

IWSEF



MAGAZINE
ISSUE 1

MARCH 2023



Featuring Capt. Radhika Menon

India's First Female Merchant Navy Captain

OUR STORY

The International Women Seafarers Foundation

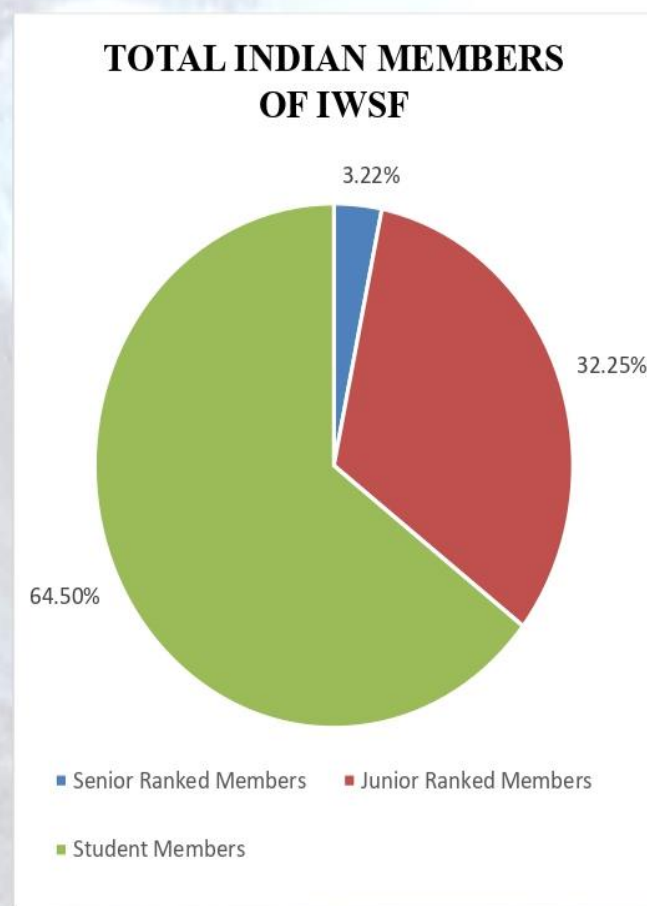
Our story began on a winter evening in 2016, when a small WhatsApp group of a few participating women seafarers suddenly expanded to an overwhelming 100 participants overnight. This social networking opened our eyes to the many issues that our industry faced with respect to bringing gender equality into this coveted profession.

As a result, the International Women Seafarers Foundation was established in 2017 by Capt. Radhika Menon, Ch. Engg. Suneeti Bala, and Ms. Sharvani Mishra, together with the support of several women achievers who are an integral part of our committee today. The foundation is a professional body, registered as a section 8 company under the Companies Act (2013). Our main objective is to sustainably increase the participation of women seafarers in the shipping industry. We offer support to women and the industry in a variety of pursuits.

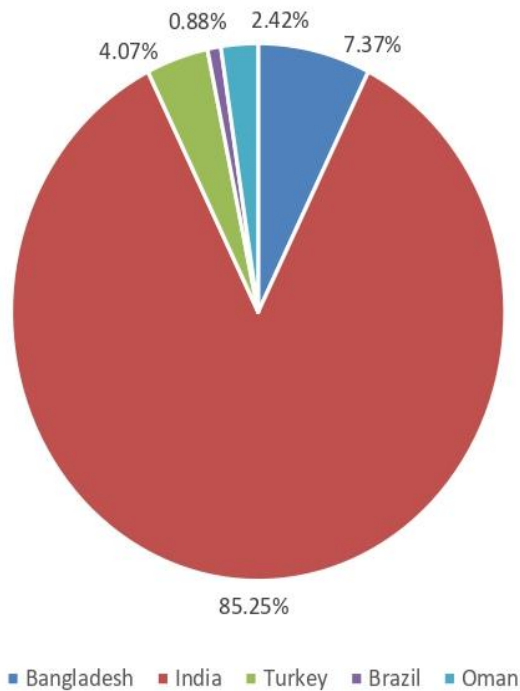
What has changed for women seafarers in the past five years?

Over the past five years, our existence has acted as a catalyst for maritime organizations to actively work on bridging

the gender gap in seafaring professions. The number of women seafarers finding employment has grown tremendously, from single-digit to double-digit percentages. Our active engagement with the top management of shipping companies has helped us to understand and align their policies and procedures to sustainably improve the count of women seafarers in their organizations.



