

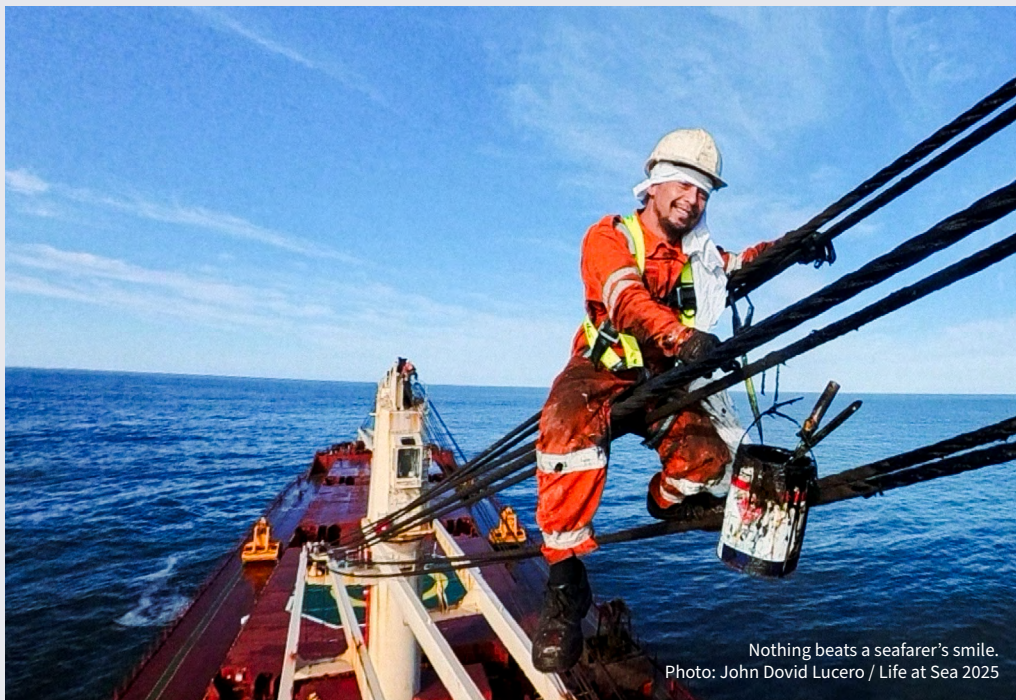
Delivering on Seafarers' Rights

2025 Progress Report



A seafarer water blasting the rust on ship.
Photo: Mark Roy Mangrobang / Life at Sea 2025

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About SSI and IHRB



The Sustainable Shipping Initiative

The Sustainable Shipping Initiative (SSI) is a multi-stakeholder collective catalysing change during this crucial decade of action for an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable shipping sector. Since 2010, SSI has brought together leaders across the maritime ecosystem to act on issues such as circular economy in shipping, seafarers' rights, and defining sustainability criteria for marine fuels. SSI's members include shipowners, operators and managers; cargo owners; classification societies; environmental and social non-profits; and service providers.

www.sustainablesshipping.org



The Institute for Human Rights and Business

The Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB) is an international think-and-do tank with the mission to shape policy, advance practice, and strengthen accountability in order to make respect for human rights part of everyday business. IHRB works in various areas including Commodities, the Built Environment, Migrant Workers, Just Transition, and Oceans. IHRB's Ocean and Human Rights Platform works specifically on shipping, ports and shipyards, coastal wind energy, aquaculture and fishing. The Ocean Platform focuses on the impacts of business activities on livelihoods and working conditions.

www.ihrb.org



CODE OF CONDUCT:

In 2021, IHRB and SSI, in collaboration with the [Rafto Foundation for Human Rights](#), developed and published an industry Code of Conduct for delivering on seafarers' rights with the aim of improving the human rights and welfare of the world's seafarers. The Code of Conduct can be used by charterers to assess their shipowners and operators. It is supplemented by a self-assessment questionnaire, which provides guidance for shipping companies on concrete ways to adopt the commitments outlined in the Code of Conduct and track progress against them.

The purpose of this report is to provide an annual update of progress against the Code of Conduct towards improving seafarers' rights. It brings together a range of perspectives from industry and from civil society – in their own words. Previous reports can be found [here](#).

Summary and Reflections

Eleanor Besley-Gould, SSI



This year's report shows a sector that is starting to confront the realities of seafarer welfare with greater honesty and urgency. Engagement with the Code of Conduct continues to grow and the conversations across this year's work reflect a clearer

understanding that welfare is integral to the safety and resilience of global shipping. These are positive signs, and they point to a shift in mindset across many parts of the industry.

At the same time, the pressures facing seafarers remain stark. Recruitment fees continue to burden families. Shore leave is still restricted in many places. Connectivity and family support are slipping and the pace of change on board is accelerating.

These challenges cut across the entire value chain and will only be solved through coordinated effort and a shared recognition of where action is needed.

SSI's contribution is to bring focus, evidence and collaboration to these issues. We work with companies that want to lead, we highlight what good looks like, and we support the sector to move from commitment to credible action. Our aim is simple. A maritime system where seafarers are treated fairly, where crew welfare expectations are understood and upheld, and where improvements are felt not just in policies but in the everyday experience of the people at sea.

The themes emerging this year reinforce the need for alignment and momentum.

Progress is possible when industry, governments and seafarers work together with purpose. This report brings together the insights that can help move that effort forward.

Summary and Reflections

Francesca Fairbairn, IHRB



IHRB works to make respect for human rights part of everyday business through a combination of research, dialogue, and collective action. Our work in 2025 has continued to focus on strengthening collaborations aimed at improving seafarer welfare.

We have followed up our 2023 and 2024 surveys in collaboration with Turtle on seafarer recruitment fees with further research that confirms the prevalence of this illegal practice. We have actively brought together representatives of the global shipping industry to find ways to eliminate recruitment fees, and in 2026 we will publish a new toolkit for companies to address these issues.

