

SEPTEMBER 2025-DECEMBER 2025

PORTSIDE

Caribbean

WOMEN IN MARITIME

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Mission Statement:

To foster operational and financial efficiency and to enhance the level of service to the mutual benefit of Caribbean Ports and their stakeholders, through the sharing of experience, training, information and ideas.

Volume 6, Number 33

September 2025 – December 2025

PORTSIDE CARIBBEAN is published by:



Tel: 866-985-9780

Fax: 866-985-9799

www.kelmanonline.com



Publisher: Cole Kelman

Managing Editor: Reba Lewis

Marketing Manager: Megan Stanley

Design/layout: Tabitha Robin

Advertising Coordinator: Stefanie Hagidiakow

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PORTSIDE
Caribbean

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More women on board: Gender discrimination a threat to global shipping



The global maritime industry is experiencing a serious shortage of human beings qualified to work as seafarers. Alarms were raised over the years, reaching a crescendo as 2024 entered its final quarter. Maritime cargo movement was in trouble for want of able and available personnel to work on board ships.

Statistics vary slightly from one organisation to the next, but it may be safe to say that there are approximately 50,000 ocean-going merchant ships, registered in more than 150 sovereign states, now traversing Earth's oceans. Seafaring staff aboard these ships total approximately 1.9 million persons, of which just under 900,000 are officers and just over one million are non-officer positions. Of that number, approximately 24,000 are women. Indeed, the 2021 *BIMCO Seafarer Workforce Report* had previously noted that female seafarers in the world represent only about 1.2% of the global seafarer workforce.

Reality is: global shipping now moves about 90% of the world's export-import cargo.

IMBALANCES

The shipping industry is experiencing a shortfall in the number of qualified seafarers needed to maintain efficiency in shipping operations. But there are continuing **imbalances** that starve the industry of vitally needed personnel and particularly women. Many are the reports of practices and behaviour on board that make life at sea especially difficult for women.

Gender discrimination has been identified as the biggest problem facing women seafarers.

In 2022, the Global Maritime Forum established **All Aboard Alliance** (*the Alliance*) with the intention of making the global maritime industry more diverse, equitable and inclusive. One of the Alliance's first actions was establishment of the Diversity@Sea workstream. Its mission: to study and address gender imbalance at sea; while, exploring methods of making careers at sea "...more diverse, inclusive and attractive to a broader pool of talent."

MAJOR CHALLENGES

Diversity@Sea Report no.1 identified a total of 15 major challenges (referred to as "*pain points*") which the survey sample of 115 women seafarers identified as troubling and painful. These 15 *pain points* were categorised under four sub-heads:

- **difficulty for women of succeeding professionally at sea** (*i.e., being perceived as less competent than men; not having equal access to training or tasks onboard and having to outperform male peers to get respected or promoted*).
- **social relations onboard** (*i.e., feeling isolated or unsupported because*

of their gender, the concern of gossip or rumours, or power abuse or sexual harassment and sexual misconduct onboard).

- **employment challenges at sea** (*i.e., service contracts at sea being too long, lack of family planning options such as maternity leave or sea-shore rotation programmes, resulting in many women having to choose between a career at sea OR starting a family, in turn pushing women seafarers to find employment elsewhere, and finally, many companies still not willing to recruit women seafarers*).
- **physical conditions onboard** (*i.e., lack of access to female sanitary products onboard or lack of access to adequately fitted Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as boiler suites, fire gloves etc., or lack of access to designated women's changing rooms, bathrooms, etc. onboard*).

"The fact that global shipping is currently short of seafarers while, at the same time, women seafarers are finding conditions and work practices on board ship discriminatory, insulting and hostile demands urgent global attention."

GLOBAL ACTION

Altogether, the difficulties and challenges being experienced by personnel in the maritime sector (including gender and nationality discrimination) speak to a need for global action. The fact that global shipping is currently short of seafarers while, at the same time, women seafarers are finding conditions and work practices on board ship discriminatory, insulting and hostile demands urgent global attention.

Global maritime trade will need, according to one estimate, an additional 89,000 officers on board ships by 2026. As to how this target might be achieved in such a short period of time, when 29% of women seafarers unequivocally identify *gender discrimination* as an obstacle to career development, is a question that begs an answer.

Gender discrimination in the maritime sector is a barrier to global trade, progress and development. That is today's reality. •

Mike Jarrett

Founder/Editor-in-Chief

JAMAICA

MAJOR EXPANSION,
MODERNISATION AT REYNOLDS PIER

Built to facilitate the shipment of bauxite mined on Jamaica's north coast in the early 1950s, Reynolds Pier is currently undergoing a process of modernisation to bring it into the 21st Century.

Ocho Rios, widely regarded as one of the Caribbean's most beautiful cruise destination ports, has two terminals, both built by the USA aluminium producer, Reynolds Metals Company. Reynolds Pier, located just west of the township of Ocho Rios, was the first to be built, moving its first cargo of Jamaican red earth in 1952. The other terminal, Turtle Bay Pier, located closer to the town, was built in 1961 mainly to export bauxite, but is now used exclusively to dock cruise ships.

With the growth and expansion of cruise shipping, Reynolds Pier has increasingly been used to accommodate cruise passengers. With the increase in tourist arrivals in Ocho Rios, and following flood damage to both Turtle Bay and Reynolds piers in February 2024 that forced cruise ships to dock elsewhere, the need to modernise Reynolds Pier became increasingly evident.

The Jamaican government, through its public corporations, and particularly the Port Authority of Jamaica, contracted the Texas-based firm Orion to upgrade and extend Reynolds Pier. Orion described the project on its website as follows:

Orion was contracted for the Reynolds Pier Phase 1 project, involving the upgrade and extension of an existing cruise terminal in Ocho Rios, Jamaica. The initiative aimed to accommodate larger vessels and included:

- construction of a new fendering system;
- installation of six mono-pile breasting dolphins;
- addition of six mooring dolphins; and,
- extension of the concrete trestle pier access way to the eastern side.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- Upgrade of existing cruise berthing facility
- Extended concrete trestle pier access way
- Construction and installation of a new fendering system
- Installed six mono-pile breasting dolphins along the 215m suspended pier
- Installed six new mooring dolphins on 1.2m-diameter x 44.2m-long steel piles



Following the departure of Reynolds Metals Company from Jamaica in 1984, the Jamaican government placed responsibility for Reynolds Pier on the newly formed public entity, Jamaica Bauxite Mining Limited (JBM). Since then, JBM has been in charge of the three revenue streams: sugar export, limestone export, and, cruise ship accommodation.

JBM Managing Director, Donna Marie Howe, during a presentation at the 4-6 June 2025 Port Management Association of the Caribbean (PMAC) conference in Curaçao, detailed the development and expansion plans being implemented at Reynolds Pier.

SYNOPSIS OF THE JBM PRESENTATION PIER EXPANSION

Goal: Expand Reynolds Pier to support increased exports and operational efficiency

Key features:

- Floating pier (pontoon) system
- Near-shore loading for up to 19 ships/month
- Increase cargo capacity from 1.5MT per annum to loading capacity of 4.5MT
- New conveyance and storage systems

Target output: Up to 8 million tons per year of limestone

Timeline: January 2024 to December 2027

Funding: \$13.14 billion Jamaican dollars (UK Export and Finance – UKEF)

PHOTOVOLTAIC SOLAR PROJECT AT REYNOLDS PIER

PROJECT DATA

System size: 100 kW Hybrid PV system

Battery storage: 800 kWh

Roof space utilised: 8,400 sq. m.

