

# Gender Diversity

**Towards Building and Maintaining  
a Diverse Shipboard Team**





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We would like to acknowledge Caitlin Vaughn - Project Manager of International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN), Natalie Shaw - Director Employment Affairs of the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and Karin Orsel - Vice Chair of the ICS, Board of Trustees member of the ISWAN and WISTA International Ambassador, for their inputs in preparing the booklet.

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The booklet would have not been possible but for the constant encouragement and support of Capt. K.N. Deboo, Director, Anglo-Eastern Maritime Training and his team. We would like to thank our AEMA colleagues for proof reading and correction of the text on a continuous basis.

Last but not the least, I would like to extend my gratitude to the seafarers who shared their experiences which have been then addressed in the booklet.

Captain Sureen Narang  
Principal,  
Anglo-Eastern Maritime Academy (AEMA)

# Foreword

Dear readers, dear ladies and gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure and honour to write a foreword in this diversity booklet, a topic that is of utmost importance to the maritime industry.

Our industry is diverse, dynamic, vibrant and innovative. We deal with the newest technologies, digitalization, new legislation and care for our environment. Our working environment (both for seafarers as well as for the people ashore) has become safer, healthier and more diverse than it has ever been before.

The importance of what is called the Human Element has been recognized by the industry leaders and legislators, resulting in ratification in 2013 of the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006. The MLC 2006 ratification is a basis for protecting our people but as an industry, we need to take the next step by educating both the next generation (trainees, ratings and Jr Officers) as well as the current seafarers (senior, junior officers and ratings). Education and training for instance on how to work in a diverse, multi-cultural work environment but also address a topic as bullying and harassment.

Our society is changing and so needs our industry, change starts with ourselves. We should treat our colleagues with respect and dignity, just like you want to be treated yourself. Respect needs to be earned, treating everybody equal and helping your colleagues out will increase the team productivity and shows true leadership.

I would like to compliment Anglo-Eastern Ship Management Limited (AESM), one of the biggest ship managers and maritime employers worldwide, for addressing and acting on a subject as diversity. A special thank you to Captain K.N. Deboo, director of

Anglo-Eastern Maritime Training Centre (AEMTC) and his team who started working on this booklet in 2016. A year in which no other ship management company recognized what needs to be done to create a better maritime future for our seafarers.

I would also like to thank the International Seafarers Welfare Assistance Network (ISWAN) team for everything they do around the globe to make the life of seafarers on board easier and for being there for the seafarers and their families when needed. Last but not least I would like to thank Mrs Sanjam Gupta, Women's International Shipping and Trading Association (WISTA) Executive Board member who shows true passion for our industry and everybody working in it.

Karin Orsel,

Vice Chair of the International Chamber of Shipping,

Board of Trustee member of the ISWAN and

WISTA International Ambassador



# Gender Diversity

## **Towards Building and Maintaining a Diverse Shipboard Team**

This booklet is a joint effort by Anglo-Eastern Ship Management Limited and the International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN) to encourage the reader to embrace the concept of diversity on board merchant ships and work collectively towards building a diverse and productive shipboard team.

The booklet throws light on social, cultural and interpersonal issues encountered by seafarers on board and the negative perceptions and attitudes that would obstruct team productivity. It is an interesting read for all seafarers and is written in a lucid conversational style. We hope that it will be made accessible to all seafarers onboard.

This is an endeavour to encourage seafarers not to turn a blind eye, but to make conscious efforts to be more sensitive to individual differences onboard and above all show respect both in thought and in action. We hope this booklet will help in developing sensitivity towards fellow seafarers.



