



Mobility and Transport Connectivity Series

She Drives Change: A Toolkit for Redefining Opportunities for Women in Transport

Chapter 6: Maritime Transport



WORLD BANK GROUP



QUALITY
INFRASTRUCTURE
INVESTMENT
PARTNERSHIP



JAPANGOV
THE GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN



Chapter 6: Maritime Transport

© 2025. The World Bank
1818 H Street NW, Washington, D.C., 20433, USA
Telephone: +1-202-473-1000; Internet: www.worldbank.org

Some rights reserved.

This work is a product of The World Bank. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect the views of the Executive Directors of The World Bank or the governments they represent.

The World Bank does not guarantee the accuracy, completeness, or currency of the data included in this work and does not assume responsibility for any errors, omissions, or discrepancies in the information, or liability with respect to the use of or failure to use the information, methods, processes, or conclusions set forth. The boundaries, colors, denominations, links/footnotes and other information shown in this work do not imply any judgment on the part of The World Bank concerning the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries. The citation of works authored by others does not mean the World Bank endorses the views expressed by those authors or the content of their works.

Nothing herein shall constitute or be construed or considered to be a limitation upon or waiver of the privileges and immunities of The World Bank, all of which are specifically reserved.



Rights and Permissions

The material in this work is subject to copyright. Because The World Bank encourages dissemination of its knowledge, this work may be reproduced, in whole or in part, for noncommercial purposes as long as full attribution to this work is given.

Attribution

Please cite the work as follows: Nato Kurshitashvili, Mitali Nikore, Ursula Casabonne and Brinda Juneja. 2025. *She Drives Change: A Toolkit for Redefining Opportunities for Women in Transport*. Washington D.C., World Bank.

Any queries on rights and licenses, including subsidiary rights, should be addressed to World Bank Publications, The World Bank, 1818 H Street NW, Washington, DC 20433, USA; fax: 202-522-2625; e mail: pubrights@worldbank.org.

Cover pages photo credits: World Bank and Adobe Stock.

Table of Contents

Preface	vi
Acknowledgements	vii
Maritime Transport	1
Mobility.....	2
Employment	9
Entrepreneurship.....	17

Preface

She Drives Change: A Toolkit for Redefining Opportunities for Women in Transport is a comprehensive resource designed to empower transport sector professionals and policy makers to address disparities in mobility, employment, and entrepreneurship between women and men within the transport sector. The objective of this toolkit is to provide users with a structured approach to identifying and addressing gaps between men and women in various transport subsectors, including urban transport, rural and peri-urban roads, rail, aviation, maritime transport, and economic corridors and logistics. The toolkit presents specific interventions and indicators tailored to each subsector. The toolkit draws primarily from the World Bank's project experience and several other cases provided by other organizations.

The toolkit leverages practical insights from projects that tackle gender disparities in the transport sector, showcasing concrete examples and discussing common challenges and solutions. Projects were selected based on innovative approaches and a strong results chain, clearly articulating constraints, interventions, and indicators to measure progress. Examples span various subsectors and regions, ensuring diverse contexts and solutions, with preference for projects with several years of implementation to demonstrate tangible results. While some indicators may be challenging to adopt due to data limitations, the toolkit provides a comprehensive list of both tested and aspirational indicators for practitioners.

To enhance accessibility to the material, sector-specific interventions are detailed in separate chapters. This chapter addresses maritime transport.

Online Interactive Toolkit:

A digital version of this toolkit is available at www.shedriveschange.org (as of July 2025). This online, interactive version serves as a dynamic and continuously evolving resource, ensuring that users have access to the most up-to-date and relevant examples. As a living document, the online toolkit will not be static; rather, it will be updated with new insights, best practices, and innovative approaches as they emerge, making it an indispensable resource for transport planners and gender specialists.

Downloadable (PDF) Toolkit:

The entire toolkit, including this chapter and the sector-related chapters, is available at [She Drives Change: A Toolkit for Redefining Opportunities for Women in Transport](#).

Acknowledgments

This toolkit was prepared under the guidance of Nato Kurshitashvili (Senior Transport Specialist) from the World Bank's Transport Global Practice, with contributions from the following authors: Ursula Casabonne (Senior Gender Consultant), Mitali Nikore (Senior Gender Consultant), and Brinda Juneja (Gender Consultant).

The authors are grateful to the following peer reviewers from the World Bank for their feedback: Ana Waksberg Guerrini (Senior Urban Transport Specialist), Arturo Ardila Gomez (Lead Transport Economist), Karla Dominguez Gonzalez (Senior Transport Specialist), and Najibullah Ziar (Operations Officer).

We would also like to acknowledge Binyam Reja (Practice Manager, World Bank Transport Global Knowledge Unit) and Nicolas Peltier (Global Director for Transport, World Bank) for their support of this study.

In addition, we would like to thank Benjamin Holzman and Jason Savino (Consultants, World Bank) for leading the development of the online version of the toolkit, Shamsiyya Mustafayeva (Consultants, World Bank) for splitting the toolkit into chapters, and RRD for the design of this toolkit.

