

Empowering Women In Maritime Sector of Developing Countries in South Asia – Gender Aspects

by

Amber Javed

Fellow of M Phil (Sociology), University of Sargodha
Email: alirazajaved91@gmail.com

Abstract

Women's empowerment in maritime sector, especially in developing countries of South Asia like Pakistan, India and Bangladesh etc. is subject to numerous factors that include their geographical locations, their education level, their social status, and their age group. Developing countries need to focus on empowering of women in maritime professions and ultimately in maritime community. This paper analyses how together, men and women, can contribute valuable things to the maritime sector and ultimately to the country's economy and how various organizations can make women empowered in this sector. The paper also recommends valuable steps that can be taken by the government, media and even individual women to ensure women empowerment in maritime sector.

Key Words: Empowering women, Women in maritime, Developing countries, South Asia, Asia

Introduction:

Women's empowerment in maritime sector, especially in developing countries like Pakistan, India and Bangladesh etc. is subject to numerous factors that include their geographical locations, their education level, their social status, and their age group. Developing countries women have always been helping to improve financial stability of their families but regrettably their contribution is, in most of the cases, undervalued. Empowering women in these countries generally and in maritime sector specifically from social, economic, educational, political and legal point of view has always been a very difficult goal to achieve for the governments, for organizations and for the individuals themselves. Naturally, there exists a tendency in most of the men of these countries that they protect their women like all male species do (Dolumbia-Henry, 2019).

On the other hand, this is also a fact that males have developed an over-protectiveness with the passage of time resulting in gender imbalance and inequality. In present time, a lady does not any longer wants to be the " little homemaker" while the husband "brings home the flesh." Maritime sector in developing countries is no exception to this fact and is generally considered male dominated because men started and established it. There is a reason that females are encouraged into this sector and the perspective that maritime is only for men, is changed.

Women's empowerment in maritime sector:

Women's empowerment in maritime sector is a complex process. It has multiple dimensions which are not only economic and social but country's culture and politics also matter. For women empowerment in maritime, there are three important areas which need to be changed;

- a. women's right to choose how they want to pursue their livelihoods
- b. making maximum opportunities available for them,

c. and giving them space to voice themselves.

This would utilize their full potential as they will equally participate and excel in maritime sector - in traditional or non-traditional way. Social awareness is needed, at family and community levels, that there is nothing wrong for men to share household workload and women to participate in markets.

Developing countries need to focus on empowering of women in maritime professions and ultimately in maritime community (Nasir, 2012). This as a goal must be one of the strategic goals of a country and lifelong learning opportunities should be ensured for women. Further, gender equality should be sought to ultimately empower women, keeping opportunities for them to work decently and contribute in economic growth. In this regard the following points matter:

a. Women Education in Maritime:

Opportunities to women's education that support various maritime industries broadly fall into two categories – vocational/technical training, required to enable women in specific practical or relevant on-the-job training/skills. The other is general education, mostly through a degree program, creating a generalist approach, develops analytical and critical thinking about status quo and about leadership for maritime sector development (Asghar, 2018).

To achieve the goal of empowerment, these elements are of utmost importance and government's contribution is essential for the latter realm where it enables maritime leaders through post-graduate education to create tangible impact in affairs related to maritime. A sensible recruitment strategy may result in the proportion of women rising to better annual intake in degrees like MSc in International Transport and Logistics (ITL), Maritime Affairs, Education & Training; Energy Management; Law & Policy; Safety & Environmental Administration; Ocean Sustainability, Governance and Management; Port, Shipping & Logistics, Maritime Safety and Environmental Management or other degrees which may enable women to contribute their participation in maritime sector (Aggrey, 2000).

