

# Empowering Filipino Women Seafarers in the Maritime Sector

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## Abstract

Filipinos account for a quarter of the world's 1.6 million seafarers. However, Filipino women account for only around two percent of more than 400,000 seafarers deployed annually. Around 90 percent of these women seafarers are in the services and domestic sectors, doing jobs that are related to their reproductive duties. Because of this, Filipino women seafarers are among the lowest paid in the seafaring industry, and are also among the most vulnerable to redundancy. Following the enactment in the 1990s of the Women in Development and Nation Building Act, maritime schools started opening up to women who wanted to become sea officers. Although more women have been attracted to seafaring in the past decade, the number of women sea officers has remained microscopic, compared to the thousands of male sea officers deployed every year. Based on focus group discussions and key informant interviews with almost a hundred stakeholders, this study finds that women sea officers often face discrimination as soon as they start applying for shipboard internship and employment. They have to battle loneliness, sexual harassment, and bullying by their male colleagues on board. This study finds that patriarchal beliefs and control in the seafaring industry have discouraged women sea officers from pursuing careers at sea. This is

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aggravated by the race among ship owners to reduce costs, at the expense of seafarers. Using the women's empowerment framework developed by Sara Longwe and the human rights-based approach as guides, this policy research paper proposes a package of measures to empower women by addressing issues on welfare, access, conscientization, mobilization, and control in the maritime industry.

**Keywords:** Women seafarers, women empowerment, gender and seafaring, Filipino seafarers

## **Background of the Problem**

Achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and girls is one of the crucial targets enshrined in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Sustainable Development Goals. According to the UNDP, the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls is not only a basic human right, but is also a crucial factor in accelerating development. This means that the fight for the elimination of other indicators, such as poverty, hunger, corruption, malnutrition, corruption, poor health, and illiteracy, are all meaningless if women and girls do not benefit from it.

While the world may have achieved strides in many aspects and sectors in terms of gender equality, the maritime sector appears to have been left behind. Previous studies done by the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) show that women account for only two percent of the world's seafarers. The majority of these women are in the hotels and services departments of passenger vessels or cruise ships. Their integration into the industry has been driven more by the demand for women's jobs on board passenger vessels rather than to improve the gender gap in the industry. It is still rare to find women officers and ratings (skilled personnel) on foreign vessels, and most of the women who control the helms of these vessels come from developed countries.

In the past two decades, both ILO and IMO have been working together to improve women's integration in this male-dominated industry. Such moves include information campaigns on seafaring and providing more scholarships in maritime schools for women. However, these efforts by international agencies and non-governmental organizations have not been enough to drastically increase women's participation in the seafaring sector. The few women sea officers who dared to break the glass ceiling were often met with discrimination, sexual harassment, and bullying by their male colleagues.

The World Maritime University (WMU) and the IMO launched a project in 2016 to develop "A Global Strategy for Women Seafarers" in the hope of encouraging more women to join the seafaring industry. Women have been encouraged to fill the shortfall in sea officers. Such a call comes as the Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO) and the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) released their Manpower Report for 2015. The report said the shortage of sea officers for 2015 was 16,500. The situation is expected to worsen in the coming decade with a projected shortfall of 92,000 in 2020 and 147,000 in 2025 (International Chamber of Shipping 2016a).

The Philippines is one of the top suppliers of the world's 1.6 million seafarers. However, women account for only two to three percent of sea-based workers deployed every year. Ninety percent of these women seafarers are in the hotel and services sector, while less than 10 percent are officers and ratings (Tangi 2012). Some of these women on board cruise liners received a basic salary of US\$50 and relied heavily on tips from passengers and commissions to boost their incomes. Like many women seafarers in various parts of the world, Filipino women seafarers were also met with discrimination, sexual harassment, and bullying by their male colleagues (Tangi 2012).

This policy research comes at a time when the world is facing a shortage of sea officers to serve on merchant vessels. Filipino women, who have been mostly relegated to low status jobs as cabin girls, massage therapists, and waitresses, deserve to reach the helm. Filipino women can become captains and chief engineers with the introduction of a package of measures to empower them. There is a big opportunity for Filipino women to fill the shortage in the supply of sea officers. The more Filipino women sea officers are deployed, the higher the remittances their families will receive, and the bigger contribution they make to the economy.

This policy research also comes at a time when the new president, Rodrigo Roa Duterte, announced in his first State of the Nation Address (SONA) the full implementation of the Magna Carta of Women, or Republic Act 9710. The Magna Carta calls for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and ensures their empowerment. The call for empowering Filipino women seafarers in the maritime sector is a fulfillment of the spirit of the Magna Carta of Women, which states:

The State shall undertake temporary special measures to accelerate the participation and equitable representation of women in all spheres of society particularly in the decision-making and policy-making processes in government and private entities to fully realize their role as agents and beneficiaries of development. (Office of the President Philippine Commission on Women 2010, 54)

### **Scope and Severity of the Problem**

The gender gap, or the problem of low participation of women in the maritime sector, should be addressed by the Philippine government and the private sector to conform with the UNDP's Sustainable Development Goal on gender equality. Filipinos are often considered among the world's favorite

seafarers and account for about a quarter of the 1.6 million global supply of seafarers. A shortage in sea officers is also projected in the coming years, and women should be given the chance to fill in that shortage. Filipino women should be given access to this opportunity. More Filipino women should be educated and trained to become officers and skilled personnel.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem addressed in this policy research is how to empower Filipino women seafarers to achieve gender equality in a male-dominated and hierarchical industry. Addressing the gender gap will also entail addressing the patriarchal control and patriarchal values prevalent in the industry.

### **Goals and Objectives**

The policy proposal hopes to meet the following objectives:

1. To determine the extent of the gender gap and the reasons behind its persistence in the seafaring industry
2. To review various efforts made by international and local agencies and organizations in integrating women in the maritime industry
3. To identify the challenges and obstacles to women's participation and empowerment in the seafaring industry
4. To introduce measures to empower women and promote gender equality in the maritime sector

### **Measures of Effectiveness**

The effectiveness of the program can be measured with the increase in the number of women enrolled in maritime schools and the deployment of sea officers. Such development will eventually lead to an increase in the number of women officers and skilled personnel on board and also improve the working environment on board.

### **Potential Solutions**

Any attempt to increase the number of women officers and skilled personnel in the maritime industry should also address the roots of gender gap and discrimination, including eliminating patriarchal values and patriarchal control in the industry.

## Framework

### Empowerment Framework and Human Rights-Based Approach

Filipino women have gone a long way in terms of fighting for their rights as women and in the elimination of various forms of discrimination and marginalization. However, patriarchy continues to dominate different aspects of Philippine society. Maria Mies (1986) has said that patriarchy literally means “the rule of fathers”. Male dominance today also includes the rule of husbands, of male bosses, of ruling men in most societal institutions, in politics and economics (Mies 1986, 37). The seafaring industry continues to be controlled and dominated by men. Most of the bosses and owners of shipping companies, crewing agencies, training centers, and even maritime schools are men. Around 97 percent of the seafarers deployed to work onboard international vessels are men, while women account for only three percent. Patriarchal beliefs – that seafaring is a man’s turf – also persist in the industry.

