Women in Africa's maritime space

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The maritime environment is male-dominated and women's inclusion into the maritime sector remains a challenge. There are a number of cultural, structural and workplace barriers that render the maritime environment unattractive to many women. Comprehensive changes need to take place, not only within the maritime sector but also within societies, to create conditions conducive for women's inclusion and meaningful participation. This report presents recommendations for South Africa that could apply to other African countries.

Key findings

▶ Sea blindness affects the way careers in the maritime space are perceived by the public, including women. Blue Economy shines a spotlight on the riches contained within the maritime space, addressing the issue of sea blindness, and offering an opportunity to increase women's participation in maritime sectors of the economy.

▶ Historically, women were prevented from meaningfully participating in the maritime space, which led to the emergence of cultural and gender biases. Responding to these challenges would require comprehensive cooperation between governments and businesses.

▶ Valid and precise gender-disaggregated data is at the core of any scientific inquiry. The lack of gender-specific data from maritime sectors prevents a meaningful investigation of the current realities of women in the maritime space.

▶ The Women, Peace and Security agenda may offer a valuable contribution to the discussion on women's inclusion in the maritime sector, given the relative success of its implementation in the peace and security sector.

▶ South Africa has made considerable advancements in promoting women's inclusion and participation in the maritime space. However, some challenges and barriers remain and need to be addressed.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are specifically for the South African government, but they have a wider utility for the whole of Africa:

▶ There is a need to generate well-considered gender-specific data and evidence on women in maritime space. One way to acquire such information is for labour force surveys to include the maritime sector as a key component of data collection exercises.

▶ It is necessary to launch a public relations awareness campaign that highlights the maritime sector, the role of women in it and the career opportunities it offers women.

▶ Within the maritime sector, the government should encourage the development of gender-sensitive budgets and gender mainstreaming in policy developments to improve the quality of working conditions for women in the sector.

▶ Within the maritime sector, specialised training and a mentorship programme should be offered to women to provide them with extra assistance.

▶ Given the absence of maritime security within the Women, Peace and Security agenda, more research should be conducted to highlight the positive contributions that women make to the maritime sector.

Introduction and background

Women's active participation in the maritime sector is low and it remains a male-dominated space. Women are continually hindered by discrimination, legal barriers and harassment at their workplace that restricts their ability to meaningfully participate within maritime industries leading to their marginalisation or exclusion. Another reason for gender inequality within the maritime sector is the numerous assumptions made about the roles, responsibilities and identities of men and women. These assumptions stem from a complex combination of historical and traditional cultural traits, pervasive work culture and societal barriers.

Women currently make up around 2% of the world's seafarer workforce and their experiences are seldom considered in the design, development, or implementation of maritime programmes and policies.[1] Even when a government enacts laws against discrimination based on sex or gender, such as the South African National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, this rarely extends into the maritime space.[2] Women's contributions often go unacknowledged which results in a low policy prioritisation for addressing gender inequality issues.

> The underrepresentation of women in the maritime industry has not changed greatly over the past decade

Evidence suggests that utilising women's potential as leaders, economic actors and consumers will result in higher levels of industrialisation and sustained growth. If more women are allowed to participate in the same roles as men in the markets, global GDP could increase by 25% by 2025.[3]

There have been some notable achievements recently. In South Africa, in 2015, Zimasa Mabela was the first African woman appointed to command a navy vessel. And in Nigeria, in 2017, Jamila Malafa and Christie Opara were promoted to the level of Commodore. However, the underrepresentation of women in the maritime industry has not changed greatly over the past decade. Within maritime and related industries such as seafarers, port operators and government officials there is a gender gap and most senior positions remain male-dominated.[4]

The issue of women's representation and inclusion is not unique to the maritime sector. A similar challenge in the peace and security field has received ample international attention. The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda is derived from the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) (2000).

The resolution recognises that, from a human security perspective, gender must be at the centre of any multilateral action in peace and security. It recognises that women are active agents of peace and they have a right

WOMEN CURRENTLY MAKE UP AROUND 2% OF THE WORLD'S SEAFARER WORKFORCE

to be part of peace processes. UNSCR 1325 was also significant for linking the status of women citizens to the well-being of the nation.

