



GULF OF GUINEA MARITIME INSTITUTE

**GoGMI - International Maritime Security
Working Group Virtual Series Report**

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN GHANA'S MARINE SECTOR

Date: 27th November, 2020

GoGMI-IMSWG ONLINE SERIES

REPORT ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN GHANA'S MARINE SECTOR

27th November, 2020

Introduction

Marine spaces are being recognized widely for their potential contribution to inclusive and sustainable development. A better understanding of the diverse opportunities stemming from investing in Ghana's marine spaces can lead to full exploitation and proper management of our "blue" resources to foster sustainable development and wealth creation. Women have an unparalleled opportunity to drive the industrialisation of Ghana's marine estate in the "blue economy" paradigm. In various blue economy sectors, women are directly and heavily involved.

Although there is increasing diversity in the economic activities of the various blue economy sectors, there remains a susceptibility to exclude and marginalize women. Many factors undermine the empowerment of women in the blue economy: in some cases, women lack equal access to maritime education and training through formal and informal processes that deny them access to specific courses, such as navigation and particularly marine engineering; in other areas, such as the fishing industry, women play an important role in the value chain, but are often marginalized in sharing or benefiting from the gains.

Over the years, traditional notions have created several barriers for women in playing active career roles in various industries, including marine. Today, these barriers continue to limit opportunities for women across various sectors. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 represents the international community's commitment to overturn these barriers. Globally, out of about 1.2 million seafarers, the International Transport Workers' Federation estimates that only 2% of the world's maritime workforce is made up of women. This assertion therefore informs the mobilization of key stakeholders and institutions to provide structures and develop programs and guidelines that will encourage more women participation in the maritime sector.

Achieving the full benefits of a blue economy will be greatly enhanced by empowering women to allow them to participate fully in and contribute to their own development and success. Gender mainstreaming in the blue economy trajectory will support better policy-making for gender equality, which is Goal 5 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Target 5.5 – "Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decisionmaking in political, economic and public life", and Target 5.C – "Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels", are noticeable amongst the list of targets set by the UNSDG 5 to foster gender mainstreaming in the marine domain narrative.

The online forum was thus organized to discuss issues bordering around the diverse roles women play in the major sectors of Ghana's blue economy; the extent to which the targets of UNSDG 5 are being addressed to enhance gender mainstreaming in Ghana's marine sector; the existing and emerging opportunities for women in Ghana's marine sector and the strategic solutions to address existing and potential challenges in mainstreaming gender in the marine sector.

Overview of Women Participation in Ghana's Marine Sector

Majority of women in Ghana's marine sector are found in the fisheries sector, specializing in fish trade and processing, and a few others venturing into modern maritime occupations, usually perceived to be 'masculine' fields. Ghana's fisheries sector is characterized by women assuming active roles in the whole fish value chain, including financial investment, fish processes and trade. However, traditionally, men have been known to control the resources. Women, popularly known as "fishmothers", provide funds to fishermen for the purchase of outboard motors and discharge fees before fish stock is distributed for sale. These women then again depend on the revenue gained from fishing activities for the livelihoods of their families, including the men. Amidst these financial commitments made by the fish-mothers, there is still the taboo against women engaging in actual fishing activities. Society has constantly been a setback for women, defining the particular roles a woman should play, and this has consequently deferred most women from participating in active roles in certain areas. In a typical fishery setting, a defined woman's role would be fish processing and trade, in addition to taking care of the family.

Generally, few women are involved in modern maritime occupations such as captains of vessels or engineers. At the highest level of decision making in Ghana's marine sector, a good number of women can be found in active roles. Nevertheless, continuous awareness about existing and emerging opportunities the sector offers for women is lacking. Some opinions suggest the low interest of women in maritime stems from the cultural beliefs of women and seafaring. Men generally can go to sea and stay for longer periods but for women—especially for those with families—staying longer at sea can become a societal and marital problem. This has largely affected how women approach maritime jobs in Ghana. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has recognised some of these challenges across various countries and thus, instituted some measures and efforts to address them, encouraging more women to take up jobs in the maritime world. The promotion of use of various technology on board vessel is helping women seafarers stay connected with their families.

Opportunities for Women in Ghana's Marine Sector

The recent Ghana – Côte d'Ivoire maritime border dispute resolution process was led by a woman, demonstrating both the active role women can play at the highest level and the opportunities available for women in the maritime sector. Numerous opportunities existing both onshore and offshore, including Port operations, Navigation, Tourism, Engineering, Fisheries and Freightforwarding, are areas women could build their capacities in and contribute tremendously to, as their male

counterparts do. Award winning journalist in Ghana for the year 2020, reported on Ghana's abandoned shipyard in Tema, highlighting the need to revamp operations to create job opportunities for both males and females in the industry.