Sara Longwe’s Empowerment Framework (2002) is used in this policy research to achieve the goal, which is to empowering Filipino women seafarers. She says that there are five levels of empowerment, namely welfare, access, conscientization, mobilization, and control. Welfare is defined by Longwe as the improvement of nutritional status, shelter, or income. Access is defined as improved access to resources and trainings. Conscientization refers to the understanding of women’s subordination and oppression. Mobilization refers to collective action and ability to connect or link up with other women. Control, which is the highest level of empowerment, means that women take control over decision-making and resources.

To ensure that the rights of women seafarers are promoted and protected in the empowerment process, the human rights-based approach (HRBA) is also applied in this policy research. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights defines HRBA as:

A conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyze inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distribution of power that impede development progress. (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2006, 15)

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979, is considered to be the bill of rights of women. The Philippines has ratified CEDAW and is obliged to implement and reflect it in its domestic laws. Article 1 of the Convention defines discrimination against women as:

Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

The human rights-based approach supports the inclusion of women in the maritime sector. This means that gender discrimination, stereotyping, and harassment of women must be eliminated. Women must be given equal opportunity to apply for the positions available on board and be treated equally.

The duty bearer and the right holder are identified in the human rights-based approach. Duty bearers are those responsible for the realization and protection of human rights. In the maritime sector, the Philippine government and other government agencies involved in the maritime industry and the deployment of seafarers are the duty bearers. Rights holders are people who are affected by or claim human rights. In this study, the women seafarers and women cadet or maritime students are the rights holders.

**Table 1. Empowerment in the Seafaring Industry**

Levels of Empowerment	Indicators in the Seafaring Industry
Welfare	Women seafarers receive the same salary as their male counterparts
Access	Women are given access to maritime schools, scholarships or sponsorships, and trainings for promotion
Conscientization	Women seafarers understand that they are discriminated against; become members of trade unions; form women seafarers' association
Mobilization	Women stage mass actions, organize fora/conferences, and link up with other women seafarers
Control	Women are at the helm, there are more women chief engineers, heads of crewing agencies, and shipping companies

## Methodology

The data gathering was conducted from August 2015 to May 2016. Almost 100 stakeholders were either interviewed or invited to participate in focus group discussions. A review of existing literature and documents related to women seafarers was also conducted.

### Stakeholders

1. Women seafarers. A total of 24 women seafarers were interviewed face-to-face, online via Skype or Facebook, or through an online questionnaire. Most of the women were on board international vessels during the time of the interview. The interviewees were referred by maritime schools, trade unions, crewing agencies, and Women in Maritime Philippines. The interviewees were between 18 to 49 years old. Eighteen of them were single while four were married and with children. One was a solo parent and another one was a widow.
2. Female maritime students. A total of 48 female maritime students were invited to participate in focus group discussions. Their schools were chosen based on the number of women sea officers they have produced. The female maritime students were from the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (5), Philippine Merchant Marine Academy (33), Asian Institute of Maritime Studies (6), and Lyceum of the Philippines University-Batangas (4). The participants were selected with the assistance of school administrators.
3. Male maritime students. Separate focus group discussions were conducted for male maritime students in MAAP (3) and PMMA (10) to find out how they felt about the entry of women in the seafaring industry. The male students revealed their attitudes toward female students in the academy.
4. Maritime schools. Top maritime schools that have been producing women seafarers were targeted for the interviews. The following maritime schools were included in this research:
  - Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP), located in Mariveles, Bataan, was established in 1998. It is owned and operated by the Association of Marine Officers and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) and was considered the top maritime school in 2015. Dean Renante Garcia and Engineer Basco, faculty and alumnus, respectively, were the key informants.

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- Philippine Merchant Marine Academy (PMMA) is a state-owned maritime academy. It was first established as Escuela Nautica de Manila under the Spanish Royal Decree in 1820. In 1899, the academy was renamed the Nautical School of the Philippine Islands, and still later renamed as the Philippine Nautical School under the US Navy. It was formally renamed PMMA in 1963 pursuant to Republic Act 3680. Commandant Bernabe N. Funelas and Engineer Ronald Magsino, assistant superintendents for Academics and for Training and Research, respectively, were interviewed for this study.
  - Lyceum of the Philippines University–Batangas City was established in 1966 by Dr. Sotero H. Laurel, son of former Philippine President Jose P. Laurel. The university started offering marine transport in 1975 in response to the government’s export policy on seafarers. The marine department is now officially called Lyceum International Maritime Academy and has a separate campus. Dean Arnulfo Orence was interviewed in Batangas City for this research.
  - Asian Institute of Marine Studies (AIMS) is a merchant marine college in Pasay City. It was established in February 1993. It offers courses in marine engineering, marine transport, and naval architecture. Capt. Lauro S. Torrechilla, Dean of the Maritime College, was the key informant from AIMS.
5. Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA). It is the government agency in charge of formulating policies and in implementing international standards related to seafarers.
  6. Commission on Higher Education
  7. Philippine Overseas and Employment Administration
  8. Seafarers’ unions. They directly recruit and organize seafarers. Engineer Nelson Ramirez, president of the United Filipino Seafarers (UFS) and members of the Associated Marine Officers and Seamen’s Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) served as key informants.
  9. Crewing agencies and shipping companies. They recruit seafarers for shipboard employment. In legal terms, they are the representative of shipping companies in the Philippines. Among key informants were Philippine Association of Manning Agencies & Shipmanagers, Inc. (PAMAS) President Captain Oscar Orbeta President, Conference on Maritime Manning Agencies (COMMA) President Capt. Rodolfo D. Estampador and Magsaysay Maritime Corporation Chief Executive Officer Alex Querol.

10. Training centers. There are around 74 maritime schools registered with CHED. They are the main targets for these policy changes. Captain Arsenio C. Padilla, Jr., president of Philippine Association of Maritime Training Center, Inc. (PAMTCI) was interviewed for this research.

**Table 2. Empowerment in the Seafaring Industry**

Types of Jobs/Position	Number of women interviewed
Captain	3
Chief Engineer	2
Second Engineer	1
Third Engineer	3
Fourth Engineer	1
3rd Officer	1
Project Administrator	2
Deck Cadet	5
Engine Cadet	4
Mess Girl	1
Brazilian Supervisor	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>

## Results and Discussion

### Gender Gap in the Maritime Sector

Gender gap is defined as “the observable gap between women and men on some important socio-economic indicator (e.g., ownership of property, access to land, enrolment at school) which is seen to be unjust, and therefore presents clear empirical evidence of the existence of a gender issue” (Longwe 2002, 5). Gender gap is highly evident in maritime schools and in the seafaring profession.

The gender gap in maritime schools can be attributed to the delay in the opening up of schools to female students. A number of maritime schools accepted male students before and after World War II. Limiting enrollees to males for decades, and for almost two centuries in the case of one government school, reinforced the belief that maritime courses were only for male students.

It has only been in the past three decades that women have been welcomed to these male-dominated institutions.

Lyceum of the Philippines-Batangas City is probably the first maritime school to have a female student. The university welcomed its lone female student in 1985. LPU Dean for Maritime Education C/M Arnulfo Orence, however, underscored that the female student only enrolled in some subjects in maritime transport in preparation for a job with the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA). LPU did not have a female maritime student for almost a decade after its first female student completed the required subjects. It was only in the mid-1990s that LPU started having female students in maritime courses. Although LPU is one of the private maritime institutions that has produced world-class seafarers, the number of its women enrollees continues to be low compared to male students.