Recognising the existing challenge, and the potential value in exploring the links between the WPS agenda and maritime sectors, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) convened a workshop, 'Defining Women's Participation in the Maritime Sector from Security to Development' on 28–29 August 2019 in Centurion, South Africa. The workshop provided a platform for maritime and WPS stakeholders to discuss ways of overcoming some of the barriers that hamper women's participation within the maritime sector.

The WPS framework and its implications for the maritime space are not well researched.[5] However, the success of the WPS agenda in increasing women's participation in peace and security processes since 2000 provides many examples of lessons learnt and best practice opportunities. These could provide some of the nuanced and contextual understandings required to overcome the structural and power inequalities which women encounter within the maritime sector.

The report, therefore, aims to provide an anchor for further investigation and research into the connection between the WPS agenda and maritime awareness.

Methodology

The primary aim of the workshop held in Centurion and this report is to explore the contribution that the experience of implementing the WPS agenda offers for enhancing women's participation in the maritime sector. Part of the analysis of the report summarises the workshop's key findings and recommendations for South African policymakers and stakeholders on facilitating increased women's participation in the maritime sector. The report also draws on various African examples to highlight the continental applicability and relevance of the discussion and recommendations.

The report is structured into five main sections. The first describes the methodology used in the design and facilitation of the workshop. The second part contextualises the issues and defines some of the crucial concepts, namely WPS and the maritime sector. The third part discusses the lessons from the WPS agenda for the maritime sector. The fourth part outlines the challenges

and barriers that were identified by the participants during the workshop. Finally, the report outlines the targeted solutions and recommendations of the workshop.

The workshop serves as a backdrop for the report, laying the foundation for the analysis. The ISS relied on a co-design process to allow meaningful engagement amongst participants during the workshop.[6] Co-design is a participatory, human-centred and action-oriented approach to solving complex problems by identifying key stakeholders to participate in a workshop; and designing actionable solutions based upon their input.

The workshop focused primarily on gendered experiences within the African maritime sector, based on the participants' own experiences and reflections. Most participants were South African, however, the workshop included representatives from the Indian Ocean Commission, African Union and Interpol.

> Historically the presence of a woman on board a vessel was sometimes considered a bad omen

The authors recognise the limits of this exploratory study. The workshop could not cover all of the challenges related to women's engagement in the maritime sector. Nor could it address the fact that women's inclusion in the maritime sector is multifaceted and complex. The conceptual link between the WPS agenda and the maritime sector is also new and requires further research and analysis. Therefore, the report will focus primarily on women's experiences as participants and employees in the maritime space, and the valuable lessons offered by 20 years of implementing the WPS agenda.

Context and concepts

The maritime sector encompasses onshore and offshore activities related to the maritime space, from shipping and tourism to fishing and fish trade, shipbuilding, transportation and resource exploration. It has historically been understood as a male-dominated environment, associated with masculine values, traits and identities.

Women were barred from actively engaging in seafaring activities until the early 1900s.[7] Historically the presence of a woman on board a vessel was sometimes considered

a bad omen.[8] Women have traditionally been restricted from performing duties that were perceived as conventionally male roles in the formal and informal maritime sectors due to cultural beliefs and gender stereotypes. This created a powerful historical legacy of gender identities grounded in stereotypes which led to cultural barriers that significantly complicated women's inclusion in the sector.

As a result of these historical and cultural barriers, many women do not consider the maritime environment to be an attractive field of employment with viable career opportunities.[9] The International Labour Organisation notes a number of problems, including instances when women applicants who meet the employment criteria were turned down for the job, with preference given to male applicants. There are also mandatory pregnancy tests for women applicants, required by some companies. These challenges are seen as additional barriers for women who attempt to start a career in seafaring.[10]

Women who work in the maritime sector are often employed in the lowest-paid segments of maritime organisations with few protection mechanisms in place, such as the cruise and ferry industry, and they are often exposed to discrimination and harassment.[11] As a result, women's contributions to the maritime sector often go unacknowledged and underappreciated due to low representation. This renders them invisible within the maritime space.[12]

This problem is further exacerbated by the widespread phenomenon of sea blindness.[13] Many states and the private sector fail to appreciate either how the maritime environment serves their national interests and security or how it provides significant economic opportunities worthy of investment. As a result, maritime activities tend to be underappreciated by society, relegating the status of maritime employment to amongst the least desired careers, while also underappreciating the massive contribution of maritime-based employees to the overall economy and security of the country. This situation aggravates the challenges faced by women trying to enter this male-dominated space.