We are focusing regional efforts on India (where the practice of agencies and middlemen charging for a job is widespread both within and outside the shipping industry), and the Philippines where many seafarers come from. We hope in 2026 to continue to deepen our relationship with India's Director General of Shipping and the Philippines Department of Migrant Workers, and ethical crewing agencies in both countries. We also continue our industry outreach in Singapore and Norway, and globally, and we thank the ITF Seafarers' Trust, TK Foundation, and the Seafarers' Charity for their support in this work.

We are also working on other issues that affect seafarers - including (but not limited to) shore leave, fair pay, and the unjust criminalisation of seafarers. We have also kept watch on the extent and impact of the 'dark' or 'parallel' fleet (unregistered vessels which operate under the radar and put

seafarers in danger), and on issues exacerbated by the use of open registries (or 'flags of convenience').

We are grateful for ongoing support from industry representatives, as well as from unions and civil society, all of which contribute enormously to our work. We are also fortunate to have built strong links with ambassadors and consular staff from countries where shipping is a significant contributor to the economy.

With our close collaborators - Rafto, SSI, The Norwegian Foreign Ministry, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Mission to Seafarers and others - as well as with the wider industry - we will continue to make issues of worker welfare a central concern for those with the wherewithal to ensure that seafarers' rights are respected and upheld.

Annual SEAFAIRER Roundtable 2025

AUTHORS: Rakesh Ranjan, IHRB | Kendra Lædre, SSI

The 2025 Seafarer Roundtable held on 7th November in Singapore marked the fourth year of the Delivering on Seafarers Rights Code of Conduct launched in 2021 and brought together a diverse group of industry stakeholders, government representatives, seafarer welfare organisations and seafarers.

Held under the Chatham House Rule, the roundtable provided a space for open and honest discussion on the state of seafarer wellbeing and for identifying realistic areas for collective action. This year's conversation highlighted both the progress achieved across the sector and the substantial work that remains to ensure fair, safe and dignified working conditions for the workforce that keeps global trade moving.

The discussion opened with reflections on seafarer happiness and a decade of insights on crew wellbeing. Participants noted that despite improvements in some areas, persistent challenges remain. Limited access to drinking water, constraints on shore leave, fatigue and a growing sense of undervaluation continue to affect daily life at sea. Topics on the changing nature of work, including the increasing role of technology and the pressures felt by cadets who spend long periods onboard with limited

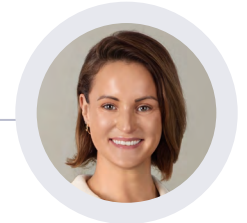
training support, were also raised. The idea of developing Blue Ports was introduced as a way to put seafarer needs at the centre of port-city relationships with clear commitments, access to information and basic amenities.

A powerful moment came through testimonies from seafarers from South India who spoke about illegal recruitment fees, predatory intermediaries and the financial strain placed on families. Some described paying between 2,000 and 15,000 US dollars to secure work, often through high interest loans or the sale of family assets. Their message was clear. Seafarers want a recruitment system that is free, fair and transparent, with direct access to job opportunities without exploitation.

A panel discussion on recruitment fees highlighted gaps in the enforcement of international standards. Although most of the global fleet is covered by the Maritime Labour



Rakesh Ranjan
IHRB



Kendra Lædre
SSI

Convention, many ports operate outside ratifying jurisdictions which weakens compliance and allows illegal practices to persist. Research shared during the session confirmed that recruitment fees remain widespread, often underreported and sometimes culturally normalised. Participants agreed on the need for consistent standards, stronger verification mechanisms and closer collaboration to reduce risk across recruitment channels.

The roundtable also explored the significant workforce transition required as the sector decarbonises. Work is underway to build a competency framework for alternative fuels and emerging technologies, and participants reiterated that seafarers must be equipped and supported through this shift. On welfare standards more broadly, an accountability gap remains.

While many shipowners claim to exceed basic requirements, only a minority of charterers currently offer enhanced welfare terms or operate structured assessment mechanisms. Vessel level tools are beginning to bridge this gap by providing greater visibility on access to water, WiFi, safe manning levels and mental health support.

Across the discussions, the need for ports to take a more proactive role was clear. The Blue Port concept, built on transparency, information access and essential amenities, was recognised as a promising avenue for improving conditions at scale. Seafarers and welfare providers also emphasised that illegal recruitment fees remain widespread, that debt continues to burden families and that enforcement weaknesses limit progress. Transparency and consistency emerged as shared priorities across all groups.

The roundtable closed with a clear and shared understanding. Safeguarding seafarer welfare requires collective responsibility, continuous improvement and commitment across governments, industry and workers. The discussions reaffirmed that when these actors come together with purpose, meaningful progress is not only possible but achievable.

Key Actions Proposed

- Maritime hubs could adopt a Blue Port model that guarantees shore leave, removes unnecessary visa barriers, improves welfare infrastructure and trains port officials to better support seafarers' needs. Work is underway to develop this.
- Targeted support programmes should be established in high-risk seafaring communities, including safe recruitment awareness, confidential reporting channels and family focussed advisory services.
- The forthcoming Responsible Recruitment Toolkit will be finalised and supported through an expanded action group and strengthened advocacy with businesses, governments, civil society, crewing agencies and unions to promote effective enforcement of existing standards.
- A shared welfare indicator system will be developed collaboratively to support vessel level reporting and drive consistent welfare improvements across owners, operators and charterers.