TOTAL IWSF MEMBERS WORLDWIDE



Our teams' continuous effort to mentor and guide fellow members on the social challenges while sailing has helped many women to efficiently adapt to their on-board environment, leading to improved productivity.

The last five years has also seen an improvement in the count of girl cadets embracing shipping as a career path in India, thanks to the efforts of the DG and the shipping companies that have shown their social and financial commitment to sustain this intake level. As IWSF, we engage with primary level schools through our Adopt A Ship program, to raise general awareness about shipping and women in shipping.

Since the DGS Notice 7 of 2019, many companies have embraced women-friendly policies and have embedded gender neutrality goals in their long-term plans. Beginning in 2023, the DGS has released guidelines for gender sensitization, which will further improve the sustenance of women in this industry. While there is still much to do, we are confident that our steps are on the right track to make the shipping industry exemplary in incorporating gender neutrality.

CO-FOUNDER'S NOTE

The International Women Seafarers Foundation (IWSF) feels elated at every occasion that brings its members together to recognize, commemorate and laud women in maritime. Whether they are aspiring or established seafarers, a token of acknowledgement from the community associates is an integral aspect of community building. With the aim of imparting the right blend of guiding, mentoring and assisting, IWSF makes consistent efforts to carve a niche for women in maritime as equals. On this year's significant occasion of International Women's Day, a group of zealous IWSF members came up with the idea of releasing an e-magazine that coalesces into our objective.



The focus is to provide a platform to young, emerging women seafarers wherein they can showcase their artistry and can confidently hone their personality.

I extend my best wishes for the thriving publication of this very first e-magazine on the 8th of March, 2023.

Sincerely,

Capt. Radhika Menon

(Co-Founder, International Women Seafarers Foundation)

CO-FOUNDER'S NOTE

As co-founder of International Women Seafarers Foundation (IWSF), I am thrilled to introduce the first edition of our e-magazine on the occasion of International Women's Day.

At IWSF, we are committed to promoting and supporting women who work at sea. As a global organization, we strive to create opportunities for women to succeed in the maritime industry, to break down barriers and to ensure equal representation at all levels.

This e-magazine is just one example of our commitment to promoting the voices and perspectives of women in the maritime industry. We hope that this publication will serve as a platform for women seafarers to share their stories, their experiences, and their insights and some fun. We believe that the future of the maritime industry depends on the inclusion and empowerment of women, and we are committed to working towards this goal. Through our various initiatives and programs, we are striving to create a more diverse and inclusive industry that reflects the talents and abilities of all individuals.

Thank you for your support and readership.

Sincerely,

Suneeti Bala,

Co-Founder, International Women Seafarers Foundation



As we celebrate International Women's Day, let us renew our commitment to creating a world where women are valued, respected, and empowered to achieve their full potential. Together, we can create a brighter future for all women in the maritime industry.

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Dear fellow seafarers and supporters of the International Women Seafarers Foundation,

As we approach International Women's Day, we are filled with a deep sense of pride and inspiration at the strides that women in the shipping industry have made over the years. From overcoming systemic barriers to proving their mettle in the face of adversity, women seafarers have shown time and time again that they are capable of achieving great things.

To those young women, we want to say this: the path you have chosen is not an easy one. But remember, you are not alone. There is a growing community of women seafarers who have paved the way for you and who are ready and willing to support you on your journey. Whether you face challenges related to gender discrimination or navigating unfamiliar waters, know that you have the skills and the strength to overcome them.



To all women seafarers, we want to celebrate your hard work, your dedication, and your contributions to the industry. You are changing the face of shipping, and we are honored to stand alongside you as we continue to make progress towards greater gender equity and inclusivity.

As we look towards the future, let us continue to advocate for the rights and well-being of women seafarers, and let us work together to build a more diverse, equitable, and sustainable shipping industry.

Regards,

Amita Kamath

Director, International Women Seafarers Foundation

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IWSF MAGAZINE
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Women's oscillation in Maritime between inclusivity and exclusivity

The necessity for understanding why we need Positive/Affirmative action and how it is NOT discrimination against male seafarers:

Gender equity, besides being a fundamental human right, is essential to achieve peaceful societies, with full human potential and sustainable development. Moreover, it has been shown that empowering women spurs productivity and economic growth. Girls and women continue to face significant challenges all around the world. Women are typically under-represented in power and decision-making roles. They receive unequal pay for equal work, and they often face legal, social and other barriers that affect their opportunities at work. As I write this, women are systematically denied their right to education, vote, inherit, get a driving license, and participate in politics, made first victims to war crimes and sexual crimes, their bodies considered commodities and that which upholds the family honor. We would be perpetuating social injustice if opportunities were denied to the growing female work force and there needs to be proportional representation of women in all sectors. It is a well established fact that any institution which has an inclusive agenda and recruited workforce from diverse backgrounds is innovative and finds creative solutions to various problems. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) are the sources of creativity and innovation. By including women workforce in adequate numbers in all walks of life, we will be contributing to the creation of hitherto unknown new brave world.