Recognising this challenge, the United Nations International Maritime Organisation (IMO) dedicates one day every year to raising awareness of how a particular function or contribution of the maritime sector contributes to global trade and economics, as well as peace and security. *Empowering Women in the Maritime Community* was chosen as the theme for 2019. This was a welcome initiative that drew attention to women's participation in the maritime sector in support of the fifth United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (UN-SDG) – to achieve gender equality and empowering all women and girls.[14]

SDG 5 underscores the integral role that gender equality plays in inclusive and sustainable development. The inclusion of women in areas that are traditionally dominated by men will lead to a more equitable, just and innovative environment, creating new ideas and perspectives.

Although SDG 5 does not explicitly refer to maritime space, it makes a clear argument for ensuring women's effective participation in all spheres of life. Addressing gender inequality and gender imbalance in the maritime space is not just a human rights issue. A study on the impact of gender diversity on businesses has shown that in societies where women's inclusion into the economy had normative and regulatory support, it increased women's participation and resulted in higher productivity.[15]

Women's contributions to the maritime sector often go unacknowledged and underappreciated

Increasing economic opportunities for women also led to decreased levels of domestic violence and increased household wealth.[16] This suggests a strong link between gender equality, economic growth and prosperity.[17] Investing in women and educating girls to enter formal paid work will increase gender equality and women's empowerment.

Complementing SDG 5, UNSCR 1325 recognises the role of women in building inclusive, just and peaceful societies. Both highlight that women have a valuable role to play in a country's peace, security and development. UNSCR 1325 and the nine subsequent resolutions known as the WPS agenda, locate gender equality centrally within national actions.[18] The WPS agenda also demonstrates that development cannot be achieved without obtaining gender equality.

The WPS agenda is premised on four main points:

- Promote the participation of women in national institutions, processes and decision-making structures.

- Work towards preventing violence against women, especially conflict-related sexual violence.

- Seek to address the needs of women in reconstruction and recovery.

- Ensure that women are protected within public and private spaces.

Progress on increasing women's involvement has been slow, regarding the WPS agenda and the maritime sector. A 2019 report by the United Nations Economic and Social Council on the empowerment of women and girls highlighted that since 2015 insufficient progress has been made in addressing structural issues that perpetuate gender inequality.[19]

WPS action plans must incorporate the maritime sector as part of its agenda. Currently, maritime space and maritime security in particular are not reflected within the WPS frameworks. This conceptual gap presents an oversight, as established ongoing efforts under the WPS agenda could have increased the visibility of the challenges faced by women in the maritime space. The South African and wider African maritime sectors' development should similarly promote the WPS agenda within its work.[20]

Ensuring gender diversity in the maritime sector can accelerate progress and efficiency

The inclusion of women entails meaningful engagement in processes that assist in framing national priorities in terms of both security and development. Bridging the gender gap is therefore not a 'women's issue' but a matter of increased prosperity and enhanced stability across all socio-economic domains, including the maritime space. Closing the gender gap would require greater political efforts as well.

Ensuring that there is greater gender diversity in traditionally male-dominated industries, such as maritime sectors, can be an effective means of accelerating

progress and efficiency. Based on research conducted in other sectors of the economy, increasing women's participation within the maritime sector should also boost innovation and organisational performance.[21]

To promote gender equality in the maritime space, the IMO has incorporated gender equality as part of its policies and procedures in the maritime space since 1988. In 1989, the IMO drafted a Strategy on the Integration of Women in the Maritime Sector to help member states promote gender equality through targeted training programmes. The World Maritime University (WMU), founded by the IMO in 1983, similarly promotes the integration of women in maritime space with a dedicated fellowship programme. In 2018, 21% of its graduates were female.[22] The IMO has also facilitated the creation of professional networks for women around the world working in the industry. These can be used as platforms to exchange experiences and to foster mentorship relations.