Estimated investment: US\$1.5 million

Annual energy cost (current): US\$199,000

Projected self-sufficiency: 84%

Status: In procurement – Bids under evaluation

IMPACT

Annual savings: US\$165,000

Carbon reduction: 220 tons per year (Equals 220 carbon credits)

Fossil fuel reduction: Major step toward low-carbon operations

Long-term goal: Green Port certification and ESG alignment

SHORE POWER PROJECT

Partner: Issue a request for proposal (RFP)

- **Ships to plug into shore power, reducing engine use**

Benefits:

- Reduced carbon emissions;
- Improved air quality;
- IMO compliance
- Progress — expected timeframe:
- Planning and financial model FY2025/2026;
- Installation FY 2026/2027

PORT DEVELOPMENT & EXPANSION PLAN (PDEP)

Goal: Expand Reynolds Pier to support increased exports and operational efficiency

Key features:

- Floating pier (pontoon) system
- Near-shore loading for up to 19 ships per month

- Increase cargo capacity from 1.5MT per annum to loading capacity of 4.5MT
- New conveyance and storage systems

Target output: Up to 8 million tons per year of limestone

Timeline: January 2024 to December 2027

Funding: 13.14 billion Jamaican dollars (UK Export and Finance — UKEF)

OUTCOMES AND VISION

- 800% increase in port efficiency by 2026
- 100+ new jobs in local communities
- Secured high-value limestone offtake agreements
- **Timeline:** January 2024 to December 2027 •

PORTS REPORT

ANGUILLA

ISLAND REPORTS SURGE IN PASSENGER, CARGO TRAFFIC

Final figures for 2024 show that Anguilla experienced a dramatic increase in passenger movements through the Blowing Point Ferry Terminal. The Anguilla Air and Seaports Authority reported a 22.5% increase in passenger arrivals to 156,054, up from 127,328 in 2023.

Similarly, Road Bay Port recorded significant increases in cargo movement, up 28% in 2024 with a total of 123,402 tons handled at the port, up from 96,345 tons the previous year.

THE REPORT

The Anguilla Air and Sea Ports Authority carries responsibilities for:

- **Blowing Point Ferry Port** — primary passenger port for excursions between St. Martin and St. Maarten
- **Road Bay Cargo Port** — main cargo port
- **Marine Base** — cruising and yachting activities
- **Corito Port** — sole port for bulk fuel
- **Clayton J. Lloyd International Airport** — sole airport in Anguilla

BLOWING POINT FERRY TERMINAL PASSENGERS

- Passenger movements increased by 22% in departures, and 22.5% in arrivals in 2024 over 2023.
- Departure 154,741 passengers in 2024, up from just over 28,000 in the previous years.
- Arrivals increased by 28,726 persons to reach 156,054, up from 127,328 in 2023.

VESSEL MOVEMENTS

- **ARRIVALS:** Marginal change over the period with 10,860 arrivals in 2024 compared to 10,303 in 2023.
- **DEPARTURES:** 10,720 in 2024 as against 10,271 in the 2023.

ROAD BAY CARGO PORT

Road Bay Cargo Port is the main cargo handling facility for imports and exports. The port had a significant increase in tonnage handled in 2024 (up 28%) as compared with the previous year. The port handled 123,402 tons in 2024, up from 96,345 in 2023.

The number of containers received at Road Bay Cargo Port increased marginally (130) from 4,170 twenty-foot equivalent unit or TEU in 2023, to 4,300 TEU in 2024. However, the number of containers leaving the Road Bay Cargo Port showed a significant increase (12.96%), from 4,035 units in 2023 to 4,558 in 2024.

ROAD BAY – FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Plans for the future centre on accommodating increased traffic using this facility and particularly the berthing of larger cargo vessels and small cruise ships. In this regard the port is planning further acquisition and utilisation of lands; separation of FCL and LCL traffic; and, construction of roads, warehouses, administrative buildings and container yards. In this regard, construction of a new jetty is completed. It features:

- Approach: 75 metres length and 5 metres wide
- Circulation space: 40 metres x 55 metres
- Jetty area: 70 metres length and 15 metres wide

- 4 ro-ro platforms
- 3 lo-lo platforms

A minimum draft of 8 metres at the end of the jetty is envisioned. This will necessitate dredging.

MARINE BASE

The base operates within the port limits of Road Bay. This facility controls and processes yachts, charter vessels, cruise vessels and other sea excursions. Plans are to have the marine base moved to the Road Bay Port once, full operation moves to the new jetty. In addition to personnel of the Anguilla Air and Sea Ports Authority, the Marine Base also houses personnel of the Marine Unit of the Royal Anguilla Police Force and the Immigration and Customs Departments.

CORITO PORT

Corito Port has been identified as a location for future expansion and development, including a major deep-water port facility. It is a dedicated fuel port, and accommodates fuel tankers, which transport the island's diesel, gasoline and liquefied petroleum gas supply.

There are two bulk fuel depots located there: Sol and Delta Petroleum.

The Anguilla Electricity Company (sole power company) has infrastructural lines in place to allow for transportation of fuel from the depot of its company some 1,200 metres away, directly to its generation station.

While it is at a strategically different location to Road Bay Cargo Port, the activity at the Port is recorded at Road Bay Port.

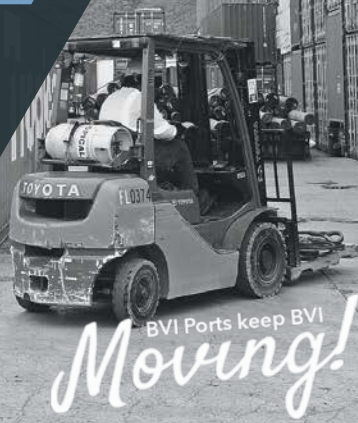
Corito will undergo infrastructural changes for regulatory compliance. •



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“IN RESPONSE TO THE LOSS OF NESTING HABITAT AT MANRESA BEACH, THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT, HIT HAINA RIVER PORT, AND THE NATIONAL AQUARIUM JOINED EFFORTS IN 2022 TO CREATE THE SEA TURTLE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION PROGRAM.”

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC WINS

CIP 2025 PORT-CITY RELATIONSHIP AWARD

The growth and expansion of global trade, facilitated by technological advances in maritime transportation and the increase in demand for more and larger seaport facilities have become a point of contention between environmentalists and governments.

Construction of seaports and the subsequent use of these facilities by cargo and cruise ships have had a disastrous impact on coastal environments, bringing governments and environmentalists into sharp, sometimes violent, conflict.

For a century or more – certainly since the motorisation of ships – there has been conflict between entities that receive and accommodate ocean-going vessels (governments and port authorities), and those (environmentalists) concerned about the destruction of natural habitats, particularly those that support the protection, reproduction and survival of various species. Over time, the concerns and arguments articulated by environmentalists have been gaining support. Indeed, destruction of the natural environment became a global concern for environmentalists towards the end of the 20th Century.

By the time the Port Authority of Jamaica proposed the construction of a cruise ship terminal at Falmouth on Jamaica's north coast in 2007, the Caribbean region was already sensitised to the need to protect the natural environment from seaport construction and expansion. Environmentalists had by then concluded that construction and operation of port systems was, *ipso facto*, detrimental to the environment. Not surprisingly, the initiative to

build a cruise ship port at Falmouth and the proposal to relocate about 150,000 organisms was viewed with great scepticism, especially by environmentalists, led by Jamaica Environment Trust.