The Philippine Merchant Marine Academy (PMMA) was the first government maritime school to accept women cadets in 1993, almost 173 years after it was founded. The opening up was brought about by the enactment of RA 7192, also known as the Women in Development and Nation Building Act, which was passed in 1992. The law mandates the integration of women in various industries and in the military to make them full and equal partners of men in development and nation building. The first batch of enrollees was composed of four women, and graduated from the academy in 1997. Aside from serving merchant and passenger vessels, many PMMA women graduates also joined the Philippine Coast Guard and the Philippine Navy. PMMA produced its first woman captain and first woman chief engineer in 2015.

The Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) welcomed midship women or female students as soon as it started operations in 1998. From 2003 to 2015, a total of 84 women completed their degrees in maritime transport, marine engineering, and marine transport engineering. The number of female graduates does not even represent 10 percent of the total graduates. MAAP has so far produced two women captains and the country's first woman chief engineer.

AIMS was established in 1993, but it was only in the late 1990s that the school experienced the entry of female students. It has also become one of the major suppliers of women seafarers. AIMS students interviewed for this research were hoping that the school could also produce a woman captain in order to boost the profile of the school. Although figures were not available, female students accounted for less than 10 percent of the student population.

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Statistics from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) show that maritime-related courses have been quite popular for the past decades because of the surge in deployment of sea-based workers since the 1970s. There was a slight surge in the number of female enrollees after the opening up policy. For academic year 1998/99, the number of female enrollees in maritime schools reached 3,736, or almost six percent of the total enrolment. However, since 1999, there has been a decline in women enrollees. Table 4 shows that from 1999 to 2004, the total number of maritime students (excluding 2002 figures) was 378,277. The number of male enrollees was 371,669, or 98.26 percent, while female students accounted for 6,608, or 1.74 percent, of the total enrollees in maritime. The ratio of males to females was 98.26 to 1.74.

The low enrolment rate of women during the period may be attributed to the lack of information campaigns by maritime schools and government agencies announcing that both male and female are eligible to take up maritime courses. Female graduates of maritime schools also had difficulty looking for jobs and often ended up doing office work in shipping companies and other industries.

**Table 3. Female Graduates of MAAP (2003-2015)**

Year	BS MT	BS MarE	BS MTE	TOTAL
2003	2	2	N/A	4
2004	4	1	N/A	5
2005	2	3	N/A	5
2006	2	2	N/A	4
2007	2	0	N/A	2
2008	2	2	N/A	4
2009	1	1	0	2
2010	3	1	4	8
2011	3	4	2	9
2012	3	3	2	8
2013	5	9	N/A	14
2014	2	9	N/A	11
2015	4	4	N/A	8
	35	41	8	84

Source: Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific

Table 4. Male and Female Enrollees in Maritime Schools (AY 1998-2004)

ACADEMIC YEAR	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE VS TOTAL
1998/99	62,687	58,951	3,736	5.9%
1999/00	73,747	72,316	1,431	1.94%
2000/01	68,966	67,634	1,332	1.93%
2001/02	82,471	80,943	1,528	1.85%
2002/03		No data		
2003/04	79,843	78,531	1,312	1.64%
2004/05	73,250	72,245	1,005	1.37%

Source: Commission on Higher Education

The number of women graduates of maritime schools was quite low in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Statistics show that the number of female graduates was slightly higher in school year 1997/98 at 4.9 percent (549) and in school year 1998/99 at 9.29 percent (936), but the momentum was not sustained in the succeeding years. During the period 1999 to 2003 (excluding 2001 when no data were available), female graduates did not even reach one percent, except for school year 2000/01. The low number of female graduates compared to the number of enrollees shows that many female students decided not to pursue their maritime courses. It is possible that female students felt uncomfortable with the dominance of males in schools. The low prospects of finding jobs after college may also have discouraged female students from completing their maritime courses or degrees. Likewise, the high cost of education and other expenses in private maritime schools may have contributed to the low graduation rate of female students.

The Magna Carta of Women was signed in to law on August 14, 2009 by then President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. The landmark law seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and encourages the full participation of women in development. The so-called bill of rights of women, however, failed to encourage women to enter male-dominated maritime schools. Table 6 shows that the number of women enrolled in BS Marine Transport from 2010 to 2014 remained low, between 1.68 per cent and 2.76 percent of total enrolment. There were fewer women enrolled in BS Marine Engineering, which did not even reach one percent of the total enrolment from 2010 to 2014. The number of graduates in the two major courses also remained less than one percent most of the time, and reached its peak of 1.7 percent for BS Marine

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Engineering in 2012. Although the Magna Carta of Women gave hope to the empowerment of Filipino women in various sectors, it hardly empowered women in the maritime sector. This shows the need for specific legislation that addresses the gender gap in the maritime sector.

**Table 5. Graduates of Maritime Schools (AY 1997-2003)**

ACADEMIC YEAR	BACCALAUREATE	
	MALE	FEMALE
1997/98	10,663	549 (4.9%)
1998/99	9,143	936(9.3%)
1999/00	9,695	47(0.48%)
2000/01	10,685	158(1.46%)
2001/02	No data available	
2002/03	10,669	77(0.72%)
2003/04	10,084	78(0.77%)

Source: Commission on Higher Education

**Table 6. Enrolment in Marine Transport and Marine Engineering 2010-14**

Year	BS Marine Transport			BS Marine Engineering		
	Male	Female	TOTAL	Male	Female	TOTAL
2010	78,767	1,352 (1.68% of total)	80,119	52,813	348 (0.65% of total)	53,161
2011	80,395	1,314 (1.8%)	82,043	58,228	384 (0.66%)	58,612
2012	74,136	1,945 (2.56%)	76,056	62,034	499 (0.79%)	62,533
2013	79,611	2,183 (2.67%)	81,794	55,562	522 (0.93%)	56,084
2014	65,730	1,865 (2.76%)	67,595	49,424	434 (0.87%)	49,858

Note: Enrolment figures for first semester only.

**Table 7. Graduates of BS Marine Transport and BS Marine Engineering (2010-2014)**

Year	BS Marine Transport Graduates			BS Marine Engineering Graduates		
	Male	Female	TOTAL	Male	Female	TOTAL
2010	4,601	41 (0.88%)	4,642	2,392	11 (0.46%)	2,403
2011	4,366	28 (0.64%)	4,394	2,970	15 (0.50%)	2,985
2012	3,961	25 (0.63%)	3,986	2,692	47 (1.7%)	2,739
2013	4,178	46 (1.09%)	4,224	2,990	32 (1.06%)	3,022
2014	3,790	43 (1.12%)	3,833	2,874	19 (0.66%)	2,893

On the professional side, the gender gap is also very wide. The number of Filipino seafarers deployed annually has been growing steadily since the 1970s. From only 23,000 deployed in 1972, the number of sea-based workers deployed in 2014 has reached more than 400,000. According to the BIMCO/ISF Manpower Report 2015, the Philippines continues to be one of the top three suppliers of seafarers, together with China and Russia. However, Filipino women seafarers have not benefitted much from this global phenomenon. Statistics from the POEA show that women only account for between two to three percent of the total sea-based workers deployed from 2006 to 2014. Clearly, male seafarers dominate the seafaring industry and account for around 97 percent.