These initiatives complemented the efforts of the Women's International Shipping and Trading Association (WISTA) which was formed in 1974. Although the IMO lacks any practical ability to dictate change within the United Nations member states, these efforts highlighted existing hurdles and barriers to female participation and also provided institutional and financial support to female seafarers.

Both the Revised African Maritime Transport Charter (RAMTC) and the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (2050 AIM Strategy) recognise gender equality as an inherent part of maritime security and development.[23, 24] These documents urge signatory states:

- To address the gender imbalance in the maritime industry across the entire value chain

- To overcome cultural barriers that prevent women's full inclusion and participation in the industry

- To create conditions to enable equal access to maritime training and education.

These principles are further supported by the adoption of the concept of the Blue Economy in policy frameworks of many African governments. This may lead to an incremental change in many of the underlying assumptions related to women's participation in the maritime space. Increasingly, African governments are

paying more attention to the potential wealth that can be created from untapped or overlooked maritime resources, and the sustainability thereof. Blue Economy, as an approach to the sustainable use of ocean resources for development and poverty alleviation, requires the full participation of women to succeed.[25]

As such, this development may serve as a vehicle for women's empowerment both economically and politically.[26] This notion was emphasised in 2015 by the then chairperson of the AU, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, who stressed that women should play a central role in the development of the Blue Economy.[27]

A challenge to women's contribution to maritime development will be in how it is framed, recognised and implemented. There is limited sex-disaggregated data available that might provide an idea of women's participation – whether formal or informal – in the maritime sector. Women's contribution to the sector is therefore still invisible. Furthermore, most women work in junior, administrative and professional roles, and not in management or leadership positions.[28] Women's integration in the maritime sector should therefore not be limited to participation that reinforces gender stereotypes. Instead, a comprehensive, all-encompassing and integrated approach is required.[29]

Challenges to the meaningful integration of women in the maritime sector

While the dominant focus for work on WPS has thus far been in situations where there is armed conflict, it is important to note that, within Africa, the absence of an armed conflict does not mean the presence of peace.

This is especially important because a common and consistent thread throughout Africa is the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence. A recent global study has highlighted the tragic reality that domestic violence kills more people than wars, and costs about US$9.5 trillion each year in lost economic output. This far surpasses the economic cost of recent wars which is estimated at US$170 billion each year.[30]

The absence of conflict in a country does not mean people live in just and peaceful environments, or that women are fully integrated and active participants in their country's development. Women face discrimination at different levels and are exposed to various types of violence in violent conflict settings, as well as in stable democracies.

Despite, and perhaps more importantly because of, their experiences in the cycles of violence, African women have been at the forefront of the WPS agenda globally and in their homelands. For example, Asha Hagi Elmi, a Somali peace activist formed the Sixth Clan and participated in the Arta Peace talks.[31]

> A comprehensive and integrated approach is required for women's integration in the maritime sector

The meaningful integration of women internationally includes the following examples:

- Globally, 27% of peace agreements have referenced women since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, up from 11%.

- The number of senior women leaders within the UN has been on the rise, from special envoys of the Secretary-General to the first female commander of a peacekeeping mission.

- Bilateral aid on gender equality to fragile states has quadrupled in the last decade.[32]

- There has been an increase in the number of women holding ministerial, legislative and local government positions, as well as, leadership positions in national human rights institutions.

- Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan and Tanzania have legislated specific percentage quotas for women's representation in parliament, while Uganda and Zimbabwe have allocated women a specific number of seats.

Although progress is slow, evidence suggests that women's contributions to peace and security mean that peace is more likely to last if women are included in decision-making. The inclusion of women requires more effective and systematic implementation and political will.[33]

What is clear is that maritime security and sectors are absent within the WPS agenda. Just like conflict is gendered, the maritime sector is profoundly gendered.

It is vital to consider the gendered impacts of maritime challenges and how it will impact on women entering the industry. Moreover, reporting frameworks and action plans that protect, support and empower women should consider how women are impacted within maritime insecurity. The WPS agenda provides a platform that can ensure women's rights within maritime sectors.