“ The waves of change impacting maritime industries, from AI to climate-related transitions. However, there should be specific attention to those who are central to these changes: seafarers. The transformation must not come at the cost of seafarers' wellbeing. ”

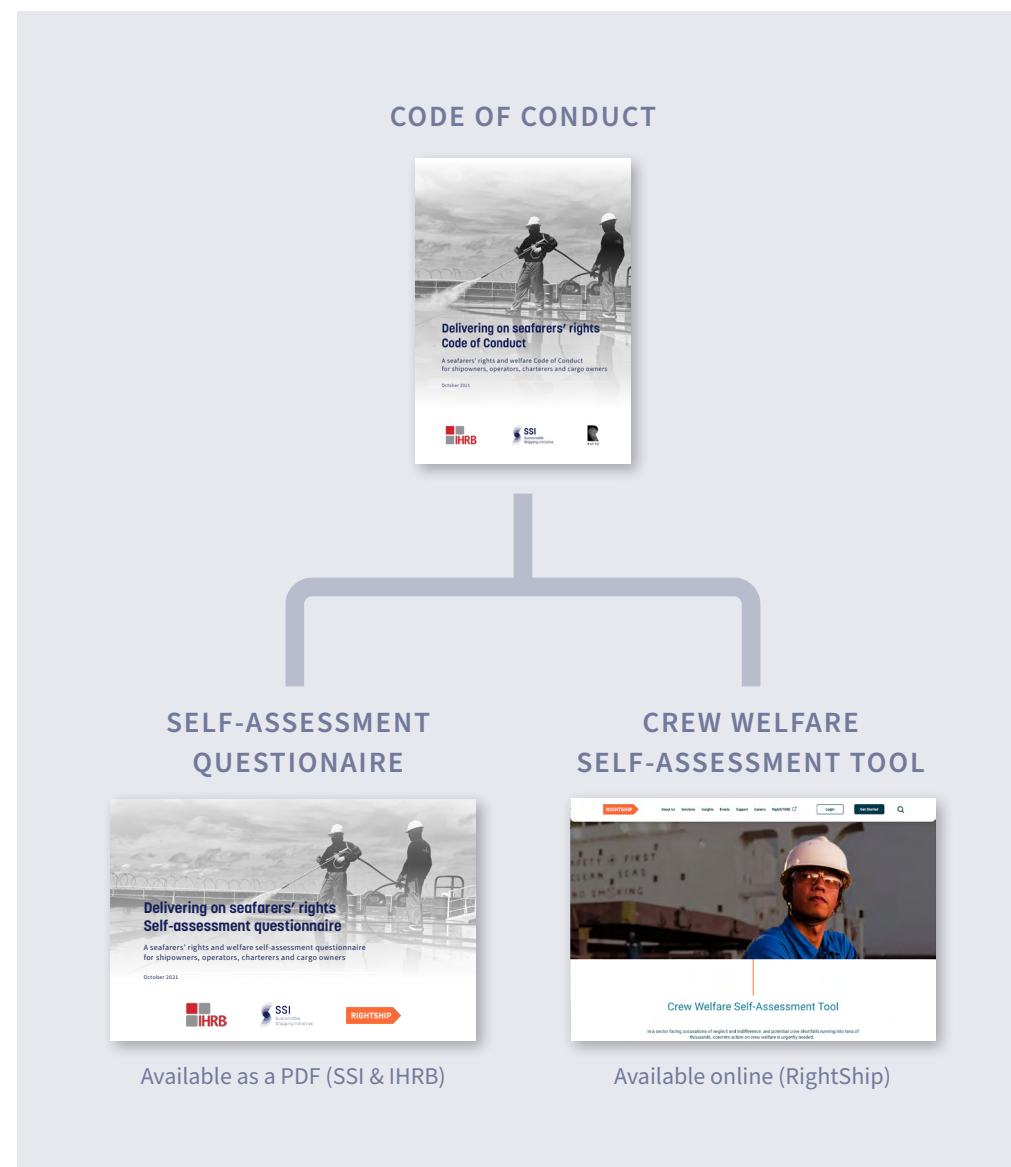
Norwegian Ambassador to Singapore HE Leif Trana

Crew Welfare Self-Assessment: Origins, Uptake and 2025 Insights

AUTHOR: Taner Umac, RightShip

RIGHTSHIP

The Crew Welfare Self-Assessment was developed to help companies put the Delivering on Seafarers Rights Code of Conduct into practice. The Code sets expectations that build on the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC). The Sustainable Shipping Initiative, the Rafto Foundation for Human Rights and the Institute for Human Rights and Business created the original framework in 2021, which RightShip transformed into a digital tool that companies can use to measure performance, monitor progress and strengthen welfare governance. The tool supports consistent reporting across recruitment, living conditions, connectivity, family support and organisational culture.