The gender gap in the seafaring industry is more apparent among officers and ratings. Most of the women officers and ratings are on board oil tankers, chemical tankers, cargo vessels, and dry vessels. The number of women in these two subgroups can be considered microscopic. One needs a microscope to find these women officers and ratings in a sea of men. For instance, in 2006 there were only 25 women officers, or 0.05 percent, of the 52,757 sea officers deployed, while there were only 329 women, or 0.24 percent, out of the 136,250 ratings deployed. It was only in 2011 that the number of women officers reached 1,005, or more than one percent, while female ratings reached almost one percent. Industry sources attributed the sudden surge to women on shipboard training during the period that was classified as either officers

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**Table 8. Number of Women Seafarers vs Total Seafarers Deployed (2006-2014)**

YEAR	Total Seafarers Deployed	Women Seafarers Deployed	Percentage of Women Seafarers
2006	230,586	6,436	2.79%
2007	266,553	5,546	2.08%
2008	261,614	6,019	2.30%
2009	330,424	8,114	2.46%
2010	347,150	9,002	2.59%
2011	369,104	12,171	3.30%
2012	366,865	9,186	2.50%
2013	367,166	10,171	2.77%
2014	401,826	12,345	3.07%

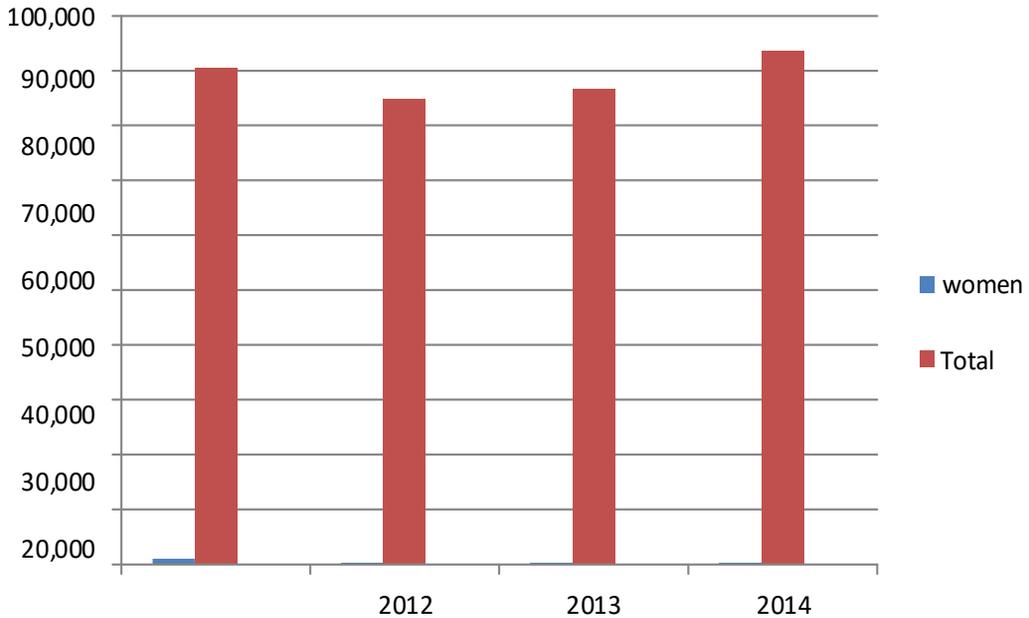
Sources: POEA , Tangi (2012)

**Table 9. Number of Women Sea officers, Ratings vs Total Officers, Ratings Deployed (2006-2014)**

YEAR	Total number of Filipino Sea Officers Deployed	Number of Women Sea officers Deployed	Total number of Ratings Deployed	Number of Women Ratings Deployed
2006	52,757	25 (0.05%)	136,250	329 (0.24%)
2007	51,353	44 (0.08%)	139,740	300 (0.21%)
2008	57,773	65 (0.11%)	98,720	394 (0.40%)
2009	78,893	90 (0.11%)	92,027	501 (0.54%)
2010	81,761	84(0.10%)	124,765	497 (0.40%)
2011	90,506	1,005 (1.11%)	140,681	1,394(0.99%)
2012	84,836	111(0.13%)	136,505	77(0.05%)
2013	86,636	118 (0.14%)	139,211	72(0.05%)
2014	93,686	170(0.18%)	154,402	89(0.06%)

Sources: Philippine Overseas Employment Administration 2016; Tangi 2012

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**Chart 2. Number of Women Sea officers vs Total Sea Officers Deployed 2011-2014**

or ratings. In 2012 the number of women officers and ratings returned to their previous levels of less than one percent.

There is also a gender gap in the hotel and services department of passenger vessels or cruise liners, but not as wide as with officers and ratings. A previous study by the author (Tangi 2012) shows that more than 90 percent of Filipino women seafarers work on board passenger vessels. Most of them work as waitresses, massage therapists, kitchen helpers, cabin girls, and utility personnel. The latest figures from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) show that women account for between 14 to 16 percent of non-marine personnel on passenger vessels deployed from 2011 to 2014.

Although more than 90 percent of women seafarers are found in this category, men still dominate the passenger vessels. Filipino women are valued on passenger vessels because of their caring attitude toward children and senior passengers as well as for their smiling dispositions. It should be noted that there are also women officers and ratings who manage to work on passenger vessels, but they are quite rare.

**Table 10. Women Seafarers on Passenger Cruise (2011-2014)**

Year	Non-marine Seafarers on Passenger Vessels	Women non- marine Seafarers on Passenger Vessels	Percentage of women
2011	59,262	8,441	14.24%
2012	58,966	8,530	14.46%
2013	60,565	9,523	15.72%
2014	70,640	11,465	16.23%

The gender gap in the seafaring industry is brought about by various factors. Based on interviews with stakeholders, patriarchal control and patriarchal beliefs are the main reasons behind the gender gap. Patriarchal control is defined by Longwe (2002, 5) as “the system of male monopoly or domination of decision making positions, at all levels of governance, which is used to maintain male dominance and gender discrimination (for the continued privilege of males).” Most of the shipping companies, shipping organizations, crewing, and ship management companies are still controlled by men.

One of the most common patriarchal beliefs is the notion that men are superior while women are considered “the weaker sex.” In the maritime sector, the notion that seafaring is man’s turf is also a patriarchal belief. Patriarchal control and beliefs affect women seafarers in various ways in the maritime sector. They are evident in terms of gender discrimination, sexual harassment, bullying, company policies on women, and maritime school policies on women. Each of these terms will be discussed extensively in this study.

### **Gender Discrimination**

Gender discrimination is generally defined as the different treatment given to women compared to men. This different treatment given to women and girls deprives them or denies them opportunities, resources, and control over policies. Gender discrimination in the maritime sector stems from the notion that seafaring is a man’s turf. Most seafarers and shipping companies believe that work on board requires heavy lifting and technical expertise. The dirty jobs in the engine department are considered unglamorous and therefore not fit for women. Thus women who dare enter the industry or maritime schools are often challenged, and their capabilities are often underestimated by male colleagues and male students. Some start to experience discrimination in maritime schools.

