.

Anyone can explore, take or even teach a course. Andrea explains that as long as the material added to the platform meets Seably’s standards of quality, anyone can add content. “This allows industry professionals to pass on their expertise and knowledge.” There are various options for courses for the learner to select, allowing them to match their learning style. “Also, as the courses are reviewed, they can see other learners’ comments on the courses before they select them.” So, anyone can explore hundreds of courses on the platform, available through the website or via an app. Importantly, seafarers do not need internet connectivity to undertake courses.

Andrea sees Seably as the solution to a broken educational system for seafarers. “The mission of maritime education institutes is to prepare seafarers for an industry that is continuously changing and facing various challenges.” But, he says, there is currently a shortage of skilful engaging instructors, a lack of on board training, over-reliance on theoretical teaching, and limited funding sources.

“The seafaring educational system should help seafarers understand the effect and benefits of digitalisation.”
Seably has been founded on ‘Web 2.0’, creating a community and encouraging course providers to add content in a variety of learning ways, for example through animations and video as well as the conventional forms of learning.

The platform allows administrators to assign training to their crew reflecting their different time zones. Vessel-specific training can also be assigned, requiring, for example, that it is completed before boarding. “This leads to safer and compliant ships and makes administration easier as well as saving vital time.”

Wellbeing is put front and centre through Seably’s WellAtSea offering. This actively promotes a holistic health and wellbeing culture within maritime through a range of dedicated content from specialists in their areas of expertise.

The training offered by Seably is also approved by DNV, a first for a digital training marketplace. The standard (ST-0595) is now open and available for any other digital service to achieve in the maritime sector. Andrea refers to a study conducted by UK-based multinational publishing and education company Pearson where 2,588 people aged 14-40 were polled on preferences, behaviours and attitudes surrounding the use of technology in education. The results revealed that 32% of Gen-Z (aged 14-23) liked online courses with video lectures against 25% who preferred eText. The survey findings also revealed that 59% of Gen-Z believe technology can transform the way students will learn in the future.

Andrea is now focused on that future, finding a place for Seably in a new, blockchain-based web which includes cryptocurrencies, non-fungible tokens and more. He is inspired by the opportunity for users to have a financial stake and more control over the web communities they belong to.

For him, digitalisation is here and will continue to grow at pace, not just for training but across all aspects of the maritime sector. “The companies who use digitalisation are keen to transform their processes with a view to making themselves more competitive,” he says.

“Big data and artificial intelligence are already influencing seafarers’ training, making it safer and greener and potentially transforming the shipping industry.” For example, artificial intelligence at work in the Seably platform looks at each learner’s behaviour at a granular level. This allows managers to see when they have spent time training, discover what courses were popular, or what vessel spent the most time taking courses. At a higher level, this gives real insights into the behaviour of the teams and vessels, which in turn allows for better training, planning and changes to courses. “Seafarers’ needs are at the core of Seably, so the training and learning will continue to be developed according to that,” he says.

As a parting thought, Andrea says he wants to encourage all seafarers to download and share more apps to help inform management of what is useful to everyday life at sea. “There are many free tools you can use in your professional life besides those you regularly use. Once you identify one you like, promote it to your manager, your captain, your company, helping to speed up the digital transformation.”

“Classroom based learning has its place, but doesn’t work for everyone”
Rest must be seen as a ‘right’

Seafarers are just as entitled to proper rest as their onshore colleagues  

By Michael Grey

It is very irritating for the passengers left at the airport, but there will be a broad measure of acceptance when they are told that the pilots cannot fly as they will have exceeded their hours of work before the aircraft arrives at its destination. But if a ship cannot sail because the captain says that the crew are too tired, the decision will inevitably be questioned, with the port demanding that the ship leaves the berth at once. Is it a case of different cultures, or a new mode of transport versus the habits of an ancient industry, where people were brought up to believe that “the ship always comes first”?

Seafarers will surely welcome the recent decision of the International Maritime Organization to set up what they term a ‘scoping exercise’ which will focus on the rules on hours of work and rest, fatigue, and the implementation of these requirements. Those impatient to see a bit of change may well point out that much of the groundwork has already been done, in the shape of the World Maritime University’s report into the way that the recording of hours of rest was being ‘adjusted’ to always demonstrate compliance to any visiting inspector, when this was manifestly not the case.

It is an important issue, which moves beyond maritime industry attitudes to take in changing views on work and rest that are increasingly seen in society at large. It might also be pointed out that the whole industry is experiencing personnel shortages, with something of a recruitment crisis emerging. Possibly made worse by the way that seafarers were treated around the world during the pandemic, the singular lifestyle of seafarers, with its isolation and loneliness, is perhaps proving less attractive to those who, in another time, might have been recruits.