Then regarded as one of the largest relocations of coral ever attempted, that historic initiative was conducted over several months, from August 2009 to April 2010. It involved a team of 93 people relocating 147,947 organisms. Initial results of this exercise were reported as successful, however, subsequent studies in 2013 indicated otherwise. Survival rates of less than 15% were recorded. The high mortality rate was ultimately attributed to proximity to the cruise port and the initiative was described as “unsuccessful”.

The question as to whether port activity and marine conservation can co-exist has remained a moot point since the construction of the Falmouth Cruise terminal. And it was against this historical background that the Dominican Port Authority (APORDOM) and Haina International Terminals (HIT) were recently recognised by the Organization of American States’ **Inter-American Committee on Ports (CIP)** for “... *successful practices that mutually promote the economic and cultural prosperity of the port and the city and bring concrete benefits to the community.*”

CIP AWARDS 2025

**‘PORT-CITY RELATIONSHIP’ AWARD –
DOMINICAN PORT AUTHORITY AND
HAINA INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

Manresa Beach, located in West Santo Domingo, is a critical nesting area for three endangered species of sea turtles (*hawksbill*, *leatherback*, and *green turtles*). However, it has faced serious threats: habitat loss, pollution, predation, and illegal egg collection.

The lack of local awareness and the absence of protected areas made urgent an intervention that would promote citizen co-responsibility, sustainability, and coexistence between a coastal ecosystem and an active port environment. The proximity of Manresa Beach to Haina River Port posed important challenges that needed to be addressed in any sustainable management strategy.

In response to the loss of nesting habitat at Manresa Beach, the Ministry of the Environment, HIT Haina River Port, and the National Aquarium joined efforts in 2022 to create the Sea Turtle Protection and Conservation Program.

This strategic alliance allowed the combination of technical, logistical, and community capabilities to ensure the protection of green, leatherback, and hawksbill turtles, all of which arrive at Manresa Beach and are critically endangered.

The initiative is based on four key components:

- 1. Monitoring and surveillance:** Technical patrols and relocation of nests to the Aquarium's hatchery.
- 2. Environmental education:** Outreach with schools, fishers, and port staff.
- 3. Inter-institutional and technical collaboration:** Coordination among the private sector, government, and science.
- 4. Continuous evaluation:** Use of indicators to measure impact and adjust strategies.

SEA TURTLE PROTECTION

After two years of implementation, the Sea Turtle Protection and Conservation Program at Manresa Beach has made significant progress, demonstrating the positive impact of the initiative. Compared to the initial scenario, characterised by a lack of protection, illegal egg collection, coastal pollution, and low turtle hatch rates, today there are concrete results reflecting positive and sustainable change.

Thanks to the inter-institutional effort, the following measurable impacts have been achieved:

- 32 nests collected from leatherback, hawksbill, and green turtle species.
- 2,230 hatchlings released at Manresa Beach.
- 80% hatching success rate: eggs incubated and successfully developed into viable hatchlings.
- 55 local fishers sensitised on sea turtle protection during fishing activities.
- 1,100 community members indirectly impacted and involved in activities.
- 550 children educated through environmental awareness sessions on the importance of marine species.
- 32 release events involving community members, HIT volunteers, and the project team.
- 300 staff members trained and sensitised on the importance of sea turtles in our oceans.

These results not only highlight the effectiveness of the intervention model, but also prove that port activity and marine conservation can coexist. The program has transformed a high-risk area into a model of collaboration between the private sector, the community, and the environment, aligned with SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), as well as the principles of the Environmental Law 64-00 of the Dominican Republic.

This experience shows that the port-city relationship can become an effective conservation alliance when corporate will, institutional support, technical knowledge, and community commitment come together. It confirms that it is possible to integrate environmental sustainability into complex urban environments in a tangible and measurable way. ●



“AFTER TWO YEARS OF IMPLEMENTATION, THE SEA TURTLE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION PROGRAM AT MANRESA BEACH HAS MADE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS, DEMONSTRATING THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF THE INITIATIVE.”



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CARIBBEAN PORT DIGITALISATION SURVEY 2025 TAKEAWAYS

CHARTING THE NEXT STEPS FROM INSIGHT TO ACTION

By **Tsahai Morgan**, Communications & Marketing Executive at ADVANTUM, and Member of the PMAC Digitalisation Working Group

The Caribbean Port Digitalisation Survey 2025 was recently presented by the PMAC Digitalisation Working Group during the Port Management Association of the Caribbean (PMAC) AGM in Curaçao. The survey highlighted key insights into the state of digital progress at Caribbean ports. Thanks to the candid responses from 20 port authorities and terminals across 17 territories, stakeholders now have a clearer picture of digital progress across the regional port sector and, more importantly, the actions required to build on these gains.

Three major highlights from the survey findings provide valuable guidance on future priorities for regional port executives and decision-makers.



1 Cybersecurity takes centre stage

While terminal operating systems (TOS) continue to rank as a top priority due to their direct impact on operational efficiency, cybersecurity has now emerged as an equally critical concern. The survey reveals a significant increase in ports enhancing their cybersecurity capabilities, with no port reporting zero cybersecurity management. This is an encouraging sign that the regional industry is proactively addressing threats.

This shift underscores an important reality, that as ports become increasingly digital and interconnected, the risk exposure grows proportionately. The clear implication is that investments in cybersecurity training, infrastructure, and robust governance frameworks will need to move higher up the agenda for Caribbean port leaders to safeguard gains made through digitalisation.

2 System integration remains a work-in-progress

The survey results show substantial progress with implementing key digital systems such as TOS, maritime single windows (MSW), and port community systems (PCS). Integrated operations, where these systems function seamlessly together, however, remain limited. While full system integration remains limited across the region, several ports have achieved moderate to high integration levels, representing a promising yet modest improvement.

A strategic opportunity now exists for ports across the region to accelerate their integration efforts. Ports achieving this will significantly enhance their ability to streamline processes, reduce redundancies, and leverage data-driven decision-making. These are key competitive advantages in today's global trade environment.

3 Investing in skills and training is crucial

The survey highlights positive improvements in training availability, with more ports now offering higher-quality digital skills training. Nevertheless, proficiency in managing organisational change remains relatively low, despite an increase in implementations. This gap highlights a crucial area for targeted action: digital transformation isn't solely technological; it requires equal attention to human factors such as training, communication, and change management capabilities.

Next steps for the Caribbean port community

The PMAC Digitalisation Working Group, of which ADVANTUM is proud to be a contributing member, has already identified strategic areas requiring urgent attention:

- **Funding:** Ongoing collaboration with international and regional funding agencies will be critical to secure necessary digitalisation investments.
- **Skills and training:** Expanding PMAC's port operations certification training and accreditation programmes, along with leveraging associate-member expertise through webinars and best-practice exchanges, can help close skill gaps and build human capital.
- **Regulatory harmonisation:** Increasing governmental and stakeholder engagement regionally and internationally will support the establishment of consistent regulatory standards and compliance frameworks.

4

Digital transformation isn't solely technological; it requires equal attention to human factors such as training, communication, and change management capabilities.