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We think that discrimination of women is part of human nature. Since the day we wrote down our application forms prior to entering this institution, we had been told that we are about to enter a man's world. We just think that we are the ones who must adjust to these changes. (PMMA women cadets focus group discussion, September 28, 2015)

Female cadets usually experience discrimination during their first two years in maritime school. PMMA female cadets said that upper class men usually underestimate their abilities.

Gender discrimination is high. For instance, some seniors underestimate the capability of female cadets in doing certain tasks (such as push-ups and jogging several kilometers). But some of us cadets just keep quiet in order to avoid conflict. We just try our best in fulfilling the tasks. (PMMA women cadets focus group discussion, September 28, 2015)

Maritime school officials claim that they do not discriminate against women. They also emphasize that they do not give special treatment to women. In PMMA and MAAP, all cadets, both male and female, have to wake up at 4:30 AM so they can do their morning jog around the campus. The physical and academic training is the same for both male and female. Engineer Joel Magsino, a faculty member at MAAP, said that sometimes female cadets finish their jogging routine even faster than some male cadets. Female cadets are excused from the daily jogging during their period. But Engineer Magsino said that since he started teaching at MAAP, he has not come across a female cadet who asked to be excused from the routine of jogging during her menstrual period.

Maritime school faculty members observe that female cadets or students tend to excel in academics while males tend to excel in physical and technical trainings. Female students also tend to be more focused in their lessons and in their studies in general. Since maritime schools are male-dominated, it is often expected for males to be on top of the class. On the other hand, if female students excel, they receive derogatory remarks from male students, as in the case of licensed Captain Jasmin Labarda when she was still at MAAP.

A concerned colleague once told me that when I was number one during the very first two semesters in MAAP, some boys were not happy about it and even questioned why a female was allowed to be on top. It makes me wonder now if a female did not excel, they would have said the same thing: "Why let a female enter here." "That's how

females are.” That’s basically the life of being the lesser gender; you’re damned if you do well, damned if you don’t. (Licensed Captain Jasmin Labarda on-line interview, January 2016)

Female cadets of PMMA and MAAP have to cut their hair crew-cut style as soon as they are accepted in the institution. For some female cadets, the ritual of hair cutting can also be tormenting as it symbolizes saying goodbye to long hair and being feminine. Most of the female cadets also look at the hair cut ritual as a preparation for their being an officer. However, when they go to malls and public places, PMMA and MAAP students complain of the way they are treated by some people.

I remember one time when I was about to enter a comfort room in a gasoline station, the staff really stopped me from entering the ladies room. She said arrogantly, “Pambabae yan (That’s for women).” But I politely responded, “Miss, babae po ako (Miss, I am a woman).” The staff eventually allowed me to use the ladies room after she realized that I was really a woman. (PMMA female cadet, focus group discussion, September 28, 2015).

The first time I went to a mall after entering the academy, I wanted to try a shirt but the sales girl stopped me. She said “Sir, sa ladies lang po dyan (Sir, that’s only for ladies).” But I said, “Lady po ako, hindi sir (I am a lady, not a ‘sir’).” Such incidents are really annoying, but I just look at it as part of the challenges of being a future officer. (MAAP female cadet, focus group discussion, September 21, 2015).

MAAP, which is operated by AMOSUP, relies on sponsorship to finance the education of cadets. However, MAAP Dean of Academics Renante Garcia said that the academy often has difficulty finding sponsors for female cadets. Shipping companies prefer to sponsor male cadets, according to him. When female cadets do not have sponsors, this means added cost for the operation of the academy. If shipping companies will continue with their preference for male cadets in their sponsorship, Dean Garcia said MAAP might reduce its intake of female cadets.

Maritime students are required to undergo one year of shipboard training before they earn their degree. The shipboard training is supposed to be the culmination of their maritime education and the application of the theories that they learned in class. Meeting this requirement, however, has become a major challenge for female maritime students.

## Tangi

Last month there were a number of shipping companies that visited our school. We applied for shipboard training. But all the companies were not accepting women trainees. We will try to apply to as many companies, hoping that one of them will finally accept women trainees. (Female students of Lyceum of the Philippines-Batangas focus group discussion, March 2016)

The country's first female licensed chief engineer, Nina Sue Da Silva, did not have a sponsor when she was a cadet at MAAP. Although that in itself was quite frustrating, she never realized that applying for shipboard employment was more challenging. She applied to 124 companies after she graduated from MAAP in 2003. She was rejected simply because she was a woman, and many shipping companies do not accept female sea officers. She was finally accepted by the 125th company she filed her application with. Although she was accepted as an engine cadet in a Japanese shipping company, she considered it a breakthrough because Japanese companies hardly accept women on board.

Licensed Captain Beverly Pawid, a graduate of PMMA in 2004, shared the same experience in job hunting.

I thought it would be easier for me to find a job because I am a graduate of a premier maritime school. I applied to many companies and I did not give up because I really wanted to help my family. Oftentimes, the crewing agents outrightly reject your application because of your gender. (Captain Pawid interview, March 2016)

Women seafarers also experience discrimination from their own male colleagues and friends. Gender discrimination stems from the erroneous notion that women are *pambahay*, or only good for the home. Licensed Captain Ma. Kristina Javellana, an MAAP 2005 graduate, also did not have a sponsor while she was studying and, therefore, had difficulty finding shipboard training. When she was finally accepted as deck cadet on board a chemical tanker, she received unpleasant remarks from male seafarers. "Baka naman pagsayawin ka lang doon, sabi nila sa akin (They'll probably just make you dance, they told me)." Captain Javellana, however, ignored such discriminatory remarks and pursued her seafaring career, usually serving on chemical tankers, and became a licensed captain in 2015.

It is quite rare to find women marine engineers because the engine department is often considered a dirty job and exclusive to males. Thus, some male engine officers who do not want women in their department usually

relegate women marine engineers to paper work or work inside the control room.

Especially some of the Indians and Ukrainians, they think women are only good for house chores and taking care of babies. You will get offended at first, of course, but in the long run, I learned how to defend myself and to speak out; then they slowed down and did not discriminate [against] me anymore. They will always try to discriminate in many forms, sometimes by not saying any words. They will give you [an] easy task, paper work to be exact, and if you will not speak out and tell them what your objections are, they will continue to treat you that way. (Engineer Luzviminida Ornopia online interview, February 2016)

### **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is generally defined as “unwanted sexual attention that is explicitly or implicitly made a condition for favorable decisions affecting one’s employment or school standing, or that which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment in the school or the workplace” (Office of the President Philippine Commission on Women n.d., 2). It can be manifested through verbal and physical conduct. The Anti-Sexual Harassment Law of 1995, or RA 7877, states that any person who directs or induces to commit any act of sexual harassment is also liable under the law. The penalty imposed under the law includes imprisonment from one to six months and a maximum fine of PhP20,000.

In a male-dominated industry, sexual harassment is an issue that women have to brace themselves for. Around 60 percent of the 24 professional women seafarers interviewed said that they had experienced various forms of sexual harassment. Some of the experiences were verbal and others were physical in nature. With the enactment of RA 7877, maritime schools are now more active in preventing sexual harassment on campus.