These challenges extend into the maritime space, although notable progress is being achieved in increasing women's participation across maritime-related sectors in South Africa.[34] Recently there have been a number of firsts:

• In 2019, for the first time, South Africa appointed a woman as part of the leadership of the IMO General Assembly.[35]

• Sub-Lieutenant (SAN) Latha Starling became the first female Navy officer to command a vessel in 2005.

• In 2015, Lieutenant Commander (SAN) Zimasa Mabela became the first Black South African female to command a naval vessel.[36]

• In 2019, Candra Shanice Pedro became the first shipbuilder at the Armscor Dockyard.[37]

• Sub-lieutenant Gillian Malouw from the South African Navy became the first female submarine officer in South Africa and Africa.[38]

In 2009, during the South African Navy (SAN) Gender Conference, Rear Admiral Robert Higgs noted that the SAN was working to increase the number of women in the force to 30%.[39] South African Navy Organisation and Work-Study Environment Division confirmed to the ISS that currently, women constitute 31% of 7 683 staff employed in the force, although primarily in supporting roles.[40]

A similar trend can be observed in other African countries. For instance, in Nigeria, similar concerted efforts resulted in 9% of the 6 039 seafarers being women and a positive dynamic for gender equality in the maritime sector.[41] Despite the numbers in South Africa and Nigeria being low, they are in stark contrast to the reported 2% of women seafarers worldwide.

In response to these challenges, workshop participants identified several factors that reflect women's experiences in the maritime sector. From the discussions and the co-

design process, results indicate that the factors can be divided into four broad categories, namely:

• Visibility

• Awareness

• Societal

• Workplace

Most of the barriers that prevent women's meaningful participation in the maritime space were found to be structural and cross-cutting. These obstacles are not unique to the maritime sector but can be attributed to broader issues of women's exclusion from peace, security and development processes. Several observations from the workshop exemplify this point.

Gendered data and visibility of women in the maritime sector

Perhaps the most significant point participants raised related to data. Participants noted that the lack of gender-specific data hinders a meaningful assessment of the needs, challenges, requirements and realities of women's participation in the maritime space. It also renders women invisible within the sector. For instance, one study on women's maritime careers in Eastern and Southern Africa noted that a comparative analysis between countries in the two regions was currently impossible due to a lack of gender-specific data.[42]

> The lack of gender-specific data within the maritime sector renders women invisible

The extent of this issue is demonstrated by the recent South African Operation Phakisa Oceans Economy summary report. The report provided data on training and skills development for women and youth, but noted that 'figures do no[t] reflect the full picture as some of the data submitted was not classified into gender.'[43] Another study on the role the Blue Economy plays for women's economic empowerment in the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) revealed that few member states are collecting gender-specific data regarding relevant sectors of employment.[44]

Evidence from the Third WMU International Women's Conference on Empowering Women in the Maritime

Community suggests that this issue pertains to other states outside the IORA community.[45] While private companies around the world are likely to have gender-specific data from their respective maritime sectors, it is not accessible to the public and there is generally no requirement to make it public.

Maritime, as a distinct sector, seldom features in sex-disaggregated labour surveys. Where gendered data does exist, it rarely covers all industries within the maritime sector. This makes it difficult to understand not only where the gaps are in terms of recruitment but also where policy engagement would make the most impact. Such data can be derived from a proper gender analysis which, in turn, would highlight the necessity of different gender-responsive and gender-transformative strategies to achieve equitable outcomes for men and women.

Lack of maritime awareness impacting personal experiences

Participants also highlighted a general lack of awareness about opportunities within the maritime sector and among the general public, related to the pervasive sea blindness. This lack of awareness affects the attitudes and career choices of women in relation to the maritime sector. The maritime sector is presented as a less attractive career option – if they consider employment in it at all. The lack of awareness also perpetuates traditional gender biases as some women and society at large perceive maritime careers as exclusively male.