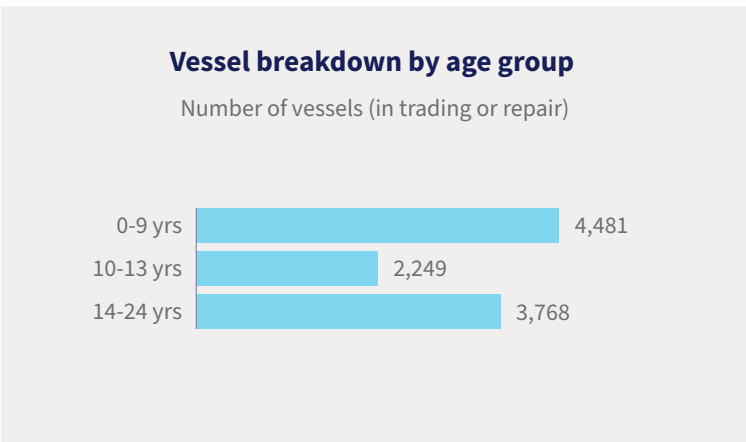
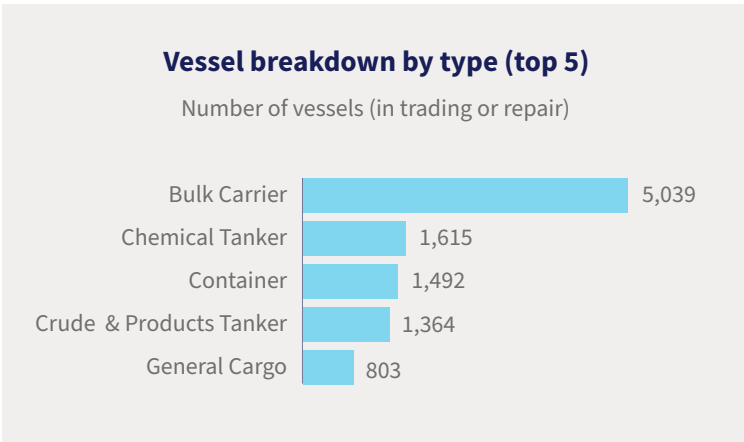
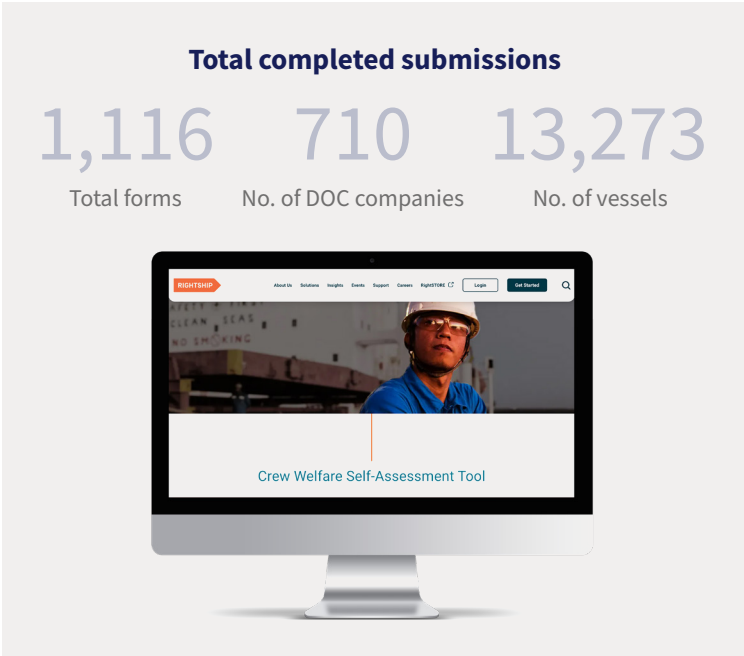


Industry Uptake and Coverage

As of 20 October 2025, 710 Document of Compliance companies have submitted assessments, covering 13,273 vessels. Participation continues to grow across all major vessel types. Dry bulk operators remain the largest group and tanker participation continues to increase. Container, chemical and general cargo vessels also contribute substantial numbers, resulting in a broad and representative dataset.

The reporting base spans a wide range of vessel ages, which strengthens the reliability of the data. More than 4,400 vessels are under 10 years old, over 2,200 fall between 10 and 13 years and more than 3,700 are between 14 and 24 years.

Submissions come from a diverse set of controlling countries. Greece and China remain among the most active groups, with Greece showing strong year on year growth. A total of 49 office assessments have now been completed, providing direct insight into how welfare responsibilities are managed within companies and how stated practices align with day-to-day operations.



Key Trends in the 2025 Data

The 2025 results show areas of progress along with areas that require further attention.

- Female seafarer employment increased from 49 % to 52 %.
- Provision of 12 month private medical insurance ashore increased from 18 % to 23 %.
- Reports of vessels without private cabin bathrooms decreased slightly from 32 % to 31 %.
- Safe manning practices remain steady, with 98 % of companies exceeding minimum levels when trading conditions require it.
- Access to free or reasonably priced internet declined from 32 % to 31 %.
- Support services for seafarers' families fell from 56 % to 48 %.

What the Findings Suggest

The data shows positive movement in gender inclusion, medical coverage and manning awareness. These areas indicate where companies appear to be strengthening their approach to welfare.

Connectivity and family support remain the weakest performing indicators. Both are consistently highlighted by seafarers as essential to wellbeing, mental health and retention. The downward trend in these areas signals where renewed focus is needed.

Industry Insights

The Code of Conduct establishes a baseline understanding of a company's operations and their delivery of seafarers' rights. Seafarers continue to face uncertainties, and it remains pertinent to provide the tools and guidance needed for more stakeholders to acknowledge and begin assessing their obligations to seafarers.

The next sections of this report include short reflections from seafarers' rights organisations, shipowners, and cargo owners on how the situation has changed in the past twelve months. These insights highlight how the Code of Conduct has assisted companies in their due diligence work, and provide important reminders of the ongoing need to continue raising awareness and working toward solutions to the issues faced by seafarers worldwide. (For further detail please see contributor websites.)



Hanging on the side of the ship, the abled seaman moved with the roll of the waves. His safety harness was the only thing keeping him secure. The sun lit up the hull, showing marks from many long trips. With a paint roller in hand, he worked slowly, covering rust and wear. The sea moved below him, the wind blew around him. Out here, painting the ship wasn't just a job. It was keeping her ready for the next journey. Photo: Malcom Serrano / Life at Sea 2025

HUMAN CHALLENGES

A Perspective From the Mission to Seafarers

AUTHOR: Ben Bailey, Mission to Seafarers



At The Mission to Seafarers, our work across more than 200 ports provides a frontline view of what issues seafarers are facing. Each year, we support over 500,000 seafarers and their families, and complete more than 40,000 ship visits. The insights from those interactions, combined with our advocacy efforts with the Seafarers Happiness Index, paint a picture of an industry grappling with deep structural pressures.

The erosion of shore leave continues to sit at the heart of the problem. Immigration restrictions, rising costs and commercial imperatives have created a new normal in which stepping ashore is the exception. Seafarers tell us repeatedly that this lack of time away from the vessel leaves them feeling trapped and fatigued, and our chaplains are often the only external human contact a seafarer receives in port. It is a profound shift, and one with real implications for the wellbeing of crew and the safety of shipping.

Alongside this, the sense of un-ending workload is hard to ignore. Reduced crew numbers, faster turnaround times and spiralling administrative expectations mean many seafarers feel they are operating in a permanent state of catch-up. The language we hear: “tired”, “busy”, “too much paperwork” has become so common that it risks being dismissed as background noise, rather than the warning signal it is.