A female graduate of MAAP said in an interview that she was a victim of sexual harassment twice on campus. The first incident happened when the female cadet was on her second year in the academy, and she learned from one of her male friends that some seniors had been peeping in the shower room of female cadets. The female cadets checked the shower area and indeed found holes in the ceiling. The female cadets reported the incident to academy officials, and all their upperclassmen were punished.

## Tangi

The second incident of sexual harassment happened when the female cadet was in her senior year. She was focusing on a group activity in class when one of her male groupmates suddenly rubbed his private part on her. The female cadet was shocked and confronted the male cadet. She reported the incident to school authorities and the male cadet was punished.

On board international vessels, Filipino women sea officers are often the only female on board. This condition or set-up makes them vulnerable to sexual harassment, especially during their junior years. Chief Engineer Da Silva, for instance, was a third engineer when she received an indecent proposal from a Danish chief mate.

*Akala nya nagpapabayad ako. Dati kasi may kasama kaming Pinay din na nagpapabayad. Akala ng Danish na yon na lahat ng Pinay ganon. (He thought that I was offering sex for cash. We had a Filipina steward who used to peddle sexual services on board. This Danish thought that all Filipino women are the same.) (Chief Engineer Da Silva online interview, January 2016)*

Based on the ship's operational procedures, a crew member must report any untoward incident or grievance directly to the immediate supervisor. But since the perpetrator of the sexual harassment was of higher rank than the direct supervisor, Da Silva reported that incident to the captain. The Danish chief officer was eventually punished by the company.

An Indian second engineer also preyed on Da Silva while she was a third engineer and was up for promotion as second engineer. The Indian second engineer used to give her light workload inside the control room and was nice to her. However, the Indian engineer's attitude changed when Da Silva rejected his invitation to his cabin.

One day the Indian engineer invited me to watch television in his cabin. I turned down the invitation and warned him that he would get nowhere with me. After the incident, he started giving me heavy workload and often reprimanded me for no valid reason. He also wrote bad marks on the evaluation form. (Engineer Da Silva online interview, January 2016).

Engineer Da Silva reported the incident to her immediate supervisor, the chief engineer, and the company disregarded the negative evaluation of her performance. She was eventually promoted to second engineer.

## Empowering Filipino Women Seafarers in the Maritime Sector

Most of the women sea officers dress up like one of the boys and sometimes even act like one of the boys just to ward off potential predators. But Marine Engineer Monique Arrojado, a MAAP graduate, was surprised one day when the Danish captain of the cargo vessel to which she was deployed called her alone inside his office. The Danish captain confessed, “There is something in you. I really like you.” Arrojado was offended because the captain was already married. She politely replied to the Danish captain, “Sir, I came on board to work and not to look for a boyfriend.”

I really don't know why he (the captain) liked me when on board I just wear my bandana, no makeup, and I try not show any part of my body. He continued to invite me to his office after the incident but I always tell him that I am busy. (Engineer Arrojado interview, January 2016)

Captain Beverly Pawid said that she always brings extra locks and items that she can use for self-defense whenever she works on board.

When I was younger, one of my male colleagues told me that someone tried to open my cabin while I was asleep. On ship, there are only two people who have access to my cabin key—the chief mate and the captain. So I always try to be extra careful and alert. (Captain Pawid interview, March 2016).

Whenever on board, Captain Pawid also puts away all her personal belongings, including slippers and underwear. “Maybe because of loneliness and boredom while on board, some seafarers develop sexual fetishism for the personal belongings of women on board” (Captain Pawid interview, March 2016).

Other forms of sexual harassment experienced by women seafarers include dirty jokes during conversations, discussion of sexual adventures, and watching pornographic movies or videos while women seafarers are in the area.

Based on the interviews, women sea officers become vulnerable to sexual harassment during their junior years and when they are the only woman on board. As women officers climb the ladder and become recognized in their profession, male seafarers tend to respect them; thus they become less vulnerable to sexual harassment. The sexist and macho attitude of male seafarers is the main reason behind the sexual harassment. This is reinforced by the working environment wherein seafarers are away from their loved ones for months.

## **Bullying of Women Seafarers**

Bullying is defined as “a form of harassment that includes hostile or vindictive behavior that can cause the recipient to feel threatened or intimidated” (International Chamber of Shipping and International Transport Workers Federation 2016, 5). Bullying is also a problem of both male and female seafarers on board, especially among ratings and junior officers. However, women are more vulnerable to bullying because of the notion of some male seafarers that women are “the weaker sex” and therefore have no place in the profession. Bullying also occurs when some male seafarer feel threatened when they see junior women officers who are working hard.

On board international vessels, a mess man is usually assigned to serve the food, do the laundry, and clean the mess of officers. The job is usually reserved for male seafarers, but one woman seafarer from Bustos, Bulacan who dared to assume this position ended up being bullied by the ship captain.

There is one incident during my tenure that our captain threw the used towel and bed sheet on my feet instead of giving them to me by hand or by calling me. He also used to throw garbage like cartons in front of the door that blocked the entrance to the mess room. I guess on our part we can call this (bullying) or he thought we are like a slave to him. (Messperson from Bustos Bulacan online interview, May 2016)

Chief Engineer Da Silva recalled that she was also bullied by a Russian chief engineer who never worked with women on board. She had an argument with the Russian chief engineer over a task. The Russian chief engineer suddenly lifted her and was about to punch her. But Da Silva threatened, “Hit me and I will make sure that this will be the end of your career.” The Russian chief engineer calmed down and did not hurt or bully Da Silva ever again.

Bullying also occurs because of racial discrimination. Some male seafarers from developed countries look down on Filipino women. A female project administrator who graduated from De La Salle University-Manila said some nationalities look down on Filipino women as “idiots and illiterates.”

There was a chief engineer before that told me frankly that I wrote the minutes of the meeting like a 10-year-old child. My other boss told me I was the dumbest of the dumbest. (Project administrator from Parañaque City online interview, May 2016)

It is apparent that women junior officers and ratings become vulnerable to bullying if they work with male seafarers who never had any experience in working with women on board. Their attitude towards women reflects that of the societies they come from and greatly affects their treatment of women seafarers, regardless of their rank.

### **Shipping Companies/Crewing Agencies Policy on Women**

Another major reason for the gender gap in the seafaring industry is the attitude of shipping companies and crewing agencies toward women. Based on the latest report released by POEA, there are around 407 crewing agencies that are licensed to recruit seafarers who want to work on board international vessels. However, at present there are only a few crewing agencies that accept women seafarers. Most of these agencies recruit women seafarers to work on passenger vessels or cruise ships. Women officers complain that crewing agents reject their applications outright without even going over their documents or without checking their credentials. But crewing agents say that shipping companies are the ones that accept or reject applications. “We just send them [shipping companies] the documents,” said Captain Rodolfo Estampador, president of the Conference on Maritime Manning Agencies (COMMA).

Crewing agents say that shipping companies are more willing to accept women to work on board passenger cruise because of the nature of Filipino women.” Our women are known to be very caring and always smiling at passengers. These are qualities that are much needed on cruise ships,” a crewing agent said. However, many shipping companies are still reluctant to accept women on merchant vessels because they are perceived to be “causing trouble on board.” (USF President Engineer Nelson Ramirez interview, March 2016).