For those women already employed in the sector, more needs to be done to elevate their roles and contributions as key stakeholders, especially as the Blue Economy is gaining more traction internationally as an important economic sector. The ecological implications of the Blue Economy have political dimensions that increase security, prosperity and development.

Improving public understanding of the role and importance of the oceans as they relate to the peace, security and development of the country, could enhance women's participation and visibility in maritime-related activities.

Two South African initiatives were noted as examples of good practice:

- The South African International Maritime Institute (SAIMI) hopes to encourage more female applicants

by establishing a special education bursary for women.[46]

- The South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA) has created a Sisters of the Sea network. This is an initiative that allows experienced female seafarers to mentor new recruits to ensure safety, security and better working conditions for women at sea. [47]

Societal attitudes toward women's participation

The WPS agenda recognises that obstacles must be overcome to ensure that women can meaningfully engage in decision-making processes. The obstacles to women's participation in the maritime sector are not homogenous across Africa due to different cultural and historical settings. However, these challenges are rooted in prevailing gender norms that drive gender stereotypes and biases. For instance, a participant from the SAN noted that legal barriers were not the main challenge in South Africa. They were structural barriers related to culture and needed to be addressed.

> Obstacles to women's participation in the maritime sector are not homogenous across Africa

African Marine Solutions Group (AMSOL), a specialist solution provider in the maritime sector, reported that the organisation has increased its percentage of female employees from 8% to 14%.[48] Despite these advances, Clare Gomes, Strategic Planning and Communications Executive at AMSOL and the chairperson of the South African chapter of WISTA noted that progress with regard to women's inclusion into South African maritime sectors, such as shipping, has been slow.[49] A reason for this is the prevailing societal biases that exist concerning women in the maritime sector.

In particular, women's professionalism is often questioned and placed under scrutiny. For instance, because most male managers are former seafarers, and not used to working with women, they tend to perpetuate harmful norms and values creating an unpleasant working environment for women. For the same reason, women in managerial positions often face discrimination, abuse and distrust.[50] Women experience sexism and prejudice from

their male counterparts and feel that they have to work harder to gain the same level of recognition.[51]

As a result, women either 'leave their jobs or continue to work, accepting the situation despite their feelings of conflict, depression, fear, insecurity and stress.'[52]

Participants in the workshop suggested that changes need to take place in school curricula as a way to introduce or promote careers in the maritime sector in South Africa. As it is, the maritime space receives little academic attention at the school level. Even less attention is given to women who want to pursue degrees that will enable them to enter maritime spaces.

Participants also noted that most maritime research is limited to coastal universities and is mostly ignored by inland tertiary institutions. This creates a knowledge and awareness gap between coastal and inland areas and further perpetuates sea blindness.

More research is required to understand women's participation in the maritime sector in Africa

This discussion relating to academic institutions was specific to South Africa but the situation is probably similar in other African countries. More research is required to understand the particular nuances related to women's participation in the maritime sector in other African coastal states.

The maritime space as a workplace and its implications for personal experiences

Women in the maritime sector need personal protection, especially within the workplace. Participants in the workshop noted how traditional gender roles and patriarchal societal attitudes that are reflected in organisational cultures are not tailored to women's needs. Sexual assault and harassment are key challenges that lead to a dangerous and unsafe working environment.

The case of Akhona Geveza, a South African navy cadet, brings this danger to light. Geveza's alleged suicide happened a day after she reported being raped by a fellow officer to her captain.[53] A follow-up investigation by the Sunday Times newspaper revealed that sexual harassment, rape and abuse of both men and women on board vessels are not uncommon.[54] These challenges are not necessarily unique to the maritime space and often reflect the wider societal ills with regard to women and gender, albeit in a more severe form.

The viewpoints on obstacles and challenges gathered during the workshop correlate with wider global trends. A recent study based on a survey of men's and women's attitudes suggests that male counterparts on board a vessel tend to have a negative bias towards women's abilities and skills. Women crew members feel isolated and not accepted, and perceive their promotion prospects as limited.[55] Other barriers to women's participation in the maritime industry were related to a lack of gender-sensitive infrastructure and support for women within the sector.