As Caribbean ports continue their digital transformation journeys, collaboration and knowledge-sharing remain vital. Guided by the insights from this survey, the region can confidently move from insight to action, turning digital potential into tangible progress. Essential to this journey will be ongoing partnerships with PMAC's associate members, whose specialised expertise, proven systems, and industry-leading practices can help Caribbean ports accelerate digital adoption, reduce implementation risks, and effectively navigate the challenges ahead. Stakeholders across the region are therefore encouraged to actively engage with PMAC, its working groups, and associate members, as they collectively build the digitally enabled future of Caribbean ports.

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SSA MARINE MIT

IMPRESSES PANAMA PRESIDENT

President José Raúl Mulino paid his first official visit to Manzanillo's international terminal in July (2025) and was immediately struck by the performance of women operating the various systems which has made SSA Marine MIT one of the Caribbean's leading port systems.

Sworn in as President of the Republic of Panama on 1 July 2024, the Panamanian leader spoke candidly about his experience at the terminal.

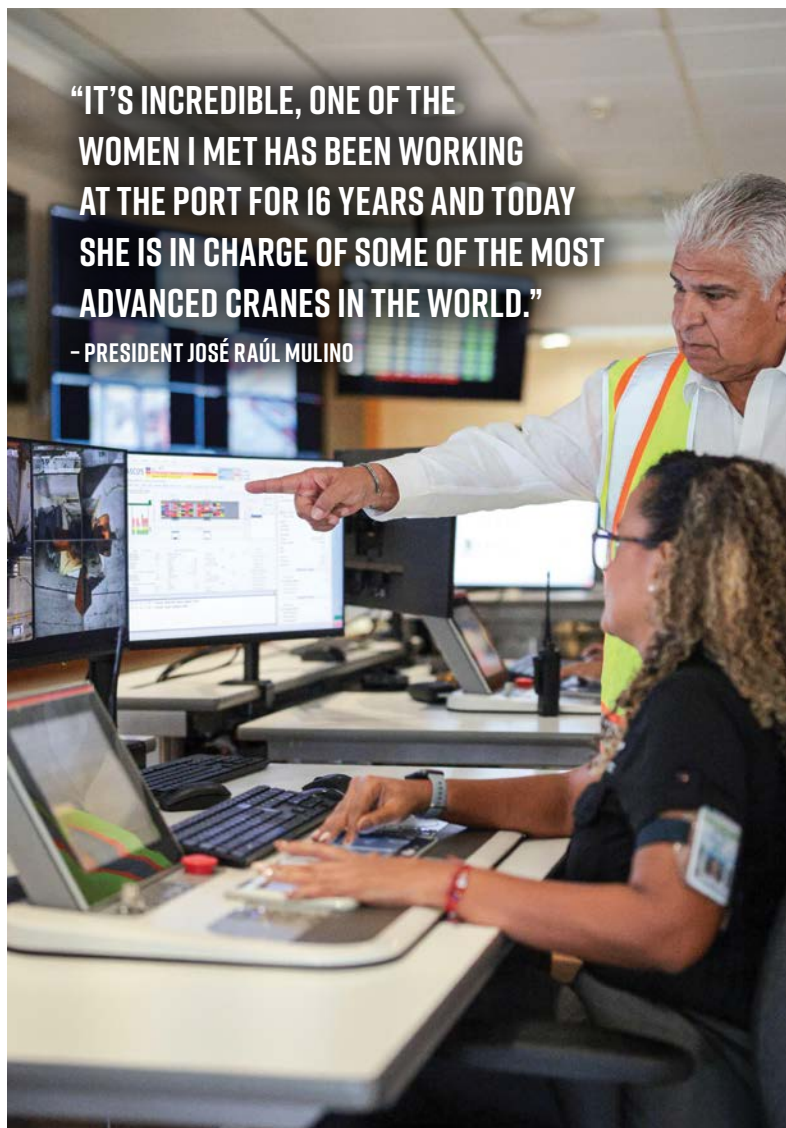
"I'm impressed by SSA Marine MIT, its size, its workforce, which is entirely from Colón. It's a port that also operates automated cranes and I had the chance to see several Panamanian women operating the equipment."

President Mulino was in the province of Colón to attend a Logistics Cabinet meeting involving ministers and directors of government entities. He expressed keen interest in visiting the SSA Marine MIT terminal at the end of the Cabinet meeting and was welcomed by SSA Marine MIT managers just after noon on 16 July, 2025. With a degree in maritime law from Louisiana's Tulane University, the Panamanian President had more than a passing interest in the systems and management processes at SSA Marine MIT.

"This visit to SSA Marine MIT, left a truly positive impression on me. It had been years since I last visited, and the growth is remarkable. Young women from Colón are now operating the new electric crane system through screens. It's incredible, one of

"IT'S INCREDIBLE, ONE OF THE WOMEN I MET HAS BEEN WORKING AT THE PORT FOR 16 YEARS AND TODAY SHE IS IN CHARGE OF SOME OF THE MOST ADVANCED CRANES IN THE WORLD."

- PRESIDENT JOSÉ RAÚL MULINO



the women I met has been working at the port for 16 years and today she is in charge of some of the most advanced cranes in the world," he said at the end of his visit.

NOTEWORTHY

President Mulino clearly recognised the systems and technologies that make SSA Marine MIT a "world standard" organisation. However, as he intimated in his observations, he was equally struck by the philosophical managerial practices which allowed SSA Marine MIT to employ, develop and retain women in its work force. His observations in this regard are noteworthy because, for centuries, women have been denied access and professional opportunities in maritime industries. SSA Marine MIT has begun the process of addressing gender equality in its operations and the newly installed President of Panama recognised this in his first official visit to the terminal.

Presently, women comprise 18% of SSA Marine MIT's 1,100-strong work force and in this group, 68 women perform tasks and occupy positions that drive terminal operations. This includes women gantry crane operators, mechanics, automatic stacking crane controllers, security and safety officers, maintenance technicians, line coordinators, vessel planners and yard control specialists. SSA Marine MIT currently has seven women operating ship-to-shore cranes, all of whom have successfully completed extensive rigorous training to achieve global



standards. In addition, women perform a plethora of administrative and management functions in all SSA Marine MIT's operational departments.

PIVOTAL

SSA Marine MIT Business Development Manager, Larissa Barrios, highlighted that in functions requiring high legal and ethical standards, the presence of women has been pivotal.

"SSA Marine MIT faces continuous challenges to keep the security measures of the cargo handled at the port. But the high value standards of women in positions such as protection officers, operations planning, and gate clerks support the company in achieving its objectives," she said.

Indeed, President Mulino's keen observation during his relatively short visit was testimony to SSA Marine MIT's commitment to gender equality in the workplace. It is that commitment that drives its programme for providing facilities for sustaining women in the SSA Marine MIT workforce. For example, in 2018, SSA Marine MIT created a lactation room to support mothers on staff who are breastfeeding. As Larissa Barrios explained in a discussion with *Portside Caribbean* (in 2024), the lactation room is an invaluable resource.

"It not only supports mothers in their breastfeeding journey, but also fosters a supportive and inclusive work environment. By facilitating continued breastfeeding through the provision of a comfortable and private space, employees can nurture their infants with the numerous health benefits that breast milk provides, including

enhanced immune protection, optimal nutrition, and strengthened maternal-infant bonding. This initiative underscores the company's commitment to promoting the holistic health and welfare of its employees and their families," she explained.