Based on the interviews, it appears that shipping companies do not really question the credentials or the productivity of women seafarers. The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) is already in place. It sets the minimum standards and qualifications for both male and female seafarers. It appears that shipping companies are more concerned about issues of sexual harassment, extra marital affairs, and pregnancy while women are on board. It should be noted that Filipino women are generally not covered by maternity benefits, which are enjoyed by women seafarers from other nationalities like Britain, Australia, Denmark, and Sweden.

## Tangi

Filipino seafarers, both male and female, are hired on a contractual basis by shipping companies or their principals. This means that all the salary and benefits of Filipino seafarers also end with the expiration of their contract. Contractualization is not beneficial to women sea officers because they are not entitled to maternity benefits. Many women officers also need to abandon their seafaring career as soon as they start having children, instead of having options to work in other departments while they are raising them.

The president of the Women in Maritime Philippines, Carla Limcaoco, said that the great challenge is to change the perception of shipping companies about women. Women in Maritime Philippines (WIMAPHIL), a nationwide organization of women in the maritime industry, was planning to forge an agreement with shipping companies registered in the Philippines to accept more women seafarers (Seafarer Times 2013).

Crewing agencies also have a big role to play in convincing shipping companies to hire more Filipino women sea officers and ratings. A crewing manager interviewed said that she had successfully convinced a Japanese shipping company to accept Filipino women cadets, although it is known in the industry that Japanese companies do not accept women seafarers. The crewing manager said that encouraging former women sea officers to set up crewing agencies may be helpful in changing the attitude of shipping companies towards women officers.

**Table 11. Agencies that Recruit for Passenger Cruise**

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CTI Group Manila	Holland American Lines - UPL
Dolphin Ship Management, Inc.	Magsaysay Maritime
Great Southern Maritime Services Corporation	Century Maritime Agencies, Inc.
Jebsens Maritime, Inc.	Eagle Star Crew Management Corporation
Singa Ship Management Phils.	Allied International Manpower Services Inc.
Splash Phils. Inc. Shipping Agency	Career Phils. Shipmanagement, Inc.
CF Sharp Crew Management	V Ship Philippines
PTC Royal Caribbean	

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Source: Philippine Association of Manning Agencies and Ship Managers, Inc. (PAMAS)

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### **Maritime Schools and Training Institutions**

Maritime schools and training institutions also contribute to the widening of the gender gap in the seafaring sector. In the latest report of the Commission on Higher Education, there are only 23 maritime institutions with accredited Merchant Marine (Deck) Programs and Marine Engineering Programs. Only three of these schools—PMMA, Palompon Institute of Technology, and Zamboanga State Colleges of Marine Sciences and Technology—are state universities. The majority of the CHED-accredited maritime institutions are privately owned. Many female students are unable to pursue their maritime courses because of the prohibitive cost of education. For instance, in Lyceum of the Philippines-Batangas City, the tuition is more than PhP40,000 per semester, while in AIMS in Pasay City, the tuition is more than PhP50,000. The high tuition also reflects the huge amount that maritime schools need to invest in order to provide education and training that meet international standards. Aside from tuition, students also need to dig into their pockets for their uniforms, books, food, and transportation. MAAP, which is a privately-run institution, provides free tuition, but female students have to undergo rigid training. Only a few women survive the training there. With the decline in sponsorship for female cadets, there may be fewer chances for women to be accepted in MAAP.

In state universities like PMMA, female students need to undergo rigid physical training. Female graduates of PMMA said many women pass the written examination, but most of them do not survive the rigid physical training. The macho style of discipline also discourages many women cadets from pursuing their maritime education.

As soon as we said goodbye to our mama and papa, we were immediately instructed to go to gym. I was shocked at the way we were treated. The officers started screaming at us and I didn't understand why. At first I really felt like quitting. But on the other hand I also had a dream. (Chief Engineer Kiat-Ong, interview, March 2016)

Officials of PMMA said that the training and discipline imposed on cadets are part of their preparation for their life on board. The administration has also been taking steps to address the special needs of women cadets. For instance, a separate dormitory for women cadets has been built. Women cadets are also excused from routine jogging in the morning during their menstrual period.

## **Social Cost of Seafaring for Women**

Aside from enduring the effects of patriarchal control and beliefs, Filipino women seafarers also bear the social cost of their profession. Since they are always away from home from four to six months, women seafarers confess that their relationship with their family members was also affected. They feel that their parents and siblings do not know them very well and sometimes feel alienated. Since they also have very limited time on shore or in the Philippines, some women seafarers say that they do not have many friends.

The breakdown of relationships and separation is also a problem that women seafarers face. Single women interviewed said that they have difficulty sustaining their relationships because of their shipboard employment. For married women seafarers, convincing their husband or partner to understand their profession is always a challenge. A number of marriages have failed because of this issue. In many instances, women seafarers have to give up their careers to look after their family and to maintain a harmonious marriage.

Women seafarers who are married or committed to non-seafarers mentioned about the identity shift that they go through when on board and when on shore. On board, they are officers, and their male colleagues follow their orders. But when they return home, they have to remove their officer mentality and become humble servants of their husband or partner. This sad reality shows that the empowerment of women seafarers must start at home. This means that even if the country produces many women captains and chief engineers, it would be meaningless if they end up as victims of domestic violence and patriarchal control at home.

Life onboard can be lonely, especially if you are the only woman on board. Women seafarers battle homesickness by joining their male colleagues in their drinking sessions. A number of women officers said they started smoking when they worked on board in order to relieve stress and also to battle loneliness. Sometimes they also need to be “one of the boys.” Such a dangerous lifestyle that women seafarers have to adopt is detrimental to their health and may lead to serious ailments.

This research also found that women seafarers may be more prone to occupational ailments than men. For instance, women engineers sometimes develop skin allergies when they are exposed to certain chemicals in the engine department. This may be due to the sensitive skin of women. One of the women officers also said that she suffered from short-term memory loss and suspected that it was caused by fumes emitted by chemicals used in cleaning vessels. The

woman officer said that she could not even remember her name when she was filling up an application form. She even forgot where she kept her money. Although she did not seek medication, her memory eventually improved after drinking supplements for more than a year.

Existing literature links short term memory loss to drugs, alcohol, trauma, and even stress. Further studies must be made to find out the link between memory loss and chemicals used in vessels.

### **Integrating Women in Seafaring**

Various efforts have been made in the international and local arena in order to address the gender gap in the maritime sector. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) introduced in 1988 the Women in Development (WID) Program to integrate women into the male-dominated maritime industry. Part of the strategy was to increase the enrolment of women in maritime schools. There have been slight increases in enrolment in maritime schools in many parts of the world, especially in Europe. For instance, at the World Maritime University, women accounted for eight percent of enrollees, many of whom were in high-level maritime trainings (Belcher et al. 2008). The WID program eventually resulted in higher participation of women in the maritime industry in Europe. In Sweden, women accounted for 23 percent of their country's seafarers from 1997-2001. In Denmark women accounted for 15 percent, and in Norway it was 10 percent (Belcher et al.2008).