Two issues, however continue to dominate the labour-rights discussion: abandonment and recruitment fees. Despite global efforts, cases of abandonment remain disturbingly high, leaving seafarers without pay, provisions or a route home. Mission to Seafarer welfare teams are often among the first responders, providing food and advocacy when all other systems have failed. Likewise, the practice of illegal recruitment fees, particularly in India, continue to trap many seafarers in debt bondage before they even set foot on a

vessel. These practices exploit economic vulnerability and undermine any notion of ethical supply chains.

Taken together, these pressures reveal an industry at a crossroads. Through advocacy and welfare delivery The Mission to Seafarers will continue calling for an industry that treats seafarers not as a function to be managed, but as the essential workers whose wellbeing determines the safety and integrity of global trade.

Tackling Recruitment Fees: A Progress Update from IHRB and TURTLE

AUTHORS: Francesca Fairbairn, IHRB | Christina Berg, TURTLE



Recruitment fees continue to be present in seafarers' experiences, despite ongoing and growing attention in the maritime industry. Last year's survey significantly increased awareness of the issue and generated substantial media visibility. Building on that momentum, we took the next step toward coordinated action with the foundation of an action group, continuing our collaboration to understand how the issue is evolving and what we can do to eliminate the practice.

A snapshot from this year's mini survey:

To understand the current situation, TURTLE ran a mini survey among 314 seafarers across 64 countries. Even with this small scale the results provide a timely "temperature check":

- 27% rated it as a major or very big problem
- 28% rated the issue moderately serious
- Responding seafarers highlighted a need for full transparency: clearer information on costs, confidence that "no-fee recruitment" applies throughout the chain, and visibility on how recruitment agencies are vetted.

The feedback reflects that seafarers are still struggling with inconsistent practices and unclear costs down the recruitment chain.

How the action group came together:

The action group was formed directly following last year's IHRB-TURTLE research, which made it clear that recruitment fees remain widespread, awareness alone is not enough, and companies need practical tools to understand what is happening in their recruitment channels.

As a result, TURTLE and IHRB convened an industry-focused, no-fee, yet non-public group of shipowners, crew managers, cargo owners/ global brands, charterers, marine insurers, investors, and others. The aim is to bring together the actors who can carry about help effect real change, and support them with facts, shared knowledge, and the combined leverage of the group.

HUMAN CHALLENGES

What the action group is working towards:

- Developing an industry toolkit with clear definitions, due-diligence checklists, practical examples, and potentially contract wording guidance
- Sustaining awareness and insight through regular exchanges, panels and discussions
- Building a coordinated, industry-backed approach that helps companies understand where fees arise and how to reduce risk across global recruitment chains.

Through this work, TURTLE and IHRB continue to combine seafarer insights, human-rights expertise and industry engagement to support meaningful and practical change.

If you are interested in getting more information about the action group, please contact Francesca Fairbairn, Shipping and Commodities Programme Manager IHRB, francesca.fairbairn@ihrb.org or Christina Berg, Head of Communications TURTLE, christina@go-turtle.com.

Evidence Base for Reform: Key Findings from the 2025 Tuticorin Seafarer Workshop

AUTHORS: Rakesh Ranjan, IHRB



IHRB has launched a two-year initiative to strengthen responsible recruitment in the maritime sector with a strong India focus. The project aims to promote responsible recruitment of seafarers by supporting the implementation of the Employer Pays Principle, increasing transparency in recruitment supply chains, and reducing exploitation and debt-related vulnerabilities of seafarers and their families, with a particular focus on India. The Employer Pays Principle states that no worker should pay for a job - the costs of recruitment should be borne by the employer, not by the worker.

Outcomes will include increased awareness of illegal payment of recruitment costs and related risks among industry stakeholders, increased pressure on regulatory bodies to enforce ethical recruitment standards, and the delivery of appropriate training to seafarers in conjunction with key welfare organisations and unions. Through this work, the initiative also aims to foster stronger partnerships across the shipping industry to advocate collectively for systemic change in seafarer recruitment specifically and welfare more generally.

A central component of the India work is structured engagement with shipowners, operators and managers, charterers, container cargo owners, DG Shipping, seafarers' rights organisations, and, importantly, seafarers themselves to identify collective approaches to persistent worker welfare challenges.

In this context, on 25 September 2025 - World Maritime Day - IHRB and the Mission to Seafarers organised the second Tuticorin workshop (the first was held in 2024) to inform a central part of this evidence base. The session brought together 30 Indian seafarers - from fresh cadets to experienced crew - to discuss recruitment costs, and the profound impacts the charging of illegal fees have on mental health, finances, and family well-being.

"It is impossible to get a job without paying recruitment fees."

Participants informed that paying recruitment fees has become an almost unavoidable norm, summarised as *"no money, no recruitment"*. Crew described paying between \$2,000 to \$6,000 for a single placement, often through chains of sub-agents, with opaque contracts, contract substitution, and deception about jobs, ships, and salaries. Some senior crew reportedly demand a share of these fees on board, with refusal leading to early sign-off or a black mark on his Continuous Discharge Certificate (the mariner's record book).

HUMAN CHALLENGES

"If I do not pay the amount immediately, someone will pay a little higher... then I would be the loser".

These costs drive seafarers into high-interest debt, multiple loans, and psychological distress, with workshop participants linking debts and overwork to accidents and even suicides at sea.

"Unable to repay one money-lender, some are forced to borrow again, and the cycle becomes so unbearable that it can push people towards the extreme step of suicide,"

The workshop also covered several other issues equally affecting seafarers. Participants highlighted discrimination between officers and ratings in wages, benefits, living conditions, and shore leave, with ratings frequently denied passes or kept working when in port. Emerging risks include digital recruitment scams, oversupply of trained seafarers relative to jobs, and the continuing threat of abandonment at sea.

The workshop revealed deep gaps in protection: weak enforcement by government regulators, unresponsive unions, almost no local maritime legal aid in Tuticorin, and very little awareness of complaint mechanisms. Overall, discussions underscored a stark protection gap between laws on paper and remedies in practice, and the urgent need for stronger enforcement, accessible support, and accountable recruitment systems for Indian seafarers.