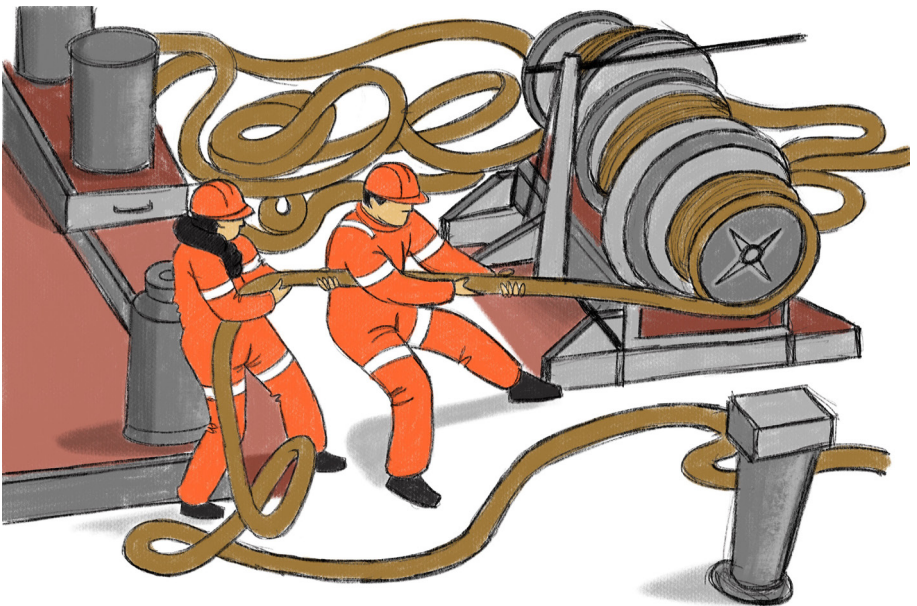
## Gender Diversity

Seafaring profession is largely male-dominated. Until two decades ago, women were mostly seen onboard either in the hospitality department on-board passenger and cruise ships or sailing as wives of senior officers.

The IMO report of 1992 stated that women accounted for only one to two percent of the 1.25 million seafarers in the world.

As such women represent an untapped resource for crewing the world fleet and addressing the current labor shortage. Indeed, IMO noted that women are an ‘under-utilized and underdeveloped resource which could provide part of the solution to the problem of crewing the future world merchant fleets’ (IMO, 1997:3).

This condition prevails even today, even after twenty five years!



**Diversity** is “the range of values, attitudes, cultural perspectives, beliefs, ethnic background, sexual orientation, skills, knowledge and life experiences of the individuals making up any given group of people” (European Commission, 1998, p.18).

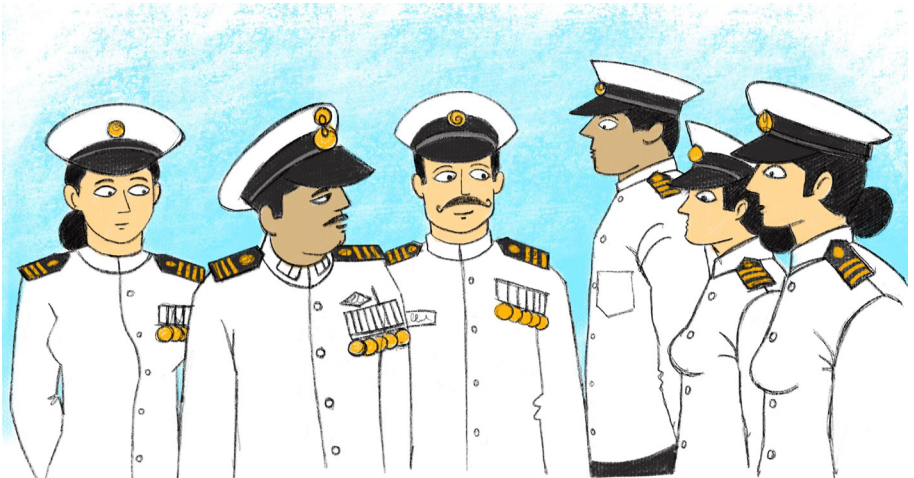


**Diversity** in the workplace refers to the differences between workers, such as sex/gender, race/ ethnicity, age, physical and mental ability, socio-economic class, language, religion, nationality, education, sexual orientation, family/marital status, HIV status, and so on.

