

Border Management Branch



GENDER NETWORK
NEWSLETTER

Women's Empowerment and Maritime Law Enforcement: Drawing a Map for Change

It is no secret that the field of maritime law enforcement has been traditionally overrepresented by men. This is due to social, economic and political factors, but also perceptions and expectations of men and women in society. Nonetheless, the intersection of women's empowerment and maritime law enforcement has consolidated as a crucial aspect of modernizing and diversifying the sector, fostering equality in line with international commitments made through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and ensuring safer and more sustainable seas by incorporating contributions and insights by women in the field.

One of the key drivers behind this advancement is the recognition of the unique perspectives and skills that women bring to the field, including related to communication, problem-solving, and empathy .



Women have proven to be adept in these areas, not only in the field of maritime law enforcement but in the entire criminal justice system as a whole, substantially helping to build stronger law enforcement agencies. When women are actively involved in law enforcement at sea, it fosters collaboration among diverse teams, promotes balanced and inclusive work environments, which results in more integral, unconventional and innovative approaches to tackling threats to maritime security, including piracy, human trafficking, and drug trafficking, among others.

However, empowering women should not be based on the perceived or actual contributions in the field of maritime law enforcement. Women's empowerment should be grounded on the principles of equality, fairness, and the fundamental human right to pursue any career or role they desire, irrespective of gender.

Maritime law enforcement agencies must embed gender equality into their policies, practices, and organizational culture to ensure a truly inclusive and equitable environment for all personnel. It is essential for governments, organizations, and society as a whole to continue supporting and promoting women's participation in this critical field to create a more inclusive and secure maritime environment for all.

In August 2023, the Global Maritime Crime Programme in cooperation with the Sri Lanka Navy convened the first Inshore Patrol Handling Craft. As the first course of its kind designed to empower women maritime law enforcement officers by equipping them with command and control skillsets, the participants shared their experiences with us.

"Completing this course can increase job opportunities for female officers, lead to higher job satisfaction and a better work performance."

Nur Zahidah binti
Zainuddin
Sub-Lieutenant
Malaysia Maritime
Enforcement Agency

"As a policewoman who serves onboard marine police craft, I find the knowledge shared by Sri Lanka Navy very important as there are differences between marine knowledge of merchant vessel and the Navy's knowledge of other vessels, such as military ships. Joining this training has improved my knowledge and I could apply it onboard my patrol vessel."

Mayank Ada Madaun
First Lieutenant
Indonesia Marine Police



Crimes that
Affect the
Environment

8th Women in Maritime Law Enforcement (WinMLE) Forum Sheds Light on Gender Equality



Women maritime law enforcement officers across Southeast Asia gather at the 8th WinMLE Forum in Medan, Indonesia in July 2023

Aimed towards empowering women officers with skillsets and access to roles that are traditionally male-dominated, the 8th Women in Maritime Law Enforcement (WinMLE) Forum was convened in Jakarta, Indonesia from 12 - 13 July 2023. Opened by the Head of the Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP) Siri Bjune and the OIC Country Manager of Indonesia Zoelda Anderton, the Forum gathered over 30 women and men officers from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, and Viet Nam. Participants explored the structural and normative barriers preventing greater representation and advancement of women in senior decision-making and operational roles. Two studies conducted in Indonesia were also presented; primarily on standard operating procedures surrounding the role of women onboard vessels and a pathway assessment of opportunities for women in maritime domain awareness. These findings were complemented with perspectives on policy and practice of gender equality within the respective countries. Participants were also exposed to an exclusive observation of the Indonesia Maritime Information Centre (IMIC) in BAKAMLA witnessing first-hand the role of women in collecting, analysing and disseminating maritime information across national agencies. The Forum ended with a breakout session on challenges and best practices in countering structural inhibitors such as competing family responsibilities, limited career progression, and cultural stereotypes. This WinMLE Forum was a hallmark event; marking the largest composition of male representatives positively championing for gender equality with their female counterparts and the first Forum to include a field visit. Participants departed the Forum with a holistic appreciation of the universal challenge of under-representation and were invigorated with novel standards and best practices that they could return with and share with their respective agencies.

Border Management Team: In September, the Border Management Branch participated in the 16th edition of the International Law Enforcement Intellectual Property (IP) Crime Conference, co-hosted by INTERPOL and the Norwegian Police Service, in partnership with UL Standards & Engagement. One of the key topics this year was leadership and diversity, women in IP Leadership. Focused on discussions such as challenges and opportunities for increasing women's representation and leadership in police services around the world, new insights and contacts were established.

PASSENGER AND CARGO BORDER TEAM (PCBT)

The inaugural PCBT gender event for Central Asia, held 22-24 August in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, marked a significant step forward in promoting gender equality within law enforcement agencies. Attended by officers from Pakistan and Central Asian countries, the event provided a platform for insights into incorporating gender perspectives into the functions of Port and Air Cargo Control Units. Organized in collaboration with the State Customs Service of Kyrgyzstan, UNODC, WCO, and OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek, this event demonstrated a resolute commitment to fostering inclusivity.

Among the highlights was a presentation by a Pakistani officer who shared invaluable experiences and best practices from her career in the Pakistani Civil Aviation Authorities. Her insights served as a potent reminder of the power of cross-regional cooperation in driving positive change towards gender equality. The event underscored the significance of a human rights-based and gender-sensitive approach in addressing cross-border crimes. Strategies for the recruitment and retention of women officers within law enforcement agencies were also prominent topics of discussion. By exploring methods to achieve gender parity and advocating for equality in leadership roles, the event exemplified the dedication of PCBT to mainstreaming gender considerations within Central Asia and beyond.



Participants in the First PCBT Central Asia Gender Workshop