As per the existing data, all over the world women in maritime constitute 41% of the total workforce. But out of this only 5% are in top level managerial, decision making positions. This is the result of patriarchal values dominating the present world. Existing myths about women pervading as truth are: They are by nature homemakers and so they better be confined primarily to household activities; Women unlike men, are mentally, physically weak and hence incapable of occupying top level managerial posts which remain an exclusive domain of men till date. From currently available statistics, we know that the actively sailing Indian women today are an approximate 3000 (0.625%) out of about 5, 33,224 registered sailing Indians. At any given point in time, 1, 50,000 Indians are onboard of which only about a hundred are female (a trivial fraction of a percentage).

It is scientifically proven that women are in no way inferior to men albeit superior to men in certain ways. Women have emotional intelligence. Given equal opportunities, women have excelled in all areas dominated by men earlier. For example in Cuba, one of the leaders of Biotech research, more than 60% of technical workforce is women. As of 26 Aug 2021, the world's % gender ratio is 50.42:49.58 (male: female) and when we have less than 2% women workforce at sea, we lose out on 47.58% brain output, innovation, creative ideas, knowledge and productivity.

Patriarchal societies have denied equal opportunities to women and structurally oppressed them. This historical injustice done to women needs to be corrected in any civilized world by way of affirmative action of including women preferably in all areas which have remained an exclusive preserve for men. This is not a favor to women or gift. By this affirmative action, you are in no way compensating for the historical injustice done to them and to the untold suffering undergone by them. We are only trying to do corrective action in the present. Only in recent times governments all over the world have woken up to this reality due to continued struggles of feminists everywhere and are formulating policies to increase women workforce in positions that are historically denied to them. Patriarchal minded menfolk are unable to accept even this belated action of the world at large and denigrate this idea of equal opportunities to women. On our end, being advocates for bringing social justice, we also believe that the era of women being the primary caretakers of the next generation is over and we would like to encourage shared parenting and a short paid paternity break for our spouses as well.

Defined by Thomson Reuters Practical Law, positive action is a "permitted action by an employer to assist protected groups which are disadvantaged or under-represented in a particular job. It is a limited exception to the prohibition on discrimination in employment." The term affirmative action refers to a policy aimed at increasing workplace and educational opportunities for people who are underrepresented in various areas of our society, example, Women in workforce and LGBTQ++ communities onboard.

Affirmative action focuses on demographics with historically low representation in leadership, professional, and academic roles. It is often considered a means of countering discrimination against particular groups. When the Maritime SheEO initiative called for nominations for the Best Gender Balanced companies, no nominations were received. There are only a shamefully trivial percentage of women in Shipping Company Board rooms.

When striving for gender balance in recruitment, it is illegal to treat a candidate applying for a role more favorably on the grounds of the nine 'protected characteristics' – race, gender, disability, marital status, religion/belief, pregnancy, and sexual orientation and gender reassignment. Companies must abide by applicable laws unless there is a genuine occupational requirement for not doing so. But this is not the case in the maritime industry where many girl cadets are denied equal opportunities or even a level playing field to compete for an employment on par with their male counterparts. We have even heard that companies did not allow female cadets to even sit for the interviews because they did not have a "company policy for female employees".

A couple of simple examples to explain the difference:

Example 1:

A large scientific research firm employs eight senior managers, but only two of them are women. The next time a vacancy arises, the firm tries to address this underrepresentation by only interviewing female applicants, regardless of whether they meet the criteria for the post. This would be discrimination/reservation, and therefore unlawful. However we see a couple of shipping firms recently came forward for a women-only batch of recruits for seafaring but they did it right by giving due regard to the entry qualifications and criteria. All women selected would be chosen on the basis of merit only.