The International Labour Organization (ILO) also launched in the past decade a research and education campaign on the plight of women seafarers. One of the major contributions of the ILO is the release of a book in 2003 on the global employment policies and practices on women seafarers. In April 2013, the IMO made another milestone by introducing the Busan Declaration at the IMO Regional Conference on the Development of a Global Strategy for Women Seafarers in Busan, Korea. The declaration recognizes the contribution of women seafarers to the maritime industry and also the challenges that they face at work. IMO advocated the promotion of policies to support women's access to maritime education and merchant marine professions (International Maritime Organization 2013).

In the Philippines, the effect of WID has been very minimal. More than two decades after IMO's WID program, the number of women in maritime schools in the Philippines continues to be very negligible. Those who manage to enter maritime schools also have less chance of graduating compared to males. As

a result, the number of Filipino women seafarers has remained between two to three percent. Among those who manage to enter the trade, less than one percent are professionals and skilled workers.

On July 7, 2007, a milestone was achieved with the establishment of Women in Maritime Philippines, an organization of women in the maritime sector, with the help of IMO officials. WIMAPHIL is now a national organization with members from various parts of the country. In June 2013, WIMAPHIL launched the “She to Sea” campaign to raise awareness on the importance of employing women seafarers. “The program aims to raise awareness on the importance of employing female seafarers in an industry that is in need of qualified shipboard officers” (Seafarer Times 2013).

The campaign made by international and local groups has been quite useful in providing information on women seafarers. However, such campaigns and strategies have not been sustained and were rather seasonal in nature. The call for women’s integration in the maritime sector has produced a greater number of women in the hotels and services departments of ships. It is probably high time to abandon the call for integration and instead push for women empowerment in the maritime sector.

### **Summary and Policy Recommendations**

The gender gap in the seafaring industry is indeed one that is most serious. While the percentage of women has surpassed men in some sectors, women seafarers have remained at between two to three percent in the past decade, the majority of whom are in non-marine or hotels and services departments of cruise ships. The number of women officers deployed on board international vessels has remained at a microscopic level at less than one percent. The prevalence of patriarchal control and patriarchal beliefs has been traced as the root cause of the gender gap. This is aggravated by the race among ship owners to reduce costs in order to maintain profits. Women officers interviewed for this research defied all the patriarchal beliefs common in the industry. The fact that the country has produced women captains and women chief engineers shows that women, like men, can also excel in a seafaring career. It is just a matter of time and a matter of changing ship owners’ perceptions. Filipino women captains can navigate a ship.

The gender gap in the male-dominated maritime sector can only be narrowed down with the empowerment of women. Using Longwe’s Empowerment

## Empowering Filipino Women Seafarers in the Maritime Sector

Framework, this research recommends that the five levels of welfare, access, conscientization, mobilization, and control be addressed.

The welfare needs of women seafarers can be achieved if they are given jobs and decent pay so they can afford to meet their practical needs. Women seafarers must be given access to trainings and educational institutions. This can be achieved by providing more scholarships to women or by encouraging schools to use their gender and development (GAD) budget to support female cadets in maritime schools. Conscientization means women are made aware of their condition and are informed about their human rights. This can be achieved by providing gender and empowerment courses in maritime schools. Both male and female maritime students should take such courses. Mobilization means encouraging women seafarers to do something or take action in order to improve their working conditions and fight for their human rights. This can be done by first encouraging them to organize, form associations, or join trade unions. Once united and organized, women seafarers can easily link up and form networks with women seafarers from different nationalities. The ultimate goal of empowerment is control of decision making and control of resources. Decision-making bodies in both private and public sectors are all controlled by men. To penetrate decision-making bodies, more Filipino women should be encouraged to reach the helm as captains and chief engineers. More women should also be encouraged to set up their crewing agencies and shipping companies through government support.

To further realize the empowerment of Filipino women seafarers and promote gender equality in the maritime sector, the following specific programs or steps are recommended:

1. The immediate creation of an Inter-Agency Committee on Women Seafarers with the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) as the coordinator. All government agencies involved in the education, training and deployment of women must be represented, such as DOLE, POEA, CHED, Maritime Training Council. Trade unions, seafarers' organizations, crewing agencies, and shipping companies must also be represented in the committee. The Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) should be included to ensure that the rights and welfare of women seafarers are protected. The committee will assess the situation in maritime schools and in the industry. The committee will also serve as a venue for continued dialogue among stakeholders on issues related to women seafarers.

2. A Program or Strategy on the Empowerment of Women Seafarers must be formulated for short-term and long-term goals. The program or strategy must include target number of students in maritime schools and target number of women to be deployed onboard domestic and international vessels. The program must also provide scholarships for women in maritime schools and training centers. Mentoring of women junior officers and career tracking should also be included in company policies.
3. A new legislation, the Empowerment of Women Seafarers Act, is another way forward. The comprehensive legislation shall recognize the important role of women in the development of the maritime industry. It must enshrine the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment in the maritime sector. It must declare unlawful any form of gender and racial discrimination, sexual harassment, and bullying. It must uphold and protect women's right to reproductive health, maternity benefits, social security, and their right to work in a safe and harmonious environment. It must provide women seafarers access to trainings, education, and financial resources to improve the maritime-related business. The law must also improve the general working conditions of women seafarers, including giving them breaks or days off during their period. It should also consider the situation of mothers who wish to apply for shorter contracts in order to have time to look after their children. Philippine registered ships must not be allowed to leave with only one woman seafarer on board.
4. The proposed law on the empowerment of seafarers must "engender" maritime schools, training centers, and the maritime sector in general. The law must also seek to promote gender-sensitive maritime education by introducing subjects on gender sensitivity and implementing gender-fair policies, such as hiring more female faculty and introducing GAD policies in maritime schools. Shipping companies and crewing agencies will also be encouraged to formulate their GAD policy. Sexist terms and language in the industry must be eliminated. For instance, the term "SEAMAN" must be replaced with the gender-fair term of "SEAFARER." Another macho term, "MANNING AGENCY" must be replaced with "CREWING AGENCY."
5. Require ships registered in the Philippines to hire more women seafarers and women cadets or trainees. The government can make this requirement a precondition for the renewal of registration of both foreign

and local ships. MARINA has been offering lower ship registration fees to foreign vessels.

6. The Anti-Sexual Harassment law must be fully implemented and awareness of the law should be broadened. No seafarer has been sent to jail for sexual harassment because victims either do not have the resources to pursue the case in court or they are not fully aware of their rights. A helpline for women and male victims of sexual harassment must be set up. It is the obligation of shipping companies to create a working environment onboard that is free from sexual harassment.
7. Women seafarers must be encouraged to organize and form networks. Women seafarers will have more chances of ventilating their grievances and advocating for their rights and welfare if they are organized. Organizing an independent union for women seafarers is something that can be considered in the future.
8. Setting up of a Seafarers Resource/Research Center in the University of the Philippines is also recommended. The number of Filipino seafarers has been growing annually, but studies on the industry have not been that extensive. The UP research center can initiate multi-disciplinary studies on occupational ailments, social protection, and also the social costs of seafaring.

These recommendations are far from perfect and conclusive. According to feminist historian Gerda Learner, patriarchy is historically constructed, and it took more than 3,000 years to perfect. This shows that there is a way to end patriarchy. Eliminating patriarchal control and beliefs in the seafaring industry will require more than the introduction of new laws and implementation of new programs. However, any small step taken to eliminate patriarchy can go a long way.

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