**Gender diversity** in the workplace is the equal treatment and acceptance of both male and female employees in an organization. Diversity adds value to an organization due to the different viewpoints and backgrounds of diverse individuals.

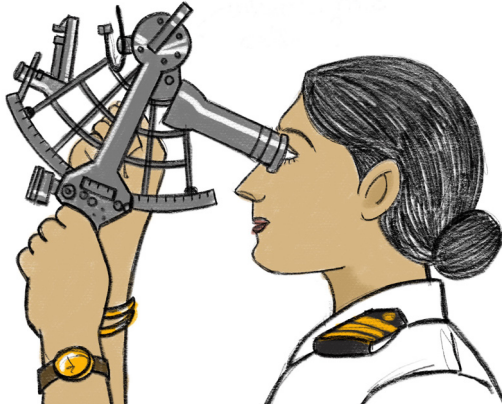
A diversity approach to the workforce is founded on the premise that harnessing these differences will create a productive environment in which everyone feels that they are valued and their talents and skills are being used optimally, and that this contributes to meeting the organization's goals.

A workforce that represents the diversity of a society in terms of gender and other attributes is more likely to understand and respond more effectively to the needs of its customer or client base in that society. Moreover, building and maintaining a diverse workforce can in itself embody the principles of equality and non-discrimination, helping to defuse prejudices and stereotypes and showing that a society free of discrimination is possible, effective and desirable.



## Why the term ‘Women Seafarers’

According to research conducted on Women seafarers in the EC: A Preliminary Report based on German and UK Case Studies (Zhao, M.,1998) The term ‘women seafarers’ is used to emphasize two issues:



**The first is the ‘sex’ of female seafarers.**

‘**Sex**’ refers to our biological and physical anatomy, for example, a person’s chromosomal or anatomical configurations.

**The second is the ‘gender’ of women seafarers.**

‘**Gender**’ should refer to differences in behaviour by sex. (Money and Ehrhardt, 1972).

Gender is “**acquired**” in the process of learning with the encouragement of parents, peers or teachers, and emphasizes the importance of these groups in determining social behaviour (Holdstock, 1998).

### **Gender Identity**

Gender Identity refers to a person’s innate, deeply felt sense of being male or female (sometimes even both or neither). While it is most common for a person’s gender identity to align with their biological sex, this is not always the case. A person’s gender identity can be different from their biological sex.



**Sexual Identity** refers to sexual orientation, for example, heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual and lesbian (Stacey, 1993).

### **Gender Sensitization**

- Refers to the modification of behaviour by raising awareness of gender equality concerns.
- Is about changing behaviour and instilling empathy into the views that we hold about our own and the other gender.
- Helps people in examining their personal attitudes and beliefs and questioning the 'realities' they thought they know.



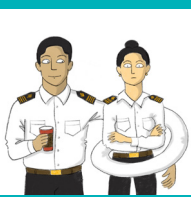
# Major Challenges

## Social Issues




Discrimination

An illustration showing a group of five people on a ship's deck. One person in a grey uniform is being excluded from a group of four people in orange uniforms who are gathered around a fire hose. The background is a simple landscape with a blue sky and green ground.



Sexual Harassment

An illustration showing two people in white uniforms on a ship's deck. One person is holding a glass and the other is holding a lifebuoy. The background is a simple landscape with a blue sky and green ground.



Isolation

An illustration showing a group of people on a ship's deck. One person in a grey uniform is standing apart from a group of three people in orange uniforms. The background is a simple landscape with a blue sky and green ground.



Attitude

An illustration showing a group of people on a ship's deck. One person in a grey uniform is standing apart from a group of four people in orange uniforms. The background is a simple landscape with a blue sky and green ground.

## Discrimination

Two patterns of shipboard discrimination can be identified:

- **Direct / Open discrimination:**

Direct / Open discrimination: the act of treating someone less favourably because of certain attributes they have or are perceived to have.

e.g., denying a woman certain shipboard duties because of assumptions about her physical capabilities.