Example 2:

A shipping company has to recruit 3 cadets. Most of the cadets they usually recruited thus far have been male cadets. Therefore, the company conducts a recruitment initiative encouraging female applicants to apply. They attend a women in maritime initiative, STEM women event and get a whole lot of female applicants via a recruitment drive at one such conference and some male applicants as well. They narrow it down to 5 applicants - 3 female and 2 male applicants - all equally fit for the job. They could decide to take positive action and recruit all 3 females, but they cannot do so if the female applicants couldn't perform better than the men in the interview process.

Shipping companies, who are showing the way to the world about how to bring in more women in maritime, make sure that the candidate from the under-represented gender is ALWAYS as qualified as the rest of the candidates. They also ensure that favorable treatment is due to the workforce being proportionally unbalanced only and they have a robust policy and framework for these employees and their specific treatment and probable issues that could arise over time. Good practices guidelines have been published by the D. G. Shipping in this regard vide M. S. Notices 07 of 2019, 03 of 2023, DG Shipping Orders no. 16 of 2014 and 20 of 2022.

While debating about who can perform a seafaring job 'better', we keep getting bombarded about the maternity break that the employee could take once, twice or more in her professional lifespan. However it has to be understood that the woman is by design the default parent that carries a child in her womb and that she cannot be penalized for being blessed by Nature for being able to produce the next generation of working professionals of the World. The term I would suggest the readers to further explore and read about is 'Maternity Discrimination'. In fact women biologically recreate humanity and they produce men work force also.

It is a very noble act and needs to be supported by all means: by granting paid holidays during pregnancy and child delivery should be made free in all Government/Public hospitals and governments/companies should bear the delivery expenses in private hospitals as well where Public hospitals do not have sufficient neonatal care facilities. Our biggest challenge currently, is the high dropout rates of women seafarers post maternity break and all our women in maritime associations are advocating for robust policies to facilitate the women to return to exactly where they left off.

When striving for gender balance in a company, there are many things we can do to legally target and attract the 'desired' people for jobs.

- Advertise job vacancies in a publication that has a high readership of a group with a desired protected characteristic needed to balance workforce. Increase awareness about the career option being viable for women.
- Attend certain events that are targeted towards female candidates, for example IWSF Vision Connect Recruitment drives that are targeted specifically at female cadets and seafarers who are looking to start careers in the industry or return to sea after their maternity break.
- Focus marketing on campuses or subjects with higher percentage female students – this is something we actively do when organizing career events.
- Identify and give more visibility to the female role models
- Re-word/rephrase job descriptions and service regulations to remove any gender bias.
- Affirmative action needs to be exercised at all levels where gender discrimination prevails, not only at the recruitment level. For instance, it has to be exercised at school & college levels so that enough female candidates are available at recruitment level. This process of affirmative action needs to be continued till proportional representation of women is established at all levels.

In short, DEI has a strong business case and is integral with fair/good practices. We at INTERNATIONAL WOMEN SEAFARERS FOUNDATION will continue to support, lift up, encourage and mentor more women seafarers. We realize that unless we advocate for each other, meaningful progress won't be made. For this reason, we would like all of our seafaring community to come together and support us in our endeavors.

-Co-Authored by,

D. V. Natarajan (retd. Scientific Officer, Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research) and
Reshma Nilofer Visalakshi (Maritime Pilot, Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, D/O D. V.
Natarajan)

ACCOUNT OF A SEAFARING MUM

BY YUVARAJLAKSHMI BHARATHI
SECOND OFFICER
MAERSK LINE



It's been 10 years since I first stepped onboard a vessel as a cadet. It feels surreal to say that it's been a decade. To be honest, When I was a kid I didn't really dream about a career at sea. I think I started loving this career only after I joined the college. Once I started sailing, I knew this was meant for me and I was on the right path. And since then the magnificent sea has me under her spell. Of course It hasn't been a walk in the park. It's no news that life at sea can be tough. In the early days, I wish I had known more female seafarers. It's amazing to see more and more women out at sea these days. For me the toughest part about being a seafarer is being away from my loved ones for so long and missing out on a lot of important things happening back home.

I recently was on a maternity break. There were days when I would just wonder if I could manage motherhood along with this career. It is daunting for many ladies at sea to think of planning a family. And now being back at sea is obviously even more harder. At this stage I'm torn between wanting to watch my son's little milestones and also wanting to move up the professional ladder. Being a mom has a different influence on your work-life balance. I keep asking myself "why can't a girl have both?". I have always believed that I should do what makes me happy and what I feel is right for me. I am so grateful for the people around me. My family has been the greatest support one could ever ask for.