There is clearly work to be done, and on many different fronts, and the hours of rest issue is just one of these important elements. And it is right that such matters are confronted on an international basis, through agencies like IMO and ILO, because any mandated solutions need to be global, in a competitive global industry.

Fundamental shift

But while these matters are battled out at IMO, maybe there ought to be some attention paid to the way in which ships and shore interact. If ships are really the ‘customers’ of the ports, shouldn’t they be treated as such by those who march on board at all hours and expect to be seen by the master? Nobody in management ashore would expect people to just turn up without an appointment. Why should custom and practice be different with visiting ships? Recent research has shown that seafarers find that their greatest times of stress and full-on business tend to be in port, which is where they become most exhausted. Why can something not be done about this?

Why should some team of port State officials, or inspectors representing a charterer, or the customs, all of whom will have been fully rested in their own beds, demand instant access to a ship which has just arrived with a master and crew who, from a rest point of view, are barely legal? Maybe this has been the norm from time immemorial, but why must such behaviour be perpetuated? Shipping may be a capital-intensive industry, but we are dealing with human beings, who make the machinery all work, and who have a right to some well-earned rest.

Technology surely ought to be able to help here. Why do officials have to physically demand instant access to ships when they arrive alongside – surely much of their business can be accomplished on-line, hours or even days before the arrival? The ‘facilitation’ of trade, increasingly accomplished electronically, ought to be extended to the clearance procedures, along with much of the other mundane box-ticking and repetitive bureaucracy that helps to make seafarers fatigued. That would be progress!
The latest Seafarers Happiness Index data reveals a rise in optimism, with an overall average of 7.21/10 - up significantly from 5.83 in the previous quarter. This quarter two, 2022 report paints a picture of important positive progress having finally stemmed a constant decline in sentiment.

The biggest single impact has been the easing of travel restrictions.

While we have not seen the end of Covid-19 issues, we are perhaps seeing the beginning of the end. This means an easing of crew change issues, lifting morale on board. People seem to be moving more freely, and this has had a massively beneficial effect on seafarer sentiment.

Where in the last report we saw a confluence of concerns, from Covid to conflict to contracts – all dragging the mood down – this time we have seen an improvement in the mood because the pivotal issue of knowing when you are going home appears to have been resolved.

There can never be any doubt that the best day for any seafarer is pay-off day. The excitement, the change of clothes, the sense of achievement, and anticipation are constant drivers for seafarers. Often the first thing many do when they arrive on a vessel is to mark the calendar with when they are due to get off. That has probably been a ritual for all crew over the centuries.

When seafarers feel more certain about how long they will be on board, this translates into a far more relaxed outlook. The feeling that they will be home on time allows them to more easily deal with many of the challenges they face while at sea. As one might expect, certainty, assurance, confidence and a sense of control make a far better trip.

This rising seafarers’ happiness data shows that we can make a difference. With more vaccinations, better travel choices, wage rises and new amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) delivering hope of universal maritime connectivity, there is cautious optimism.

But while the data suggests improvements, there should be no complacency. Indeed, optimism should be tempered by the delicacy of the recovery. These gains can so easily be lost if we once more see crew change issues. We should not and cannot rest on our laurels for a moment. There is still much to be done, and beyond the data-driven positivity seafarers still spoke to us about their concerns and the problems they face.

**In the crosshairs**

The reality of a seafarer’s life is that they are vulnerable to any geopolitical wrinkles. Where there is war, they can get trapped, attacked, and see conflict first-hand. When there is a pandemic and disease, they are vilified, unwanted and trapped on their ships. When things go wrong on a global scale, it is the poor seafarer that is so often and easily caught in the crosshairs.

Over past research, data was trending downwards, and moods were dropping even faster. Time and time again, we heard tales of a ‘broken’ profession, and stories of often insurmountable problems. Seafarers are sharing experiences which are frustrating and detrimental to their mental health. However, as industry good practice evolves and improves, we are hearing reports of a far more holistic and management-centric view of wellness, tackling mental health issues and clamping down on problems such as harassment, bullying and victimisation.

The industry has been collectively working hard to ensure that wellbeing is at the forefront of thinking. By listening we can empathise and understand the impact of the things we can do. We can learn what the best companies are doing, share best practice to make life better, to raise smiles and spirits, and to encourage all to try and find their path to seafarer happiness. With this rise in sentiment data, perhaps finally we are learning lessons and installing the importance of happiness at sea.

Steven Jones is the founder of the Seafarers’ Happiness Index, in association with Idwal and the Standard Club. The Index is designed to monitor and benchmark seafarer satisfaction levels by asking 10 key questions and serves as an important barometer of seafarer satisfaction with life at sea. Questions focus on a range of issues, from mental health and wellbeing, to working life and family contact. If you would like more information, to see the data or read more in-depth reports, visit www.happyatsea.org for access to the latest results and to have your say.
There are many health benefits to spending down-time solving puzzles. Lower stress levels, better memory, improved mood, improved problem-solving abilities, and better work performance are just some of them.