Various government sector universities of developing countries may be tasked to introduced these degree programs where enrolment opportunities for women may be created. Moreover distant learning programs may be introduced to facilitate women who otherwise cannot join academic program in universities for a quality and cost-effective education. Private sector universities and colleges can also play a vital role in this regard.

b. Role-playing institutions to bring a change:

Empowering women means to bring a drastic change in maritime community and enable women to advance. Governments, industry, academia and civil society all have a role to play to bring this drastic change and to move from promise to action, from lofty goals to concrete outcomes in an incredible way and ensure effective implementation. Opportunities can be created for women to work as seafarers including those who can work on board ships in service section, for example, hotel and catering.

c. Fixed representation of women:

Women representation should be fixed, say between minimum 3 to a maximum 30 percent, in maritime sector. Presently, the biggest hinderance to achieve gender equality in the maritime sector in developing countries is the perception by public in general that women are not meant to work on board ships due to the very nature of seafaring.

d. Gender equality in maritime:

Developing countries, as a matter of fact, need rapid progress to pursue gender equality in maritime sector. Women will be motivated towards maritime sector opportunities in their broadest perspectives. McKinsey Global Institute, about women participation in maritime sector states that according to an estimation, participation of women in “full-potential” scenario, i.e. if women participate at the same level as men, towards economy they would add up to \$28 trillion, that makes up to 26% of annual global GDP by 2025 compared with what the global DGP is today. This however is possible only if priority is given in use of resources to promote career opportunities and improved working and living conditions for women seafarers can be identified. This includes health and wellbeing at working places. There is still much to be done for women in maritime, especially in shipping (ILO, 2019)

e. Policy making:

For empowering women in the maritime community, the community members, traditional stakeholders, prominent speakers, government reps, industry persons related to maritime, port, ocean and fishing, international organizations, research departments and institutions, NGOs, communities, and media should be brought together to assess and highlight the current situation and opportunities for women in maritime sectors and industries in developing countries. All these should make concrete recommendations for required actions. The outcomes may be compiled and decision-making at the highest levels may be informed for policy and decision making.

f. Social and climatic environment for women:

Women in most of the developing countries of South Asia suffer from certain social threats. Lack of encouragement by families and society, as well as the fear of bullying and sexual harassment, have been identified as the key factors impeding the stimulus for women to select a maritime career or any other career which is apparently considered male dominating. For example, weather events at sea that are extreme in nature, such as floods, rising of sea levels, scarcity threats of household water and food, have impacts on women and men differently. Moreover in these countries, both sexes have different capabilities, opportunities and access to those resources which facilitate their adaptation toward climate change, such as food, fuel and water. The events which are related to changing climate also place immense burden, specifically on women in respect of their care and social reproduction work. Pregnant women are peculiarly affected because of being more vulnerable to vector and water-borne diseases and death such as due to malaria than the general population. Women as a group when compared to men as a group, do not have much stronger chances to recover. They die more due to

intensive droughts, floods and hurricanes. In SA, climate change affects females in another way. It places on them the greater risks of damage in form of bodily injury, rape or harassment when they are out of their secure homes in search of drinking water, fuel and food (Khattak, 2018).

Moreover, there is a clear evidence that women in fishing industry are treated less better than men coworkers and paid unequally. Substantial segregation of work by gender is also there as men perform much of the offshore and high-value fishing, harvesting and aquaculture. On the other hand, women have opportunities to do low, unpaid, low-skilled and seasonal jobs like fish processing or harvesting, sales and maintenance of fish species that are less valuable. Women work mostly without health, safety and labor rights protections. For women already in maritime sector, these problems need to be addressed by higher authorities (Walsh, 1998).

Conclusion:

Almost all developing countries of SA are well-capable and equipped of promoting gender equality in this sector. Governments needs to encourage women to opt for ocean and maritime careers – whether it is on board ship or ashore. The maritime and ocean industries can offer women with career in various sectors, such as working as insurers, ship brokers and integrated shipping services providers, economics and finance professionals related to maritime, such as banking, providers of intelligence for global shipping and trade, members of classification societies, workers in recruitment and placement agencies, medical doctors or health specialists of maritime, shipbuilding & recycling, ports and logistics, coastal and spatial planning, marine scientists and women fishers – and so on. SA’s focus empowering women in maritime sector will definitely open tremendous opportunities for them, with many of them leading the way.

SA should aim at being maritime center of excellence in education and training at higher levels and recognize that empowering women is the key to empowering maritime sector. This will close existing skills gaps, enhance revenue and ensure that maritime as a sector remains sustainable for next generations. If men and women both put efforts and work together, sky is the limit. Women of today are so capable of making a changed future. Women have various responsibilities at work and with family but they must not be scared to make a difference because without a change, the next generation of women will have to pay the price of being stagnant and suffer because of same challenges. To focus on future, all those who blazed the trails for women of present must be acknowledged by doing the same task for the next generations. Together, men and women, can contribute valuable things to the maritime sector and ultimately to the country’s economy.