- **Indirect / Hidden discrimination:**

Indirect / Hidden discrimination: occurs when an organization's practices, policies or procedures disadvantage people who share certain protected characteristics (e.g. age, sex, disability, sexual orientation).

e.g., having an unwritten rule that says certain jobs within a company are only to be ever done by a particular ethnic group.

## Discrimination at work can come in various forms;

- **Harassment** – constantly picking on one particular member of the group.
- **Sexual harassment** – making unwanted advances of a sexual nature towards a particular person.
- **Bullying** – regularly joking about, shouting at or demeaning a particular employee.
- **Stereotyping** – pigeon-holing particular minority groups.
- **Insensitivity** – dismissing the concerns of persons who feel they are victims.

*A female cadet is not given the task of climbing up on the crane for inspection and maintenance since the job involves strength and stamina.*

*Female cadets are asked to clean the navigating bridge, whilst the men will be cleaning the cargo holds after discharging a dirty cargo.*

*The job of overhauling a heavy valve is not assigned to the 4/E (woman seafarer) due to the false assumption that she is weak and incapable of doing heavy work.*

*“During my initial days on board, they gave me a heavy sledge hammer to use, which was really getting on my back. They deliberately gave me jobs where they expected that it would be very hard for me and that I would fail”*



## Sexual Harassment and Bullying

According to the European Directive, harassment is a form of discrimination when an unwanted conduct takes place, which has the purpose of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Sexual harassment means unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, or other conduct based on sex, affecting the dignity of women and men at work (EIRR 287, December 1997:13).

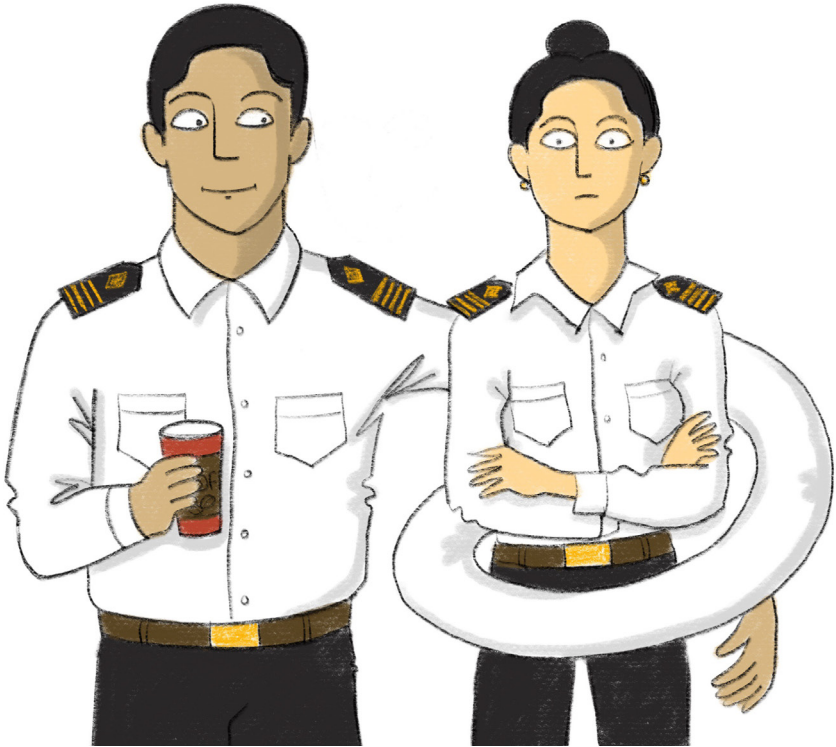
### Examples of harassment

The following are examples of harassment, as mentioned by ICS / ITWF:

- Displaying or circulating offensive or suggestive material
- Innuendo, mockery, lewd or sexist / racist / homophobic jokes or remarks
- Use of offensive language in describing or making fun of someone with a disability
- Comments about a person's physical appearance or character which cause embarrassment or distress
- Unwelcome attention such as spying, stalking, pestering, overly familiar behavior or unwelcome verbal or physical attention
- Making or sending unwanted, sexually suggestive, hostile or personally intrusive telephone calls, text messages, emails, comments on social networks, faxes or letters
- Unwarranted, intrusive or persistent questioning about a person's age, marital status, personal life, sexual interests or orientation, or similar questions about a person's racial or ethnic origin, including their culture or religion
- Unwelcome sexual advances or repeated requests for dates or threats
- Suggestions that sexual favors may further a person's career, or that not offering them may adversely affect their career
- Leering, rude gestures, touching, grabbing, patting or other unnecessary bodily contact such as brushing up against others
- Spreading malicious rumors, or insulting someone (particularly regarding age, race, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and gender re-assignment)

## Action to be taken

- In case of sexual harassment, the seafarer can inform the Master or Chief Engineer or if necessary a helpline for support and advice.
- Should this not be possible, a second person to be identified to whom a concern can be raised.
- The abusers may be the Master or chief and there has to be an independent person who can be approached. This person might be the company personnel officer.



# Bullying

Bullying is defined as direct or indirect verbal comments, actions, behavior, or tactics such as verbal abuse or psychological manipulations that are used to harm an individual or an attempt to harm an individual.

Bullying is a distinctive pattern of harming and humiliating others, specifically those who are in some way smaller, weaker, and younger or in any way more vulnerable than the bully. It is a deliberate and repeated attempt to cause harm to others of lesser power.

## Examples of bullying

As per ICS / ITWF, the following may be found to be examples of bullying:

- Verbal or physical threats or abuse, such as shouting or swearing at colleagues, either in public or in private, including derogatory or stereotyped statements or remarks
- Personal insults
- Be-littling or ridiculing a person, or his / her abilities, either in private or in front of others
- Sudden rages or displays of temper against an individual or group, often for trivial reasons
- Subjecting someone to unnecessary excessive or oppressive supervision, monitoring everything they do or being excessively critical of minor things
- Persistent or unjustified criticism
- Making unreasonable demands of staff or colleagues
- Setting menial or demeaning tasks that are inappropriate to the job or taking away areas of responsibility from an individual for no justifiable reason
- Ignoring or excluding an individual from social events, team meetings, discussions and collective decisions or planning
- Making threats or inappropriate comments about career prospects, job security or performance appraisal reports
- Spreading malicious rumors, or insulting someone (particularly regarding age, race, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and gender re-assignment).
- Shunning people at work and rebuffing their efforts to integrate with others if they are believed to 'not fit in'



- Cyber bullying including inappropriate:
  - suggestive and unwanted remarks
  - graphics or threat-centered, abusive e-mails
  - postings on social networks
  - text messages.

There are sometimes situations when excuses are made to, which may involve a **'hidden'** agenda.

- Strong or robust management styles
- A working relationship that is described as a 'personality clash'
- Someone being described as 'over-sensitive' or 'unable to take a joke'
- Describing someone as having an 'attitude problem'
- A manager who 'has a low tolerance for non-safety critical mistakes which are made unintentionally
- Making fun of someone who has made a minor mistake at work.



Using foul language, abusive and swear words is not professional at all. Whilst it may have been acceptable in the past, it is demeaning and unacceptable in today's world. You can be firm without being abusive!

## Isolation

Social Interaction is a need of human being. On board, social interaction is limited and leads to boredom. A woman has to face an issue of loneliness due to her being alone amongst a large number of male crew. Isolation faced by women seafarers may be different in many aspects and more serious than the situation experienced by male colleagues. It leads to alienation and a clear distrust of their male colleagues.

However there can be occasions where male crew members are equally inappropriately treated by their female colleagues.

Isolation leads to depression when one is the only female crew member on board and there is no one else to confide in one's problems.