Women are disproportionately represented in terms of maritime-based employment and economic prosperity. For example, in Sierra Leone, women in the fisheries sector cannot access financial resources and as a result, they remain underrepresented in decision-making positions. Women's salaries in the fishing industry in Sierra Leone are also typically lower than those of their male counterparts, reflecting the trend across other maritime sectors.[56] Furthermore, most national and international policies regarding fisheries do not include any specific references to gender or sex, which renders women invisible and unrecognised within this environment.[57]

Women are also affected differently when it comes to maritime crime. Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing creates food insecurity and is more likely to affect women. This is because women employed in the fisheries sector have less access to markets, earn less and have limited access to financial resources.[58]

Reflections on working in the maritime sector indicate a range of challenges and needs, as well as societal and personal expectations. Working on board a ship sometimes means spending months at sea in a challenging environment. The difficult requirements of the work at sea and the challenge of finding a balance between work and family often cause women to opt for a land-based position instead. A survey study on women's maritime careers in Eastern and Southern Africa found that women who chose to work at sea often

sacrificed their family lives to gain recognition in this male-dominated sector.[59]

Some participants in the workshop also noted that women working in a male-dominated sector, especially on board a vessel, often faced a difficult emotional environment and felt isolated. One participant provided a key observation in this regard, noting that many challenges emanate from the fact that women are not well represented in maritime organisations. Traditional views of gender roles create a culture in which violence and discrimination can flourish in the absence of more women. More women in the environment would also boost the acknowledgement of women's positive contributions.

> The barriers to women's engagement in the maritime space are connected and mutually-reinforcing

Participants noted that addressing the leadership gap and encouraging the promotion of women could help the number of women in the sector reach critical mass, bridge some of the existing gaps and by extension alleviate some of the challenges due to increased visibility of women. It should be noted that critical mass of women can increase visibility and develop better workplace conditions but changes in attitudes need to be directed from above through policies and laws. Consequently, women's engagement in the maritime space would start to be perceived as normal.

However, this situation cannot be achieved without a comprehensive and dedicated collective effort to address the pervasive cultural and traditional norms that underpin many of the challenges. These challenges are not only in the workplace but within societies. It is evident from the discussion on the four categories of factors that reflect women's experiences in the sector, that the barriers and challenges to women's active engagement and participation in the maritime space are all connected and mutually-reinforcing.

While an awareness campaign could address the issue of sea blindness in society, better data-capturing would increase the visibility of women and work they do. A gender-sensitive work environment would create working conditions that are more conducive for women.

Appropriate policies and guidelines are required and should be developed inclusively to address prevailing negative attitudes, abuse and sexual harassment in the workplace. The interconnected nature of these negative factors renders any effort to increase women's participation in the maritime sector unattainable unless all factors are being comprehensively addressed.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the South African examples discussed in this report. They are intended to apply to South Africa and other African countries.

Capture gender- and sex-disaggregated data within the maritime sector

- There is a need to generate reliable sex- and gender-specific data and evidence in maritime sectors. This will assist in understanding the existing obstacles women face across the sector, ranging from the Blue Economy to maritime security agencies. This will also identify challenges that hamper women's integration in the maritime sector, and improve the visibility of women in this field. One way to acquire such information is for labour force surveys to include the maritime sector as a key component of data collection exercises. This would enable key stakeholders to highlight successes, address challenges and emphasise the positive contribution women play within the navy and fishing associations.

A public awareness campaign that highlights the maritime sector and the role of women in it

- A nation-wide public awareness campaign regarding the opportunities within the maritime sector must be launched. It must be conducted in a manner that addresses both gender and cultural biases and sensitivities around the issue. The campaign should focus on normalising the presence of women in this environment and should target both men and women. It should target provinces and communities along the coast and inland.

- Career opportunities within the maritime sector need to be highlighted and brought to the attention of girls and women. Government departments responsible for education should develop curricula on the maritime sector which can be used in early

childhood education and elementary, secondary and tertiary institutions. Increasing understanding of the maritime space will help overcome sea blindness. The maritime industry and other organisations must expand and target recruitment to include women.