Bibliography and References:

- “Empowering women in maritime community” the theme of World Maritime Day 2019. Retrieved Sep 19, 2019 from <https://safety4sea.com/the-role-of-women-in-shipping-continues-to-grow/>.
- Achieving Gender Equality Through Empowering Women in the Maritime Community.* (2019). World Maritime University. 8 April 2019 available at <https://www.wmu.se/news/achieving-gender-equality-through-empowering-women-maritime-community>

- Aggrey, H. A. (2000). *Women in the Maritime Industry: A review of female participation, and their role in Maritime Education and Training (MET) in the 21st Century*. Maritime Education And Training. World Maritime University, Mamlo, Sweden.
- Asghar, A. (2018). Empowering women still a challenge in Pakistan. *The Weekly Economist*, Pakistan.
- Boosting diversity in the maritime industry. (2019). *UK Government*. 28 January 2019 available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/boosting-diversity-in-the-maritime-industry>
- Day of the Seafarer 2019. (2019). *World Maritime University*. 25 June 2019 available at <https://www.wmu.se/news/day-seafarer-2019>
- Doumbia-Henry, C. (2019). *Empowering Women in the Maritime Community Feature*. World maritime University website.
- Empowering Women in the Maritime Community*. (2019). *Sea News*. 13 August 2019 available at <https://seanews.co.uk/features/empowering-women-in-the-maritime-community/>
- Female learners 'dive in' to maritime working world*. (2019). *My Port Elizabeth (South Africa)*. 3 August 2019 available at <http://myportelizabeth.co.za/female-learners-dive-in-to-maritime-working-world/60645>
- Fisherwomen Seek Their Rights*. (2008). The Nation newspaper, September 2, 2008. available at: <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Karachi/02-Sep-2008/Fisherwomen-seek-their-rights>
- Gender gap in maritime sector 'serious.'* (2019). *Manila Times*. 13 March 2019 available at <https://www.manilatimes.net/gender-gap-in-maritime-sector-serious/524661/>
- ILO meeting agrees measures to attract and retain seafarers and to promote opportunities for women seafarers*. (2019). International Labor Organization. 11 March 2019 available at https://www.ilo.org/sector/news/WCMS_675948/lang--en/index.htm
- Khattak, T. M. (2018). Harnessing Pakistan's maritime opportunities. *Daily Times*. Pakistan.
- Moving from empowerment to action*. (2019). *Dhaka Tribune (Bangladesh)*. 25 June 2019 available at <http://dhakatribune.com/opinion/op-ed/2019/06/25/moving-from-empowerment-to-action>
- Nasir, S. (2012). Women empowerment. *Pakistan Today*. Retrieved September 18, 2019 from <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2012/03/07/women-empowerment-3/>
- Our women welcome World Day Theme*. (2019). *Fiji Sun Online*. 16 January 2019 available at <https://fijisun.com.fj/2019/01/16/our-women-welcome-world-day-theme/>
- Sailing solo in an industry dominated by men*. (2019). *Straits Times*. 25 June 2019 available at <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/sailing-solo-in-an-industry-dominated-by-men>
- Walsh, Martha (1998). "Women in Food Aid Interventions: Impacts and Issues." Time for Change: Food Aid and Development Consultation, 23–24 October 1998. Rome: World Food Program (WFP).
- Women encouraged to dive-in to the maritime sector*. (2019). *My Cape Town (South Africa)*. 8 August 2019 available at <http://mycapetown.co.za/women-encouraged-to-dive-in-to-the-maritime-sector/>
- Women in maritime: We need all hands-on deck*. (2019). *DCN - Daily Cargo News (Australia)*. 13 August 2019 available at <https://www.thedcn.com.au/women-in-maritime-we-need-all-hands-on-deck/>
- Women in the Global Maritime Industry*. (2019). *Modern Diplomacy*. 27 August 2019 available at <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2019/08/27/women-in-the-global-maritime-industry/>