*A cadet is not allowed to go and sit in the lounge, is not made a part of social exchanges and is kept busy beyond his work hours because he / she is not of the same nationality as the other officers....*

*Men can drink together, talk to each other or even fight with each other. Whereas a women needs to maintain decorum or else she may be termed 'loose'.*



It is fundamental to extend respect for others, irrespective of gender, race, culture, religion or nationality. Excluding colleagues because of certain attributes is a form of discrimination and can exacerbate feelings of isolation.

## Attitude

The attitude and behavior of male seafarers can have a significant impact on the morale of their women colleagues.



## Challenges & Recommendations

### Cabins

Cabins should have a means of securing from inside for security when sleeping. It is important to adhere to a proper protocol respecting individual privacy. A tag 'Do Not Disturb' could be used.



## Sanitary Bins

- Provision to be made for disposal of sanitary napkins.
- Special sanitary bins to be provided for the disposal of sanitary products.
- A private and hygienic disposal method on board all vessels could greatly help to alleviate the unnecessary anxiety and humiliation felt by many women seafarers during menstruation.



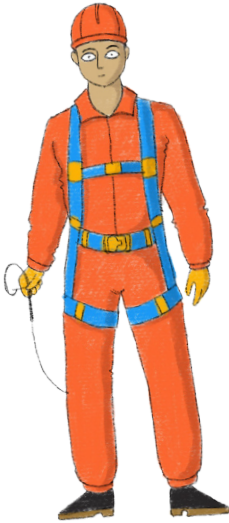
## Shoes, Boiler Suits, Raincoats and Parkas

Boiler suits, lifejackets, shoes, gloves, raincoats, parkas – Sizes for women should be made available as loose fitting clothing / safety gear pose a danger to the seafarer.



## Safety Harness

Harness to be of a size that fits comfortably on women, taking into account dimensional and physical differences.



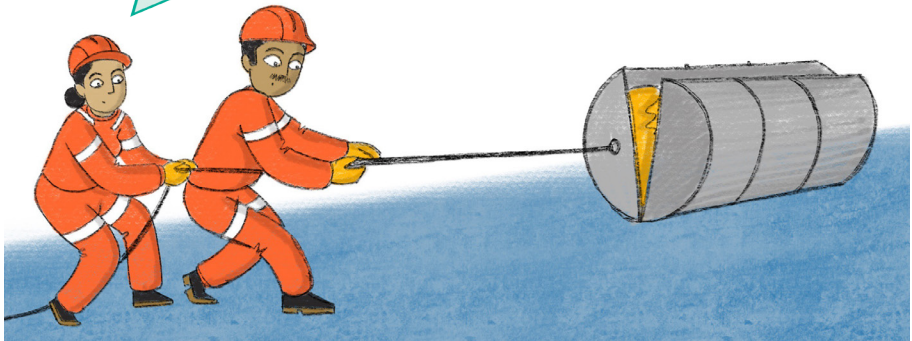
“Harnesses are generally designed around the needs of men. The gender of persons working at a height where there is a requirement for wearing fall protection device is predominantly male.”

For example, where the harness design incorporates shoulder strap, waist belt and leg loops that fasten around the thighs, the design has to allow for physical differences for both the sexes.