President Mulino left SSA Marine MIT visibly impressed. More than one of the leading port facilities in the Caribbean region, in the context of human development and gender equality, SSA Marine MIT is a trendsetter. •

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AN OCEAN OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

WIMAC-GUYANA CHAPTER HOSTS AWARDS CEREMONY

Women in Maritime Association Caribbean (WiMAC) Guyana Chapter celebrated the achievements and contributions of women across the sector in a Gala and Awards Ceremony on June 20 at the Guyana Marriott Hotel, Georgetown. Held under the banner “An Ocean of Opportunities for Women: Anchoring Excellence”, the event, with more than 360 invitees in attendance, brought together some of the leading voices in the maritime sector.

The unwavering commitment to excellence and continuous development by trailblazing women, both locally and internationally was acknowledged as the women of WiMAC-Guyana committed to its mission to champion gender equity and professional growth in the maritime sector.

14 visionary women were honoured as the **2025 awardees.**

- Maritime Leadership Award: **Romona Arthur**
- Executive of the Year: **Briony Tiwarie-Gabriel**
- Port Management Excellence Award: **Nalini Jamuna**
- Outstanding Female Ship Captain: **Sabita Sookdeo**
- Sustainable Maritime Champion: **Dawn Maison**
- Blue Economy Advocate: **Donnette Streete**
- STEM in Maritime Award: **Shania Stewart**
- Mentor of the Year: **Annette Arjoon-Martins**
- Diversity & Inclusion Champion: **Miranda Thakur-Deen**
- Maritime Educator of the Year: **Coleen Denyse Abrams**

- Exemplary Seafarer Award: **Rebecca Samuels**
- Maritime Safety Advocate: **Sherry-Ann Wilson**
- Shipping & Logistics Innovator: **Keisha Hack**
- Women-Owned Maritime Business Award: **Kerensa Bart**

The Executive Council of WiMAC also recognised Thandi McAllister as **Maritime Ambassador** for her continued advocacy and excellence in maritime stewardship.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

“This gala is more than a celebration; it is a statement of intent. We are here to honour the resilience, intellect and leadership of women in maritime, while actively creating space for the next generation of female professionals. WiMAC-Guyana is steadfast in its commitment to building a more inclusive, visible and empowered maritime workforce,” said Katina Benn, President of WiMAC-Guyana in her address to guests.

Among the distinguished guests were Honourable Bishop Juan A. Edghill, Minister of Public Works, who reaffirmed the government’s support for gender equity and development within the maritime industry.

“The establishment of the national WiMAC-Guyana chapter, which serves as the voice for women in our local maritime sector and actively seeks opportunities for women is something that must be applauded,” he said.

Delivering the keynote address, Dr. Deniece Aiken, President of WISTA-Jamaica, issued an inspiring call to action on the critical role of women in shaping a resilient, inclusive maritime sector.

“Let every step you take be purposeful. You belong in this industry and your voice matters. To the awardees, thank you for your courage and resilience.



Katina Benn, President, WiMAC Guyana.

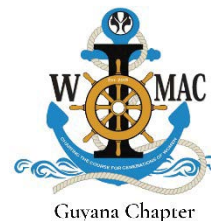
“LET EVERY STEP YOU TAKE BE PURPOSEFUL. YOU BELONG IN THIS INDUSTRY AND YOUR VOICE MATTERS.”

You remind us of what is possible when determination meets opportunity. Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition.”

The event’s accomplishments were made possible by the generous contributions of its sponsors and partners, including the Guyana Maritime Administration Department, International Register of Shipping, El Dorado Offshore, Caribbean Shipping Ltd., C&V Shipping Ltd., Muneshwars Shipping, BK Marine, SBM Offshore Guyana, John Fernandes Ltd., and Tropical Shipping. •

“THIS GALA IS MORE THAN A CELEBRATION; IT IS A STATEMENT OF INTENT. WE ARE HERE TO HONOUR THE RESILIENCE, INTELLECT AND LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN IN MARITIME, WHILE ACTIVELY CREATING SPACE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF FEMALE PROFESSIONALS.”

– KATINA BENN, PRESIDENT OF WIMAC-GUYANA



WOMEN IN MARITIME ASSOCIATION CARIBBEAN (WIMAC) – GUYANA CHAPTER

The WiMAC-Guyana Chapter Inc. advocates for and actively works to create equal opportunities for women in the maritime sector.

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Current Directors

(as of December 2024)

1. Katina Benn – President
2. Sonia Charran – Vice President
3. Mohini Somaroo – Secretary of the Board
4. Thalissa Grant-McClure – Director of Finance
5. Anesa Barnes – Director of Projects & Events
6. Louise Williams – Director of Policy and Development
7. Alicia DeAbreu – Director of Membership
8. Thandi McAllister – Immediate Past President

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WMU Alumni (left to right): Alicia DeAbreu, Saskia Tull, Katina Benn, Dr. Deniece Aiken, Randy Bumbury



WiMAC Guyana (left to right): Thalissa Grant McClure, Director of Finance, WiMAC Guyana; Mohini Somaroo, Director and Secretary of the Board, WiMAC Guyana; Katina Benn, President, WiMAC Guyana; Hon. Bishop Juan A. Edghill, Minister of Public Works, Guyana; Sonia Charran, Vice President, WiMAC Guyana; Anesa Barnes, Director of Projects & Events, WiMAC Guyana; Dr. Deniece Aiken, President, WISTA Jamaica; Alicia DeAbreu, Director of Membership, WiMAC Guyana.



***FRONT ROW** (left to right): Mauricia Vandeyar (for Rebecca Samuels), Annette Arjoon-Martins, Sabita Sookdeo, Romona Arthur, Dawn Maison, Shania Stewart, Donnette Streete.

***BACK ROW** (left to right): Keisha Hack, Kerensa Bart, Briony Tiwarie-Gabriel, Nalini Jamuna, Hon. Bishop Juan A. Edghill, Minister of Public Works, Guyana, Katina Benn, Sherry-Ann Wilson, Miranda Thakur-Deen, Coleen Denyse Abrams.

*WiMAC-Guyana's Mission and Objectives stem from the overarching Mission and Objectives of the WiMAC.

WIMAC-GUYANA WOMEN IN MARITIME GALA AND AWARDS CEREMONY

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY
DR. DENIECE M. AIKEN
[ABRIDGED FOR SPACE]

We are all here tonight for the very same reason – to recognise the significant contributions of some outstanding women. And we support the move towards a more equitable sector which we hope to achieve in the near future.

It was over 50 years ago that the first women's professional network – the Women's International Shipping and Trading Association, which we know as WISTA, was established. At that time, there was little or no female presence in the maritime sector. Maritime was seen as a masculine industry, only for men – so much so that women were barred from maritime training institutions. We simply did not belong. Shortly after, in 1988, the global community recognised that something was wrong with this picture. This issue of no female involvement in maritime industries needed to be addressed.

So, the International Maritime Organization (the "IMO") launched the "Programme for the Integration of Women in the Maritime Sector". Through this programme, the IMO led a number of initiatives, including Training, Fellowships dedicated to education of women; and, supporting the establishment of maritime professional associations.

By 2021, tremendous progress had been made. The IMO supported the establishment of eight professional women's associations in several geographic regions, including the Caribbean. And, thanks to the IMO-WISTA Women in Maritime Survey, we now know that by 2021: 20% of the workforce in maritime administrations were women; 29% of the private sector in shipping were women; and, only 2% of the world's seafarers were women.