INDUSTRY ACTION

Psychological Safety for Seafarers

AUTHOR: Manasi Dutt, Bernard Schulte Shipmanagement (BSM)



Working at sea is inherently challenging and seafarers work in one of the most demanding environments globally. While the foundation of operations for all ship managers is the physical safety of our seafarers, psychological safety is increasingly being recognised as a cornerstone of crew wellbeing and safe and efficient operations.

A psychologically safe work environment is one in which voices can be raised in question or dissent without being penalised. It demands that trust be deliberately and tangibly embedded within the workplace culture. In a safety-critical and strongly hierarchical industry like shipping, psychological safety underpins all safe operations as it allows seafarers to challenge unsafe practices and proactively own up to mistakes before they escalate into larger issues. When seafarers feel valued and empowered to communicate freely, operations unfold safely; conversely, when anxiety and fear suppress vital information, the risk of failure increases significantly.

At BSM, we recognise that embedding psychological safety into our workplace culture requires sustained effort. Our approach utilises a framework of clear policies and robust procedures that are reinforced through continuous training and awareness-raising for our seafarers. We empower crew members to raise their voices outside of the hierarchy with an anonymous reporting tool administered by an independent third-party company to guarantee confidentiality. All reports are diligently investigated in-house not only for resolution but also to reinforce trust and extract systemic learning. Seafarers are familiarised with these standards during pre-joining briefings before every contract onboard.

Beyond reporting, we offer practical support through initiatives implemented to support our seafarers and help manage issues which may be affecting how safe they feel onboard. Included in these are the ISWAN helpline, a free, confidential and multilingual helpline for seafarers that is accessible 24 hours and all year.

We also provide mentorship to cadets, building psychological safety for them in the nascent stages of their career when they are often more vulnerable to being silenced or minimised onboard.

Recognising cultural differences in interpreting bullying and harassment, BSM is developing clearer definitions and guidelines to ensure consistency across our fleet. These efforts all lead back to one principle: setting standards of respectful behaviour and maintaining strong mechanisms for reporting and resolution.

At BSM, we are committed to creating a culture where psychological safety is not just encouraged but embedded, because protecting seafarer rights and achieving operational excellence go hand in hand.

Actions Taken to Improve Seafarer Welfare and Wellbeing

AUTHOR: Jarle Kverneggen, Klaveness Combination Carriers



INDUSTRY ACTION

Safety and wellbeing are interlinked.

There are inherent safety and security risks related to operations at sea. These must always be managed carefully to safeguard life. Our seafarers work hard to create safe operations onboard every day. Safety and security at work is a basic human right, and we constantly try to become even better. Our safety culture program KLASS (Klaveness Always Safe and Secure) was initiated 5 years ago and all personnel in the organization participate in training and workshops to increase skills, raise awareness and make the safety culture resilient. Common values, leading by example skills and collaboration in teams contribute to do the job correctly and safely. From time to time, people make poor judgements or mistakes. Even more so if we are distressed, tired or have strong emotions of some reason. In such cases, the team members around must be trained to recognise the unsafe situation arising, feel obliged to and comfortable with interfering and stopping work to avoid accident.

Being part of a team founded on trust, care and openness is good for safety and also good for wellbeing. Crew debriefings after contract, and wellbeing and safety culture surveys help us understand where to focus next.

Mental and physical health are linked with safety. All seafarers carry out medical check prior to joining vessel to ensure person is fit for contract without posing an undue risk to health and the operation. All crew members and their families are covered by health insurance. Filipino seafarers are also covered by a house insurance scheme. Insurance and disaster relief program reduce concerns if disaster happens. OSM Thome in Manila also provide other initiatives to support social sustainability e.g. Women's Desk, Scholarship Program, Ratings Program, Seafarers' Family Club and calamity outreach initiatives. At any time, our crew can contact ISWAN seafarer's helpline if they have struggles or mental challenges. This also goes for family members.

Everyone has a need to belong and feel included. This starts with the warm welcome at the manning agency and continues when joining the vessel and being seen by colleagues. Crew conferences and vessel visits are keys in building the larger team.

KCC is member of the Sustainable Shipping Initiative (SSI) and works proactively to promote and deliver on seafarers' rights.

The Code of Conduct in Charterer Due Diligence

AUTHOR: Robert Haggquist, South32



South32 is a globally diversified mining and metal company as well as a large charterer, completing over 400 voyages per year and carrying a diverse set of commodities. Maritime transport plays an important role both to support the operations (inbound) and deliver the commodities (outbound) to our customers.

The global shipping industry has been identified as being particularly susceptible to systemic human rights risks given seafarers are often from nations with human rights, labour rights and corruption challenges. The problem is exacerbated by the fragmentation of regulatory oversight and practical limitations for the effective enforcement of basic conditions onboard vessels. While we do not own vessels or directly employ seafarers, we recognize charterers' important role to positively influence seafarers' safety and welfare. For this reason, we played a key role in developing the Code of Conduct through our ongoing engagement with the Sustainable Shipping Initiative (SSI), which serves as an effective platform for collaboratively addressing important industry matters.

This year, the Code of Conduct is included in our supplier tiering, where vessel owners are ranked for long-term partnerships based on various criteria, including seafarer welfare.

The Code of Conduct forms a key component of our enhanced due diligence (EDD) program. The EDD program involves additional vetting with a special focus on the vessel managers to ensure that highest safety standards are met. Rather than focusing only on individual vessels, the framework aims to solve crewing challenges through a comprehensive, holistic perspective. The program includes physical inspections, desktop analysis, quality audits and in some cases in-depth human rights due diligence assessments.

In addition, we continue to work closely with Mission to Seafarers to provide seafarers on all our vessels with the opportunity to participate in the Seafarer Happiness Index, a survey to assess and monitor wellbeing. At this time of year, we conduct our annual seafarer appreciation campaign, during which care packages are distributed to all South32 chartered vessels across our terminals.