ACCOUNT OF A SEAFARING MUM

BY YUVARAJLAKSHMI BHARATHI
SECOND OFFICER
MAERSK LINE

Many of us fear how the society might frown upon a mother leaving the kid back home for months together. In my personal experience people all around me have only been positive towards this. I keep hearing only words of encouragement. Maersk has been wonderful right from the beginning and especially during my maternity leave. Maersk offers 4 months of paid maternity leave and then without hesitation they extended my unpaid maternity leave. Even ashore, women are not given equal chances because of the maternity break. Or because of the possibility of a maternity break in the future. But that hasn't been the case for me. I started exactly where I left off. I also used this time off to get my chief mates licence so the break doesn't actually feel like a break from career.

There is no denying that the world is changing. But there are still a lot of stereotypes that needs to be broken. It is still surprising to many that women can also be at sea. Despite a lot of initiative, a lack of awareness about career at sea for women still exists. Companies have started being more accommodative towards women. Maersk has put in a lot of efforts to create an impartial lifestyle for women seafarers onboard. We have campaigns and specific company procedures against any kind of bullying or harassment. In my years of experience I have been fortunate to have sailed with many male counterparts who are extremely professional, respectful and wonderful to work with. I personally would love to see more and more female colleagues onboard. Being a seafarer you get to meet a lot of people from different cultural background, with different views. You get to travel the world. And definitely gives you a different perspective of life. You work without a Sunday for months together when you are onboard. And when you get home, you spend months filled with nothing but Sundays. I love what I have been able to do with my career so far and the satisfaction it brings me to know that women can do anything we set our mind too.



UNCHARTED WATERS: A TRIBUTE TO WOMEN SEAFARERS

KHUSHI

B.SC(N.S.) IMU NAVI MUMBAI CAMPUS

*On this International Women's Day,
I raise my voice in celebration and say,
Of women seafarers, who are strong and
bold,
Their spirit of resilience never gets old.*

*In a world dominated by men at sea,
They broke barriers and rose to be,
Masters and engineers, deck officers too,
Their courage and determination shining
through.*

*In the face of challenges and adversity,
They stand tall with unwavering tenacity,
Navigating the rough seas and stormy
weather,
Their skills and expertise bringing us
together.*



UNCHARTED WATERS: A TRIBUTE TO WOMEN SEAFARERS

KHUSHI

B.SC(N.S.) IMU NAVI MUMBAI CAMPUS



*From the vast oceans to the narrow
straits,
They steer the ship with finesse and
grace,*

*Breaking stereotypes and shattering
glass ceilings,
Their achievements, an inspiration with
profound feelings.*

*So, on this day, I salute and honor,
All the women seafarers, a true wonder,
May their voices and aspirations be
heard,
And their legacy forever be
remembered.*



WHAT'S COOKING WITH WOMEN AT SEA



WOMEN'S OSCILLATION IN MARITIME BETWEEN INCLUSIVITY AND EXCLUSIVITY

VAISHNAVI HARISH
B.TECH IMU CHENNAI CAMPUS



Not having embarked for my first sail yet, my experience, understanding, judgment and thoughts remain confined to the University life I've led. And based on the ship-life-like environment that I have dwelled in for the past (almost) four years now, I find myself a tad sanguine that I'd be fostered more or less in similar environs.

Women's inclusivity shouldn't and (hopefully doesn't) interfere with that of men's. You see, maritime field is sizeable enough and clearly there's room for so many more. Changes, at first, are difficult to come to terms with. I second that. But our seafaring community has already started to take baby steps towards the objective of attaining an all-inclusive state of being. Needless to say, it's unquestionably far from having become a mainstream attribute of our industry. And because the social aspect of maritime is well under construction, it is bound to take heaps of time followed by yet another bulk in refining the constructed. A sector that has long been the 'realm of the men' is justly divulging the aversion to the now sped up dynamic of women's addition. But the efforts ought to remain unfeigned if the goal of inclusivity is intended to be attained. On account of some experiences, I can tell that many a time the talk of women in maritime seems nothing more than a charade. In fact, the dialogues reek more of exclusivity than a realistic portrayal of attempted inclusivity. The most prevalent and slightly comical aspect is the struggle to maintain the façade of being supportive of women in this field. And by the looks of it, it certainly appears to be an extremely daunting task.

