

Technological Advancements Inspiring the Gender Shift

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A widely circulated statistic in the maritime industry is that women represent only 1.2% of the global seafarer workforce. While it seems trivial, it is vital to understand that this is a 45.8% increase to 24,059 women seafarers since 2015. Moreover, when looking at shore-based roles, women comprise 20% of the workforce. Clearly, a lot needs to be done to achieve gender parity in the maritime sector. And a lot is certainly being done.

Empowerment of women

First, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) is strongly committed to the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly the Sustainable Development Goal 5, which focuses on the empowerment of women. The IMO has also launched a leadership accelerator programme along with the Women's International Shipping & Trading Association (WISTA) to increase the visibility of women in senior roles across the maritime sector. This is imperative to attract young women to a rapidly evolving industry that is incorporating digital operations and decarbonization initiatives as well as embracing new technologies for remote vessel management.

Second, several public-private partnerships are advancing education and career development projects for women across the globe. The governments of Saudi Arabia and the UAE are heavily invested in promoting opportunities in the workplace for women. In fact, almost 43% of students at The Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport Branch in Sharjah are women – the highest percentage of female maritime students in the MENA region. A significant investment of \$1.9 million by DP World has been directed towards a global programme for gender equality, empowering more than 160,000 women

in local communities. Third, maritime communications technology is undergoing a momentous transformation. With LEO technologies spreading rapidly across the industry, a wide range of applications are now available for seafarers – videoconferencing, remote maintenance, big data transfers, and more.

All of these services can be managed in real-time from the shore, creating a whole new niche of jobs for female talents. In parallel, improved crew welfare on board, including e-learning programs, telemedicine, and a range of leisure applications (such as easy access to social media, web browsing, and

movie streaming services) make life at sea more attractive for the fairer sex. With increasingly better working conditions – both at sea and on the shore, women who choose to join the maritime sector can find exciting opportunities for career advancement.

From port executives and finance professionals to engineers and cyber security experts, a rich variety of prospects is available to women today. Digitalization is literally transforming the face of the industry, paving the way for diversity and inclusion. At IEC Telecom, we take a lot of pride to develop connectivity solutions that contribute to this historical shift.