INDUSTRY ACTION

Advancing Crew Safety and Welfare Through the Master Coach Programme

AUTHOR: Jennifer Sakaguchi, Rio Tinto

INDUSTRY ACTION

Rio Tinto

As a leading charterer with about 2,700 voyages and carrying over 300 million tonnes of cargo annually, Rio Tinto is not just part of the conversation on safety and welfare, they're leading the way through its flagship Designated Owners & Operators (DOO) program to raise safety and welfare standards across the dry bulk sector.

Building on this foundation, 2025 marked a significant milestone with the introduction of the Master Coach program, a first-of-its-kind initiative designed to embed a proactive safety culture onboard vessels. They aim to accelerate progress through clear and consistent way of working that owners, operators, and ship managers can adopt going forward. The goal is to embed proactive safety practices and a culture of care into everyday operations, making the safety and welfare of seafarers a fundamental part of the industry.

Unlike traditional compliance audits, the Master Coach Program focuses on immersive, collaborative coaching. Experienced former ship masters and chief engineers join DOO member vessels for 8–14 days—typically the duration of a voyage between Western Australia and China—working side by side with crew members. These coaches provide tailored guidance, encourage open dialogue, and empower seafarers to identify and address unsafe practices without fear of blame. This approach fosters trust and strengthens the safety-first mindset across all ranks, from deck to engine room.

The program's design is informed by office audit outcomes conducted by Principal Master Coaches, ensuring alignment between shipboard practices and management systems. Fleet managers are actively encouraged to participate in onboard sessions, reinforcing continuity between vessel and shore-based operations.

Impact and outcomes:

The results speak volumes. Since the DOO program's inception, Rio Tinto and its partners have achieved zero fatalities, zero permanent disabilities, and a 70% reduction in reported personal injuries onboard chartered vessels compared to 2022. Critical shipboard incidents at terminal facilities have dropped by 40%, underscoring the effectiveness of this integrated approach. Feedback from participating crews highlights increased confidence in applying safety protocols and appreciation for a coaching model that prioritises empowerment over enforcement.

With over 37 shipboard visits completed in 2025 and growing industry recognition—including nominations for innovation awards—the Master Coach Program exemplifies how leadership-driven engagement can transform safety from a checklist into a shared value. By aligning with the SSI Code of Conduct and leveraging best practices from DryBMS, Rio Tinto continues to champion systemic change, ensuring that every seafarer works in an environment where welfare and dignity are non-negotiable.

Growing Fresh Food at Sea: How Hydroponics Supports Seafarer Wellbeing and Reduces Waste

AUTHOR: Yvan Tseng, Berge Bulk

INDUSTRY ACTION



Berge Bulk continues to show how practical innovation can strengthen both seafarer welfare and environmental performance. Through its fleetwide hydroponics programme, crew members harvested more than 1.2 metric tonnes of fresh vegetables while at sea. The initiative began in 2019 and now spans 150 hydroponic systems across 75 vessels. It has become a key part of the company's efforts to create healthier onboard environments and reduce waste across its operations.

The systems allow seafarers to grow a variety of produce, including lettuce, bok choy, cherry tomatoes, capsicum, basil, parsley, rosemary and chilli. By growing food onboard, Berge Bulk reduces plastic packaging and avoids emissions from transporting fresh produce, critical gains for a fleet serving nearly 2 million meals annually.

For many seafarers, the programme has also become a source of joy and connection during long periods at sea. Crew members describe planting, tending and harvesting crops as therapeutic and refreshing. Messmen manage the systems and often involve colleagues in the process. An online community allows cooks and crew to share photos, recipes and tips across the fleet. Friendly competitions reward vessels for creativity, harvesting volumes or standout produce. In 2024, leading ships included Berge Phan Xi Pang with 124 kilograms grown and Berge Olympus with 88 kilograms.

The programme highlights how thoughtful, small-footprint interventions can support crew wellbeing and reduce waste at the same time. It also shows how shipping companies can create positive experiences for seafarers while contributing to broader sustainability goals.

ASSURANCE



DNV's Commitment to Seafarer Welfare

AUTHOR: Rachel Lock, DNV

DNV views seafarer welfare as a cornerstone of sustainable shipping and a prerequisite for a successful energy transition. As stated in DNV's Maritime Forecast to 2050, "Technology alone will not deliver decarbonisation—people will. Ensuring that seafarers are trained, safe, and supported is critical to achieving our climate ambitions."

A recent DNV study for the Maritime Just Transition Task Force points towards an immediate need to train seafarers. It states that the increase in newbuild orders for alternative fuels will increase the demand for seafarers with the required competence, challenging their availability in the near term. The number of seafarers expected to work on ships fuelled by LNG / LPG could increase by nearly 200,000 within the next 5 years, and as many as 800,000 seafarers may require additional training by the mid-2030s to enable the fuel transition in shipping. This surge in training demand highlights a critical governance challenge, ensuring that workforce readiness is not left to chance. DNV sees seafarer welfare as a critical component of workforce readiness.

Now more than ever, companies therefore need to ensure that workforce readiness is embedded in corporate culture and governance systems. This is particularly challenging in the maritime industry given the complexity of its interconnected global network, involving shipping companies, port authorities, regulators, and supply chain stakeholders. This complexity also stems from the need to coordinate international trade routes, comply with diverse regulatory frameworks, and manage technological advancements in vessel operations. Beyond logistics and economics, the industry faces critical challenges in safeguarding seafarer welfare. Long periods at sea, isolation, mental health concerns, and demanding working conditions make crew well-being a priority for sustainable operations. Addressing these issues requires robust support systems, fair recruitment and labour practices, and initiatives that balance efficiency with human dignity.

A critical way for companies operating in the maritime industry to address this is through robust governance frameworks that include mechanisms that mandate training standards, integrate seafarer welfare into their corporate strategies, and enforce compliance through transparent reporting. Strong governance and robust management systems are essential to embedding seafarer welfare into the fabric of sustainable shipping. Companies that combine policy alignment, operational frameworks, and independent verification can create

transparency and accountability across the maritime value chain and are ultimately more likely to create a competitive advantage in the market going forward. This means elevating crew wellbeing to board-level discussions and linking it to sustainability and operational performance KPIs.