WOMEN'S OSCILLATION IN MARITIME BETWEEN INCLUSIVITY AND EXCLUSIVITY

VAISHNAVI HARISH
B.TECH IMU CHENNAI CAMPUS



Let me opt for the traditional path of explaining my thoughts by dint of citing a few petite examples. Whenever there's some event in the college and people gather in the auditorium, for instance, the management leaves no stone unturned in making sure that all the girls are present and seated in the front row. The spotlight is supposed to remain on them at all times. They speak their hearts out on not being hostile towards women's inclusivity and showcase their joy upon seeing a fortuitous population of female cadets in the crowd. They make them feel so important in those measured moments that everything else appears to be of little significance. Then, the program comes to an end. The Chief Guest(s) leave and there's a complete reversal in both, the words and the actions. In fact, people have gone to the extent of refusing to provide the girls with vehicle to drop them back to their residential campus and would get infuriated if requested further (and note that they had absolutely no problem with the transportation when it was to be done before the start of the event). Disturbingly hilarious, isn't it? Next comes the timeless agenda of 'how women should dress up'. In a generic aspect, this issue is more focused on the lines of patriarchy, misogyny and let's say double-standards. But in maritime, it has been customized to be in sync with the decision of whether a certain girl should be accepted or ousted. My perception paraphrases that patriarchy is being allowed to be carried forward inadvertently. The archetype is the notion men carry to have the persona of this savior-image on at all times. And this is just extra. I can adduce this one occasion where the female freshers were "advised" to opt for traditional apparel instead of western clothing by a male official because it's very difficult to keep the boys under control as there are too many of them. So, girls should take up the responsibility to dress up decently. That way the administration will not have to deal with any unnecessary cases of them being eve-teased. Now, the only bothersome dimension of his piece of advice is the part where the inability to discipline the boys is mentioned. That's all (at least, in my humble opinion).

WOMEN'S OSCILLATION IN MARITIME BETWEEN INCLUSIVITY AND EXCLUSIVITY

VAISHNAVI HARISH
B.TECH IMU CHENNAI CAMPUS



After this transpires the fluctuating denotations of everything that is said. And let me make it clear, the meaning changes as per the convenience of the state of affairs. You see, if a girl cadet encounters a stumbling block, then the gravity of it is determined on the basis of the ease of the solutionist. The decision ranges from "is it even worth the attention" to "how positively will this extended support reflect on my image". My point is, if it's not feasible to give the supposed 'special treatment' then there's no meaning to the pretense. Let's just drop it and allow inclusivity to advance organically with time. Rome wasn't built in a day. At this juncture of reading, the "exclusivity" facet of the magazine's theme might seem to have notably permeated the tone of this article. But in no way do I intend to deem the efforts and initiatives of people and organizations that are authentically striving for the "inclusivity" to become established and 'normal' hollow. All I am phrasing is, even so the work of inclusivity is under progress, the dark clouds of exclusivity looms larger in practice than is perceived to be. The process is just tardy and fickle as opposed to the entrenched assumption of its briskness and constantness. This digital era of superficiality has given voice to many and simultaneously left innumerable with none. And a sector as robust as maritime should definitely fall in the former category sans the superficiality. As it happens, one can either be a member of the club or not be one at all. The elite membership is, however, earned and no-one is entitled to it.

MESIAH

BY ESHIKA TAWADE
SAMUDRA INSTITUTE OF
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Women face numerous social challenges in their quest of a sailing career. The IWSF comes as a 'mesiah' of sorts in such adverse times. It is a non-profit company founded in 2017 by 3 pioneering women - Capt. Radhika Menon, CE. Engineer Suneeti Bala and Miss Sharvani Mishra. Capt Radhika has been sailing for 31 years and counting; CE Suneeti Bala is the first woman chief engineer aboard a marine vessel; Miss Sharvani sailed for about 8 years and then joined offshore.

Gender equality is just preached- not practiced, and therefore this foundation strives for the benefit of women who are victims of the gender bias. It is their prime objective to understand the effectiveness of current policies in providing gender- neutral environment on board.

This foundation helps women regarding any sexual or mental harassment faced on board/during their voyage, helps female students in any discrimination of difficulties they face during their course of education and many other issues. Their goal is to increase the number of women seafarers around the world- after all, why should it only be a man's world!?

The foundation has representatives from 8 countries as of now who help them in familiarizing with women sea farers of their respective countries and to educate them about their objectives.

At present, they have members from the following countries - India, Bangladesh, Oman, Brazil, Turkey, Singapore, Germany, USA, UK.

They hold regular meetings for students onboard to mentor them and guide them for their journeys.

Hats off to these pioneers and all those women who leave the security of their homes and environment to sail the seas! More power to all such women!



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