And now in 2025, after all the effort of women's associations, the IMO, public and private sector organisations, women represent less than **30% of the workforce in maritime administrations**, which is an improvement on the 2021 figures. We



also see that **women represent 24% of the workforce in the Caribbean region** – the second highest representation globally. The Pacific region has the highest representation with 26%. But there was a decrease of more than 10% in women in the private

sector ... now only 16%. And an even further decrease in seafaring professions – with only **1%** of women working as seafarers globally today.

For an industry that moves approximately 90% of global trade – these figures strongly

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suggest that much, much more needs to be done. The numbers are clear. We need more women in the sector.

WHERE DO WE BEGIN

We must stay current with what is happening in the sector and understand that the maritime industry is a vast ocean, full of opportunities for women.

We now see a rise in smart ports and global port networks and logistics hubs — with the inclusion of AI, blockchain, and other new technologies. These create new opportunities for women to pursue careers in digital leadership for port management and logistics and supply chain operations.

The recently agreed global **net-zero framework** created a massive shift in the industry that has led to introduction of new innovative solutions to combat climate change — such as autonomous and hybrid vessels, electrification of ships and the introduction of new low sulphur fuels like hydrogen and ammonia, creating new channels for employment in **environmental protection, green fuels, and sustainability**.

These new ways of operating require new and fresh approaches to education and certification in the industry. This has opened new possibilities for women to get involved in higher level teaching, research, and

curriculum development... even project management and coordination in universities and in **maritime education and training** institutions.

Additionally, alongside the decarbonisation shift, the industry is experiencing a digitalisation transformation, which will be guided by a new global digitalisation strategy expected to be approved and released by the IMO in the year 2027.

These two major shifts need to be led by a robust regulatory framework. And this calls for more **maritime law and policy specialists** across the globe. Women need to get urgently involved.

There are also many opportunities to work at sea. And, as the global infrastructure changes, the working dynamics on board vessels are also changing to be more accommodating for **women seafarers**.

And lastly, there is also a growing number of **shore-based roles**... in port operations, human resources, compliance, information technology among others... where diverse approaches to work and leadership are strongly needed.

Organisations like WiMAC are now becoming the outlets through which women can be filtered and gain access to opportunities that exist in the maritime space. But the real work doesn't start with the group — WiMAC. It actually begins with the individual members themselves. Every one of us have some very important

work that must be done to ensure that the group — WiMAC — will be impactful.

MANY STRATEGIES

I will share with you three of the many strategies that helped me to navigate the maritime space to find my place in the ocean of opportunities... from Jamaica, all the way to Sweden and now to working in Estonia, the Baltic Sea region, and the United Kingdom.

STRATEGY I: CREATE

The first strategy is: Create! Don't compete!

This is how it started for me. It was the year 2012. I was a young law student about to finish Law School in Jamaica and eager to enter the legal profession as a practising attorney. I had my eyes set on specialising in Intellectual Property Law. And, as I was already tutoring other law students on the legalities of patents, trademarks, and copyrights, I knew for sure this was what I would be doing post-graduation... or so I thought.

Things soon changed. I received a phone call from the Ministry of Transport and Works. I was being invited to sit on the Board of the Caribbean Maritime Institute (CMI). I agreed without hesitation.

At my first board meeting, all board members were presented with a book called *Blue Ocean Strategy*....



“WE MUST STAY CURRENT WITH WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE SECTOR AND UNDERSTAND THAT THE MARITIME INDUSTRY IS A VAST OCEAN, FULL OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN.”

– DR. DENIECE M. AIKEN

a *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* bestseller written by two professors of strategy... W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne... from an institute in France. This book outlined a marketing strategy that promotes breaking out of crowded, bloody, competitive environments... the so-called **red ocean**) – and moving instead towards creating new, uncontested spaces where you can thrive without direct rivals... the so-called **blue ocean**). They emphasised **value creation and innovation** as key to unlocking new opportunities. This was a new approach.

We were urged to read the book and to apply it to our decision-making as Board members of the CMI. ...which we did. This new approach resulted in many successes for the CMI.

I took the strategy a bit further by applying it to my own personal life. I decided to look away from the “red ocean” of law firms and litigation... in which I had spent time following graduation... and embrace the new, uncontested space of **maritime law**. That shift in focus led me to the World Maritime University (WMU) in Sweden which I pursued a Master’s degree in Maritime Law & Policy.

While there, I took value creation even further. Taking note of the very limited number of women in my class I established the **WMU Women’s Association** and successfully, in partnership with the IMO, created a scholarship for one female to attend WMU each year. The next move was to secure funding for women to participate as speakers in international conferences. At that time there was no such association and so the initiative was happily welcomed by the WMU and IMO community because it fitted perfectly within the **IMO’s 1988 Programme for the Integration of Women in Maritime**.

When you start creating value, you quickly realise how addictive it can be. The feeling of achievement motivates. It makes you want to continue creating value, over and over again. So, after completing my Master’s degree, I returned to Jamaica and joined forces with the women there to establish a **Women in Maritime Association for the Caribbean** (WiMAC).

Later on, in 2023, I established WISTA JAMAICA and I am currently serving as its first President. And presently, as if that was not enough, I am in the process of leading a new maritime law initiative in Estonia.

I know it all sounds good. And it does feel good when you see the product of the work. Value innovation is challenging and time-intensive... and requires diligence and commitment. But it’s worth it in the end. And the best part about it is that, by the time others catch on, you will already be far ahead... maybe already exploring a new **blue ocean**!

STRATEGY 2 – CONQUER YOUR TITLES! YOU ARE MORE THAN WHAT YOU DO.

This brings us to the second strategy. Conquer your titles.

One thing about us as people: we love titles. We love them so much that we introduce ourselves using our titles. For example, when you first meet someone and by way of introductions seek learn something about them, they will usually respond by saying something like: “I am Jane, the Director of...” or “I am Margaret, the CEO of...”.

In 2019, I was stationed in South Korea for three months under an International Seabed Authority **Ocean Law internship**. By that time, I had transitioned from being a Board Member to being Vice President, Legal & International Affairs at Caribbean Maritime University. Now titles are good. They carry weight. And they do provide a level of access to people, places and money. So being a Vice President worked in my favour.

I was offered the opportunity to make a courtesy visit with the President of one of the Maritime institutions in Korea. And, of course, I immediately accepted. But before we met, I was required to him send my CV (*i.e.*, *curriculum vitae*) as much as two days before the meeting. At the meeting I met three persons – the President, a member of his team and a language translator. The President introduced his team members and graciously asked if I was settling in well in Korea. I confirmed.

Then (through his translator) he said that he had read my CV and was confused about how to address me. He needed clarification. Paraphrased, the question



was: “I see you are a Vice President but then also you are an Ocean intern. How do you move from Vice President to Intern? Isn’t that a backward step?”

I paused briefly before responding. Through the translator I indicated that it didn’t matter to me what my title was at any stage. I am someone who loves to learn so he was free to refer to me by whatever title he chose. He smiled and said: **I have never heard anyone say something like this to me ever. You have changed how I think about this.**

And just as how he changed his thought process about titles, I urge you all to do the same. As much as titles may afford access, they also can be restrictive, keeping you stuck in a box; thinking within the same repetitive loops; shackled by job titles and their limitations.

Reality is: your true value is not defined by a title. It is defined by who are and all that you can do. So, redefine yourselves and continuously ask: *Who am I without this title?* Keep asking yourself that question until you find the right answer. You will know it when you find it.