By aligning with international standards such as the ILO Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) and SSI's Delivering on Seafarers' Rights Code of Conduct, companies can ensure they are aligning with best practice and demonstrate leadership in seafarer welfare. Communicating publicly about progress relating to seafarer welfare is also critical to raise the bar across the maritime industry.

At DNV we see a significant increase in companies seeking independent assurance of the measures they are implementing so they can provide credible evidence of compliance when they engage with stakeholders, ultimately building trust and leveraging their competitive advantage. This transparency empowers responsible decision-making and incentivises best practices across the industry.

"Embedding seafarer welfare into governance and assurance frameworks is not just compliance—it's a strategic imperative for safe, sustainable shipping."

WELFARE THROUGH TRANSITION – THE HUMAN SIDE OF DECARBONISATION

Advancing Seafarers' Rights Through the Maritime Just Transition Task Force

AUTHOR: Natassa Kouvertari, LR Decarb Hub

As zero- and near-zero (ZNZ) fuels reshape ship operations, the Maritime Just Transition Task Force (MJTTF), supported by the Lloyd's Register Foundation and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), has played a pivotal role in safeguarding the right of seafarers to access training and safety frameworks in step with technology change in a just and equitable pattern.

Through collaboration with the LR Maritime Decarbonisation Hub (The Decarb Hub) as technical lead and the World Maritime University (WMU) as academic lead, and in partnership with the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), the MJTTF delivered the first cross-sector learning materials for ammonia, methanol and hydrogen. These include a unified basic training framework; three advanced, fuel-specific competency frameworks; guidelines for familiarisation

programmes for companies and comprehensive instructor handbooks. Collectively, these outputs establish an evidence-based foundation aimed at ensuring that all seafarers—regardless of geography or employer—can benefit from safe, fair and accessible training pathways.

Grounded in 12 international risk-assessment workshops and shaped by more than 500 technical recommendations from over 100 stakeholders, the project developed detailed competency and Knowledge, Understanding and Proficiency (KUP) requirements aligned with the International Code of Safety for Ships Using Gases or Other Low-Flashpoint Fuels (IGF Code). Their formal submission to the 11th session of the IMO Sub-Committee on Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping (HTW11) contributed directly to the adoption of the '*Generic Interim Guidelines on Training for Seafarers on Ships Using Alternative Fuels and New Technologies*' (STCW.7/Circ.25). This represents the first regulatory instrument to embed MJTTF-derived competencies into a global standard.

Despite this progress, structural barriers remain. Fragmented national training systems, uneven instructor capability, and disparities in access to technology, risk leaving parts of the global workforce behind. Without targeted support for developing maritime nations, the benefits of the green transition may not be equitably shared. The Lloyd's Register (LR) Decarb Hub's Theory of Change directly addresses these gaps through its Human, Safety and Risk programmes, which embed human-factors research, risk assessments, and training innovation into regulatory and organisational practice; thus linking evidence with capability-building and system transformation.



Addressing Seafarers Need for New Competencies and Training Related to the Introduction of Ammonia as a Fuel

AUTHOR: Martin Eriksen, MMMCZCS



Mærsk Mc-Kinney Møller Center
for Zero Carbon Shipping

The Mærsk Mc-Kinney Møller Center for Zero Carbon Shipping (Center) is a not-for-profit, fuel agnostic independent, research- and development center working with industry players across the energy- and shipping sectors to develop solutions and viable decarbonization pathways for shipping globally.

With our partners, the Center facilitates the development and implementation of new energy technologies, builds confidence in new concepts and their supply chains, and accelerates the transition by defining and maturing viable strategic ways to drive the required systemic and regulatory change.

The Centre's analysis confirms ammonia as a central part of the future alternative fuel mix for maritime. Ammonia is already one of the most produced chemicals in the world and widely transported as a commodity (fertilizer). However, the shift to using ammonia as a fuel aboard vessels introduces new safety challenges.

Ammonia is toxic, and leaks are potentially lethal. Addressing the safety risks of ammonia as a marine fuel is, therefore, critical to realizing its potential to decarbonise shipping at scale.

Seafarers across the shipping industry will require new skills, competencies and training to manage the safety risks associated with ammonia as fuel. Seafarers are at the core of the shipping industry and training will be vital to ensure a successful transition and implementation of the 2023 IMO Strategy on Reduction of GHG Emissions from Ships.

While current frameworks for seafarer training provide a foundation, they are insufficient to meet ammonia's unique challenges. In February 2025, a collaborative project led by the Mærsk Mc-Kinney Møller Center for Zero Carbon Shipping and the LR Maritime Decarb Hub originated three reports that will help seafarers and industry stakeholders meet competence and training challenges from ammonia as fuel.

WELFARE THROUGH TRANSITION

The project has systematically identified competency and training requirements that will support the safe implementation of ammonia as a marine fuel. Concurrently, members of our project team have participated in other industry training initiatives during 2025 such as baseline training framework for seafarers in decarbonisation by the Maritime Just Transition Task Force.

Finally, 2025 also marked the year where IMO during the Subcommittee on Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping (HTW11) in February established a correspondence group to develop, among else, fuel specific training guidelines for ammonia as fuel. The Centre has been actively supporting this group and anticipate the guidelines to be completed in 2026, so to provide a safe environment and a comprehensive level of training for the crew to be able to operate ammonia fuelled vessels.

Call to Action

The evidence in this report makes one point unmistakable. The conditions that matter most to seafarers can be improved, but improvement will only come through coordinated action and sustained pressure across the value chain. Every actor has a responsibility. Eliminate recruitment fees. Protect shore leave. Ensure safe manning. Provide connectivity. Support families. Respect the people who keep global trade moving. Let us commit to these priorities and deliver change that is visible in the daily lives of seafarers, not only in policy documents.



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