- There is a need to improve women's visibility in maritime research and to raise awareness of women working in the environment. It is important to share success stories, have role models and introduce mentorship programmes for women. One way to achieve this is to establish additional maritime studies departments at higher education institutions. More focus needs to be placed on inland institutions and recruiting women. Role models for women entering the maritime sectors will help them to better understand the available opportunities within these sectors.

Gender-sensitive budget allocations and gender mainstreaming in policy developments within the maritime sector

- The government needs to prioritise access to financial resources for women involved in the maritime sector. Financial empowerment of women is proven to lead to more positive and sustainable outcomes in terms of peace, security and development.

- The government should support maritime industry stakeholders to design infrastructure in a gender-sensitive manner to improve the quality of working conditions for women. This would require that South African policies and procedures are revised to be more gender-responsive. These revised policies should be implemented in a way that ensures the well-being of women.

Specialised training to provide extra assistance to women

- More support needs to be given to women to mentor and coach other women within the maritime sector. This can be achieved through a national maritime women mentorship/coaching programme.

- A scoping exercise undertaken by the government would help identify what is already there. Activities can then be scaled up and adequate funding and support can be provided to women-led organisations.

More research on linkages between WPS and maritime security

- The focus of the WPS agenda on conflict obscures our understanding of opportunities that could link it more directly to maritime issues. For example, several WPS resolutions recognise human trafficking as a key challenge to women's security. There is a need to link maritime-based human trafficking and other maritime criminal activities to land-based challenges to women's safety and well-being. More research on the linkages between WPS and the maritime sector could provide evidence to highlight the positive impact of women in leading positions in the political, social, cultural and economic spheres.

- Given that the WPS agenda is a well-recognised policy framework, there is a need to integrate gender-specific challenges in the maritime sector more closely with WPS instruments. Issues pertaining to the maritime space, especially maritime security and its gendered impact, have a direct bearing on overall peace and security. Gender stereotypes challenge all women in South Africa and therefore enable unequal treatment of women in the maritime sector.

- The WPS agenda extended its scope over the years (e.g. including violent extremism). Given this expansion, key maritime stakeholders and relevant WPS actors in South Africa should engage with each other. The inclusion of maritime stakeholders in the development of a South African national action plan for women, peace and security could be the first step to this engagement.

Conclusion

The perspectives gained from the workshop and a literature review show that women's inclusion into the maritime sector faces significant challenges around the world. Cultural factors and established historical roles result in structural and workplace barriers. There is a lack of awareness about opportunities that exist in the maritime space for women. Not all factors that shape the way women are affected by maritime challenges were highlighted in the workshop. These factors include income, education, social status and age.

Comprehensive changes through a holistic approach need to take place, not only within the maritime sector

but also within societies, to create conditions conducive for women's meaningful participation in the sector. Governments and industry actors in Africa need to make substantial commitments to improve the current situation, and change established practices to make the maritime space more attractive to women.

The WPS agenda may offer a valuable contribution to the discussion on women's inclusion in the maritime sector, given the relative success of its implementation in the peace and security sector. Maritime, including maritime security, does not currently feature in the WPS agenda nor link to the WPS framework. This sea blindness on the part of the WPS framework is an oversight which affects gender-linked activities in the maritime space. Addressing the maritime gender gap is a positive investment towards the stability, security and prosperity of the maritime sector at large.

Safe seas mean safe borders. Prospering coastal communities leave less room for illicit networks to penetrate and prey on their vulnerabilities. The concept of

Blue Economy is gaining momentum and is a viable option for addressing unemployment and underdevelopment in Africa. Women's participation is central to the success of this approach. It is imperative to initiate women's participation within emerging maritime and security sectors to ensure they are on an equal footing with men. Increasing their role within the maritime sector could also have a positive impact on women outside the sector.

Ultimately, gender equality and women's inclusion are not just women's issues. Barriers to women's participation in any aspect limit the pool of available talent and narrow the scope of ideas, innovation and progress.

Gender diversity is associated with a dynamic, creative and productive work environment, that will stimulate growth within any sector of the economy, including the maritime sector. This will result in better economic and financial outcomes for the country and the maritime sector. It will also contribute to the successful implementation of the WPS agenda, attaining the SDGs and safeguarding women's rights.

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