STRATEGY 3 – NURTURE YOUR NETWORK

There are many books, Instagram posts, and TikTok and YouTube videos about the secrets to success and how to be successful, with hundreds these tips and tricks you may apply. But in reality, it’s the people around us (colleagues, family and friends) and the people

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we meet along the journey, who will help us to progress and achieve our goals. For me, it was my family, my friends, the women and men at WMU, the members of WiMAC, WISTA, work colleagues and mentors. They offered advice and encouragement and connected me to possibilities I had never imagined.

WiMAC is a fantastic network which serves as that foundation where we can get to know each other and learn from each other. But networking isn't just about *knowing* people. It is also about collaboration. It's about sharing, not hoarding information. It's about celebrating others without fear that their successes will dim your own light. And it's about saying your colleague/friend's name in a room full of opportunities.

Networking is not only about what you can take. It's an exchange. What you give will determine what

you receive. So, I urge you as WiMAC members, future members and industry partners, don't only think about what the network can do for you... also consider what you can do for the network.

So, in conclusion, let's ponder how we can truly explore this *blue ocean* of opportunity.

Leave behind already crowded *red oceans* and boldly create new value in the vast *blue ocean* of opportunities.

Free yourself from the limitations of titles to explore the full spectrum of your innate capacities.

Invest deeply in your networks — nurturing, supporting, strengthening, and expanding them with unwavering determination.

And, above all, offer the hand of support and encouragement. Lift a colleague as you climb the ladder of success. Their success will strengthen you. •

“NETWORKING IS NOT ONLY ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN TAKE. IT’S AN EXCHANGE. WHAT YOU GIVE WILL DETERMINE WHAT YOU RECEIVE. SO, I URGE YOU AS WiMAC MEMBERS, FUTURE MEMBERS AND INDUSTRY PARTNERS, DON’T ONLY THINK ABOUT WHAT THE NETWORK CAN DO FOR YOU... ALSO CONSIDER WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR THE NETWORK.”





WOMEN IN MARITIME: THIS IS YOUR TIME

BY CAPT. RAWLE BADDALOO



In May 2023, I authored an article for *Portside Caribbean* entitled: “Women on board, remove the barriers”. Happily, the response to that charge is gaining momentum. More and more, women are being employed in many traditional areas of the maritime sector that were previously male dominated. From available data and participation in regional maritime events, we are in a position to assess this growing trend.

Change is evident and it is becoming accepted as the norm.

The new IMO Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez took office on January 1, 2024, for an initial four-year term. His stated priorities are: Protection of Seafarers Maritime Security; and, Decarbonisation (of the maritime sector). However, various decisions have since showed an added priority not clearly enunciated, that is, Women in Maritime.

This year, the IMO celebrated a theme “An Ocean of Opportunities for Women”. This aligned well with

the theme for World Maritime Day “Our Ocean, Our Obligation, Our Opportunity”. It should be clear to all jurisdictions that women must be afforded an equal opportunity.

- Women’s empowerment has five components:
- Women’s sense of self-worth;
- The right to have and determine choices;
- The right to have access to opportunities and resources;
- The right to have power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and,
- The ability to influence the direction of social change so as to create a more just, social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

ORGANISATION

The IMO’s policy of treating women equally has helped the movement immensely. Notable examples of growth are reflected in the formation of WiMAC

(*Women in Maritime Association*); WISTA International (representing women in maritime management), WIMOs (*Women in Maritime Operations*) in the USA, WIMA-Asia and, AWIMA (*Arab Women in Maritime Association*).

Each of these organisations has several chapters in their regional jurisdictions, together creating a large and formidable organisation. Besides operating under the umbrella of the Women in Maritime-IMO’s gender programme, there is a common thread here, all guided by the following functions: **Networking** for creating platforms for connectivity; **Professional development**, offering training and continuing education; **Mentorship** programmes for facilitating guidance and support; **Industry engagement** for fostering relationships with maritime companies; and, **Advocacy** for supporting the recruitment, retention and promotion of women in leadership and/or technical roles.

“MORE AND MORE, WOMEN ARE BEING EMPLOYED IN MANY TRADITIONAL AREAS OF THE MARITIME SECTOR THAT WERE PREVIOUSLY MALE DOMINATED. FROM AVAILABLE DATA AND PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL MARITIME EVENTS, WE ARE IN A POSITION TO ASSESS THIS GROWING TREND.”

It has become quite normal to see postings in various media of women being elevated to Masters of big ships, particularly on passenger vessels. And in shore-based entities — ship agencies, freight forwarding, customs brokerage, logistics services and pilotage, this is increasingly evident.

The journey from deck cadet to sitting final examinations to become Master requires about eight years of actual sea time. Over the years and particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, the mental health of seafarers has been “front and centre” of many discussions. It has become the norm now that the maximum time spent at sea on one tour of duty does not extend beyond four months, to be followed by a similar period ashore. Whether this is the correct strategy as regards mental health is still being debated. Indeed, some younger officers do not take the full four months off at home. They work on another vessel in another jurisdiction so as to gain valuable sea time.

MARITIME TRAINING INSTITUTIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN REGION:

- LJM Academy, Nassau, Bahamas
- MatPal Marine Institute, Georgetown, Guyana
- Atlantic Alliance Maritime and Officer Training Institute, Georgetown, Guyana
- Bethel and Associates Marine Services and Training Institute, Grenada
- Caribbean Maritime University, Kingston, Jamaica and
- University of Trinidad and Tobago, Department of Maritime Studies, Chaguaramas, Trinidad and Tobago.

I mention this purely to demonstrate the entire period to reach the top as such could be long. Besides being qualified, there is also the very pertinent matter of experience. On smaller shipping lines, promotion could be quicker. In large fleets, it is a different matter.

MARITIME TRAINING

The other matter is that our schools have still not put maritime subjects on the primary and secondary school syllabus. It means that when young people leave the traditional school system, they enter maritime academies with no knowledge of what to expect. It is therefore particularly important that this push to change the syllabus in our schools, receive urgent attention.

Therefore, there are avenues for financial assistance as well as conveniently located training institutions in the Region.

Maritime Training spans a relatively long period and it is costly. Trinidad and Tobago, for example, has a Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses Programme (GATE) to support nationals. After a “means test” is done, the level of financial support that could be given is established.

There is also the American Caribbean Maritime Foundation (ACMF) that grants scholarships to attend any of the above Institutes once certain criteria are met.

ACCEPTANCE

It is clear that momentum is growing as regards acceptance of women in the maritime sector. The Caribbean Shipping Association as well as the Port Management Association of the Caribbean have each signed Memoranda of Understanding with WiMAC. At every conference there are sessions and presentations that are relevant and insightful. And, it should also be noted, that men are also involved, supportive and engaged in the discussions. In this regard, it is not unusual for an experienced male executive to mentor women entering the maritime sector.

The Directors and Heads of Maritime in the region (DiHMAR), at its annual meetings, devote time to WiMAC to present on its progress. Questions are asked of each Administration about the percentage of women recruited.

One problem that will likely continue to face the Caribbean region is the availability of women to fill posts. Being a supporter of Meritocracy, it is hard enough to get men to fill positions. Now that women are becoming increasingly present in the cadre of qualified individuals, we must remain diligent in employment practices. Recruitment decisions based purely only on gender can be dangerous but are certainly not good management. Male or female managers must always choose the best applicant.

It is very pleasing to see the great contribution women continue to make in the maritime sector. For the first time the IMO Regional Representative in the Wider Caribbean is a woman. For some time now, the head of the Secretariat at the Caribbean Memorandum of Understanding (CMOU) on Port State Control has been led by a woman. In many other jurisdictions this is a growing trend.