## Heavy Work and Physical Capability

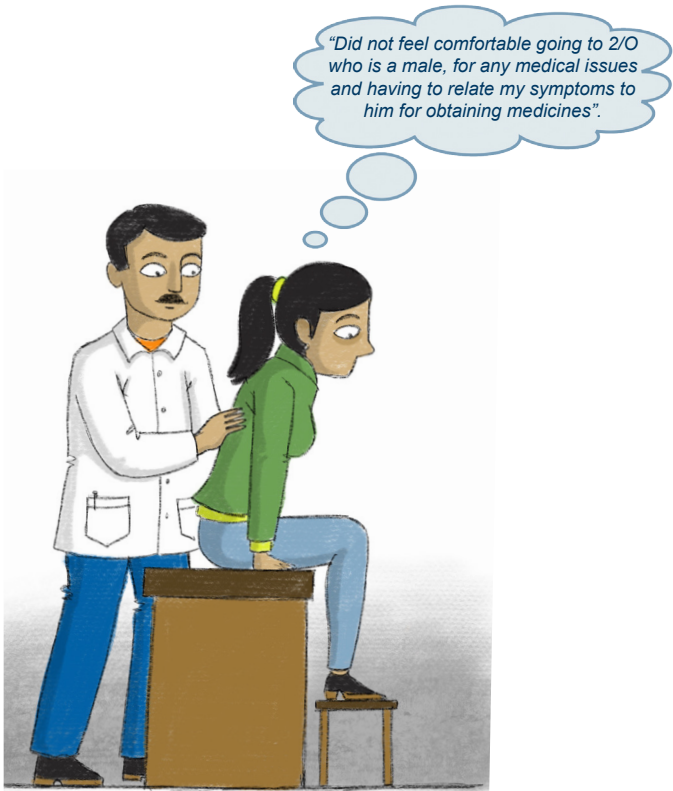
Focus on manual handling training is critical. Men and women needs to work together in team during heavy work. Special equipment may be necessary and assistance beneficial.

*“Whenever any heavy load beyond my capacity was to be lifted, I used the proper equipment or asked for assistance”.*



## Illness / Injury / Medical Treatment

- Feminine hygiene products should be kept on board in bonded stores.
- Women should be able to access medical supplies when needed without having to consult a male colleague (e.g. Menstrual medicines - Pain killers).
- Medical supplies should cover the needs of the entire crew.





Helpline/Welfare Dept.: +91 22 6112 4301, +91 96194 95166  
[www.angloeastern.com](http://www.angloeastern.com)



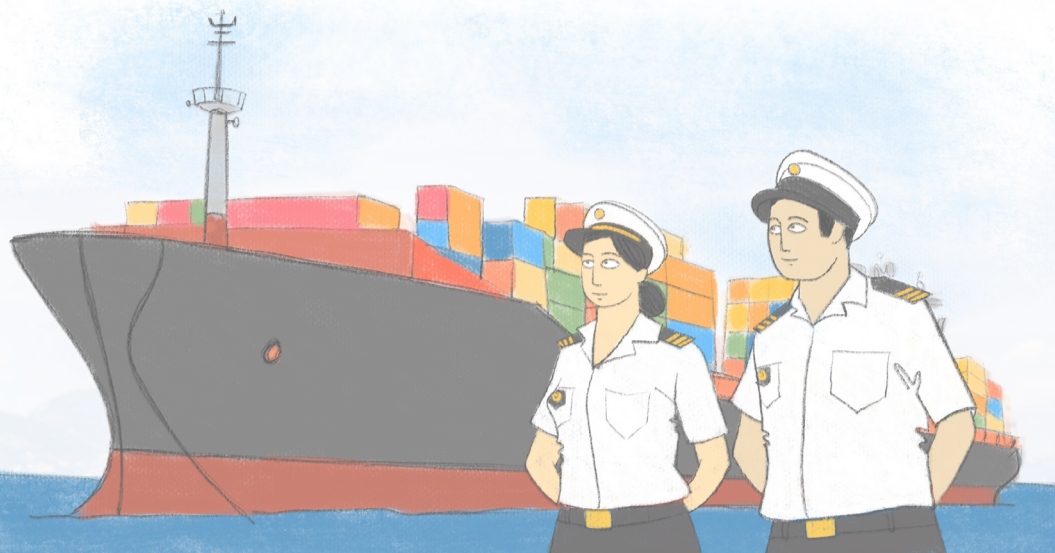
ISWAN: Helpline no: direct dial +44 20 7323 2737  
[www.seafarerswelfare.org](http://www.seafarerswelfare.org)



**SeafarerHelp**  
*The lifeline for seafarers*

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