The National Fish Processors and Traders Association (NAFPTA) constitute a membership organization of fish processors and traders operating small and medium scale fisheries businesses in Ghana, established to provide a common platform for networking, exchanging ideas and experiences, training and capacity building for its members.

To improve working conditions and enhance value chain creation in Ghana's fisheries, the Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) has greatly supported the NFPTA with various resources including finance and technical assistance towards Ghana's fisheries development and objectives. The Ahotor oven has been introduced to fish processors to aid in the production of healthier fish in a safer way. The World Bank program for women in fish processing in Ghana has also supported these women by licensing their fish stock, giving them the opportunity to export their fish products to other countries for revenue. Further opportunities for developing fisheries businesses exist in the areas of fish storage, handling and trade.

Fostering Increased Participation of Women in the Marine Sector – Exploring the Potential

Significant strides have been made in recent years to incorporate more women in the marine sector to promote gender equality. For instance, some measures have been put in place to attract more female participation in various marine related courses offered at the tertiary level of education in Ghana. With the requisite skills and training, women have been employed in important maritime organizations in the country, including the Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority, the Ghana Maritime Authority, the Ghana Shippers Authority, Oil and Gas exploration and exploitation institutions, amongst others.

In spite of these recognizable improvements, there is much to be desired in bridging the gap between men and women in Ghana's marine field. Compared to their male counterparts in the sector, fewer number of women are found in high-level decision-making positions. In the fisheries sector where an impressive number of women operate, very few of these women are educated and skilled to apply modern technologies and innovation to address the challenges they face in their line of work.

In the area of advocacy, Ghana hasn't made significant strides when it comes to education and orientation of women and young people on available maritime careers and business opportunities. A huge gap exists in communication on maritime opportunities for women in Ghana. Education and reorientation of women and the society at large need to be a reiterative process, so that barriers and stereotyping of women in marine fields can be broken for more women to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the sector.

On maritime media coverage, the propagation of maritime news is generally low. Most media houses do not have segments for curated maritime news content, thereby, making the industry a shadow one.

The Ghana Maritime Awards Event is one initiative that seeks to recognise and promote people working in the industry. It also serves as an advocacy platform to make more people, especially women, aware of the opportunities and happenings in the maritime sector.

A good number of women in maritime organizations have started some awareness programs including; Women in Shipping and Trade Association (WISTA), Women in Maritime in West and Central Africa (WIMOWCA) and Women in Maritime Association (WIMA). These organizations are working together to project the opportunities for women in the industry. One of WIMOWCA's agenda is to create awareness for young people in second-cycle institutions and develop the interest to build careers in the maritime sector. The association also has training opportunities for people already in the industry who wish to develop the careers further. But of course, more mentorship programs should be curated to further these causes. Both WISTA and WIMOWCA have scholarship packages for women who want to pursue maritime programs at the Regional Maritime University in Accra, Ghana. However, there is still more room for progress.

Recommendations

For Ghana to confidently boast of achieving full participation of women in its marine sector, a number of challenges need to be addressed. Awareness creation on the opportunities available in the marine sector and the tremendous roles women play in harnessing the full potential of the sector for sustainable development was identified as the key tool for ensuring equal participation of both males and females in the marine sector. In addition, education and orientation of society to support women who take up roles traditionally thought of as 'masculine' roles in the sector was proposed as important activities to champion the course of gender mainstreaming in the marine sector. Specifically, the following recommendations were enumerated by stakeholders as the actions to take to enhance gender mainstreaming in Ghana's marine sector:

1. Special training programs should be instituted for women to pursue maritime jobs.
2. Development of more maritime advocacy programs to inform policy makers and duty bearers on maritime development in Ghana.
3. Creation of more awareness programs to encourage women to enter the marine space, highlighting the opportunities it offers and also change the notion that the industry is a maledominated one.
4. Development of mentorship and orientation programs for young women, to expose them to women who have excelled in the sector, as a means of encouraging, informing and transforming their minds with regards to the importance of women participation in maritime and the consequential economic and social benefits.
5. Introduction of fisheries and other marine-related subjects at the primary school level in coastal communities, instituted by the Ministry of Education with support from the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and other related organizations.

6. Provision of more Government scholarships for training people (particularly women) in the maritime sector.

Compiled by
Lawrence Dogli
Programmes Manager
Gulf of Guinea Maritime Institute

Edited by
Dr. Alberta Ama Sagoe
Director
Gulf of Guinea Maritime Institute