HARASSMENT

Harassment has been an issue in all places of employment. Ships, because of the solitude at sea, make this industry prone to this scourge. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) will introduce mandatory anti-harassment training for all seafarers, starting January 1, 2026. This would be done under amendments to The Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) Code. This is certainly great news.

The Maritime industry I think is embracing this change. New tonnage is being built and current designs accommodate women. It is hoped and expected that this trend will grow rapidly as nearly all vessels operating in the Caribbean space must be replaced by 2030... because they will no longer comply with the new decarbonisation rules.

This is an opportunity. Our women across the Caribbean region must grasp this opportunity by doing the necessary training to be able to sail on these new ships.

This is your time, my colleagues! ●

Captain Rawle Baddaloo,

h.c. Honorary Doctor of Science UTT, FNI, MSC.

Course correction – A gender-inclusive maritime sector

BY DENIECE M. AIKEN*

A photograph of a Black woman with curly hair, wearing a white button-down shirt, smiling and shaking hands with a man. The man is wearing a dark suit and glasses. They are in an office setting with a window in the background.

“In 2024, women comprised about 24% of the workforce of the Caribbean maritime sector¹. That was higher than the global average but, regardless, still reflected significant underrepresentation.”

In 2025, the world remained a daunting one hundred and 23 years away from gender parity; approximately one and a quarter centuries. Think about that. Yet, even amidst this stark reality lies one hopeful truth: over the past year, more than a decade of gender-equity progress has been achieved.

The World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report 2025* revealed that nearly 70% of the global gap has been bridged. This was the highest level since the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet the maritime industry has barely advanced. Within this fragile progress emerged a clear lesson for the maritime sector, that is, **gender equity is not merely a moral accessory. It is the engine of economic resilience and innovation.**

Wake-up call

The second global IMO-WISTA Women in Maritime Survey delivered stark, unfiltered insights. With respondents from 88 IMO Member States and 608 organisations from the private sector, the findings underscore stagnation and regression. The number of respondents increased to 176,820 in 2024 (from 151,979 in 2021). Yet the share of women fell from 26% to under 19% of the overall maritime workforce.

Within national maritime authorities, women accounted for only 19% and in the private sector excluding seafaring roles, only 16%. Active female seafarers remained nearly invisible at just 1%, down from 2% in 2021. These statistics are more than numbers. They highlighted systemic barriers that impede talent pipelines, limit career pathways and, stifle the industry's capacity for inclusive innovation.

Finland's bold intersection

With an 87.9% closure rate, Finland ranked second (in the Global Gender Gap Report 2025) among major economies that surpassed the 80% mark, thus highlighting its steadfast leadership in gender equality. The state turned commitments into concrete outcomes through the introduction of the Equality and Non-Discrimination Policy, unveiled in December 2024 by the Finnish Shipowners' Association. The policy addressed 14 concrete action points, including: zero tolerance for any form of harassment; diversity to reshape corporate culture; and, guaranteeing women and other under-represented groups unfettered access to every role – from technical positions to senior leadership.

This policy fits seamlessly with Finland's national gendermainstreaming legislation, which obliges public bodies and private employers to integrate tailored equality plans and quota systems into their decision-making processes. This extends to shipping enterprises to maritime education institutions. Simultaneously, Finland is advancing toward the EU's requirement of 40% gender representation on non-executive boards by mid-2026, a benchmark the Nordic countries are already on track to meet.

Beyond boardrooms, Finnish firms are embedding women at the heart of the digital and green transitions, investing in automation, ESG analytics, decarbonisation projects, and port digitalisation initiatives.

Caribbean context

In 2024, women comprised about 24% of the workforce of the Caribbean maritime sector¹. That was higher than the global average but, regardless, still reflected significant underrepresentation. While this indicated some progress in the Caribbean region, the numbers highlighted a deeper structural imbalance. This matters now, more than ever.

Presently, the maritime industry is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by two megatrends: decarbonisation and digitalisation. These forces are drastically altering operations, regulations, and competitive dynamics across the span of global shipping. Women across the Caribbean are actively reshaping the maritime industry through powerful, coordinated initiatives. Leading this movement are national chapters of the **Women's International Shipping and Trading Association (WISTA)** and the **Women in Maritime Association Caribbean (WiMAC)**. Both organisations play pivotal roles in advancing gender equity, professional development, and leadership in the sector.

WISTA International, established in 1974, is a global network active in over 50 countries. Its mission is to empower women to take on senior leadership roles and drive meaningful involvement across the maritime sector. With chapters in Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, Bermuda, and The Bahamas, WISTA has been fostering environments in which women can shape and influence maritime policy and practice. These WISTA chapters have created space for women to lead and influence maritime policy and practice.

Complementing this work is WiMAC. Established in 2015, with the support of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), WiMAC promotes women's participation and positions them to lead in key areas such as maritime administration, port operations, and regulatory governance.

To fully realise their potential, both the WISTA and WiMAC require stronger institutional support. This includes greater funding, formal roles in national maritime strategy development, and targeted investment in upskilling women for high-growth areas. These organisations are not *fringe actors*. **They are essential drivers of the Caribbean's maritime transformation.**

“Studies consistently show that organisations with diverse leadership teams outperform their peers in return on equity, navigate crises more effectively, and pioneer breakthroughs with greater frequency.”

Caribbean imperatives

Studies consistently show that organisations with diverse leadership teams outperform their peers in return on equity, navigate crises more effectively, and pioneer breakthroughs with greater frequency. Finland's experience, where mandatory board quotas ushered companies into more sustainable, crisis-ready governance models, illustrates how gender balance can transform decision-making from the top down.

Women represent untapped reservoirs of creativity and expertise, especially critical as maritime industries grapple with labour shortages while striving to attract and retain skilled professionals. When workplaces fail to offer equitable, supportive environments, women simply look elsewhere, deepening the talent gap that already threatens operational capacity.

Nowhere is the need for inclusive leadership more urgent than in regions now confronting the frontline impacts of climate change. Caribbean countries with national economies and coastlines that are particularly vulnerable, stand to gain immeasurably from women with a proven track record of community-driven environmental innovation. Ignoring their insights is more than equity failure; it is a blind spot that undermines the drive toward climate-resilient maritime practices.

The second global IMO-WISTA Women in Maritime Survey made it clear: women remain drastically underrepresented at sea, in leadership, and across every layer of the maritime world.

The path forward demands bold, systemic action. Caribbean maritime stakeholders must move beyond symbolic commitments and embed gender equity into the very architecture of their organisations. That means codifying boardroom parity; channelling investment into women's leadership development; and, institutionalising inclusive policies that permeate every office, deck, and dockside classroom. It means amplifying networks through WISTA chapters in Jamaica, The Cayman Islands, Bermuda, The Bahamas, and WiMAC. And it means holding every initiative accountable to real, measurable outcomes rather than abstract targets.

Crucially, governments must enact and enforce legislation that safeguard these advances, setting clear quotas; funding gender-focused training programmes; and, monitoring compliance.

Inaction carries steep consequences. It shuts out half of the sector's most promising innovators. It robs the industry of varied insights that are essential for meeting tomorrow's challenges. And, it also weakens maritime capacity to respond to changing regulations and market expectations, thus eroding its long-term competitive edge.

For the Caribbean, as it is for the world, gender parity is not optional; it is existential.












The time to course correct is now. ●

¹ IMO–WISTA Women in Maritime Survey 2024

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