**Sudoku**

The aim of Sudoku is to fill in the empty cells so that each column, row and 3x3 region contain the numbers 1 to 9 exactly once. Find the answers to both puzzles in the next issue.

**Easy Level**

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**Jumble**

Can you correctly unscramble these anagrams to form four words? If so, send your answers by email to thesea@missiontoseafarers.org by November 30, 2022. All correct answers will be entered into a draw for a chance to win a Mission to Seafarers’ Goodie Bag, containing a pen set, mug and handmade woolly hat. Please include your answers, name, the vessel you are working on, your nationality and finish this sentence: “I like The Mission to Seafarers because…”

1) heros  2) arboruh  3) arnemilt  4) yuaq

**Issue 2, 2022 solutions:**

1) Auxiliary  2) Thruster  3) Steering  4) Piston

**Word wheel**

This word wheel is made from a 9-letter word. Try and find that word, then make as many words of three letters or more as you can from these letters. You can only use each letter once, and each word must include the letter T.

**Answer for Issue 2, 2022 issue:**

57 possible words, eight letter word was Atlantic

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**Flag code**

Can you tell us what word these flags are communicating? Answer in the next issue. Answer for Issue 2, 2022: Capesize

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See Michael Grey’s feature on page 12

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“No hours of rest ‘adjustments’ on this ship!”
Help for seafarers around the world

Are you one of the 1.6 million people around the world working at sea, or a loved one of someone who is?

The Mission to Seafarers is a great source of support for anyone working in the industry, and we’ve been helping people like you since the 19th century.

We work in over 200 ports in 50 countries and are available 365 days a year. We can provide help and support, no matter your nationality, gender or faith. Our network of chaplains, staff and volunteers can help with any problem – whether it’s emotional, practical or spiritual help that you need.

Our services include:

- **Ship visits** – we carry out approximately 35,000 ship visits a year, welcoming crews to ports, providing access to communication facilities and offering assistance and advice on mental health and wellbeing.
- **Transport** – Our teams can arrange free transportation to the local town, shopping mall, doctor, dentist or a place of worship.
- **Seafarers’ Centres** – We operate over 120 Flying Angel centres around the world, offering visiting seafarers a safe space to relax between voyages, purchase supplies, seek support for any problems they might have and stay in touch with their families.
- **Emergency support** – Our teams are trained in pastoral support, mental health first aid and critical incident stress counselling. We can also provide advocacy support.
- **Family networks** – We operate these networks in the Philippines and India where seafarers’ families can meet, share information and access support.

Our mission is to care for the shipping industry’s most important asset: its people.

To find out where we work, visit www.missiontoseafarers.org/our-ports. Here you can find information about all our centres, including contact details, facilities and opening times.
“As we look out from our homes, our ships, our places of work, we can feel equally vulnerable. Crisis seems to follow crisis”

When I was a child, I used to walk in the hills near my grandparents’ house. There was a bench I came across regularly and it had a Bible text on it. It was from Psalm 121: “I lift up mine eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help.” It suggested that the person who placed it there believed that by looking to the hills he or she was inspired and reminded of the God who can help.

That may be true, but it is not what the Psalm actually says. The inscriber had forgotten the question mark. In fact, it says: “I lift my eyes to the hills. From whence cometh my help?” It finishes with that question mark.

It was probably a Psalm, a song, sung by pilgrims to Jerusalem as they set out on their way home. They looked out from the city at the hills through which they would have to pass. They were scared. These were hot, parched, dangerous places where robbers lay in wait for vulnerable and weary travellers.

As we look out from our homes, our ships, our places of work, we can feel equally vulnerable. Crisis seems to follow crisis. Pandemic, war, an energy crisis, economic threat. Things that will touch on ourselves and our families, quite apart from any more personal problems.

We might echo with the singers of the Psalm – “where does my help come from?” The next line is more confident. “My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth”. Of course, that is no easy answer. Faith does not solve our problems and give easy solutions. Jesus knew that, as we do. However, it is a good starting place.

As we travel with the God of Jesus, the Maker of heaven and earth, perhaps in conversation with him we can begin to find strength and understanding.

The Revd Canon Andrew Wright is secretary general of The Mission to Seafarers.

By The Revd Canon Andrew Wright

Coping in times of crisis

Finding inspiration to find ‘strength and understanding’

A prayer for seafarers

Lord, we are living through difficult times. It is easy to be worried and anxious for ourselves, our families, our friends.

Thank you that you walk in love beside us. Help us to stay faithfully by your side.

In friendship with you may we be supported and sustained day by day. Amen