Our sincere appreciation goes to the World Bank clients, project staff, and colleagues from development organizations whose insights and contributions enriched the project case studies.

Lastly, we thank the Government of Japan for its funding of the toolkit through the Quality Infrastructure Investment (QII) Partnership.

6

Maritime Transport



The maritime transport sector operates through three interconnected segments: ports, shipping operations, and inland waterways, which represent critical infrastructure that handles over 80 percent of global trade.¹ by volume and provide essential connectivity for passenger movement. Modern ports serve as sophisticated interface points between sea and land transport, housing container and bulk terminals, passenger facilities, and complex technical operations for cargo handling and vessel management.

Port activities encompass a range of operations, from crane operations to customs control, supported by extensive logistics and administrative functions. Shipping operations are divided into cargo and passenger services. Cargo shipping utilizes various specialized vessels, from container ships to bulk carriers and tankers, requiring expertise in navigation, engineering, and maritime logistics. Passenger shipping, through cruise ships and ferries, combines technical vessel operations with hospitality services, demanding skills in both maritime operations and customer service.

Inland waterways complete the maritime ecosystem with river ports, domestic shipping services, and vessel traffic management on rivers, lakes, and canals. This segment focuses on local transport, tourism operations, and environmental protection, requiring specialized knowledge of local conditions and regulations.

Despite the sector's economic significance and technological advancements, women's representation remains very low, with women comprising approximately 1.2 percent of the global seafarer workforce.² This disparity results from historical, structural, and sociocultural factors. The maritime sector's association with physically demanding work, long periods at sea, and male-dominated workplace cultures has created significant barriers to women's participation. Additionally, the sector's unique operational characteristics, such as 24/7 operations, remote locations, and specialized technical requirements, pose distinct challenges for integrating women's needs. Many societies view maritime work as unsuitable for women. This stigma is particularly strong for onboard positions, where women face skepticism about their ability to meet the sector's demands. The nature of maritime work, including extended periods at sea, makes it challenging for women to maintain family relationships and manage household responsibilities. Even shore-based roles are affected by the industrial nature of port environments and perceived safety risks, which limit women's participation in male-dominated spaces.

Mobility

In maritime transport, disparities in mobility between men and women manifest through multifaceted challenges that extend beyond basic transportation access to encompass complex interactions between infrastructure design, operational patterns, and sociocultural norms.

Availability

Ports and shipyards, typically located in industrial or remote coastal areas, often lie outside established public transportation networks. This spatial disconnection creates particular difficulties for women, who tend to rely more heavily on public transport. The problem is especially acute

¹ World Bank. 2023. [Why ports matter for the global economy.](#)

² International Maritime Organization (IMO) and Women's International Shipping and Trading Association (WISTA). 2021. Women in Maritime Survey 2021. https://wwwcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/OurWork/TechnicalCooperation/Documents/women%20in%20maritime/Women%20in%20maritime_survey%20report_high%20res.pdf

during early morning shifts or late-night operations when public transport services are minimal or nonexistent. The lack of reliable, scheduled transportation forces many women to either forgo maritime employment opportunities or resort to more expensive private transport options, creating an economic barrier to sector participation.

The first- and last-mile connectivity to maritime facilities poses additional challenges. Even when public transport exists, the final segments likely involve walking through poorly lit industrial areas with limited pedestrian infrastructure. This infrastructure gap disproportionately affects women, who may need to navigate these spaces during odd hours, while carrying necessary work equipment or managing personal safety concerns. Table 6.1 highlights some interventions to improve the availability of maritime transport for women. Case study 18 presents interventions from India.

Table 6.1. Addressing Availability Barriers for Women in Maritime Transport

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p>Data collection to construct baseline: Collect sex-disaggregated data on access to ports and other maritime facilities, focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel patterns to ports and maritime facilities (transport mode, duration, frequency, and purpose, and first- and last-mile connectivity). • Travel preferences and perceptions of affordability, availability, accessibility, safety, and personal security at maritime facilities. • Perceptions and experiences of harassment in maritime transport and facilities. 	<p>A survey conducted to collect and analyze sex-disaggregated data on maritime facility access patterns, including transportation modes, trip frequency, purposes, travel times, and distances.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/percentage of women using maritime transport. • Number and percentage of women passengers using extended-hour ferry services. • Average waiting time on key routes used predominantly by women. • Number/percentage of women shifting from higher-carbon-emitting transport modes to lower-carbon-emitting maritime transport. • Number/percentage of women reporting improved accessibility to jobs and essential services due to the introduction or improvement of maritime transport.

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p>Availability of maritime transport: Extend early morning and late-evening ferry schedules to accommodate women working in markets, caregiving, or shift jobs.</p> <p>Increase ferry frequency on routes with high female ridership, such as market hubs, schools, or health care centers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of additional ferry trips during early morning or late evening hours.• Number/percentage of women passengers using extended-hour ferry services.• Average waiting time on key routes used by women.• Number/percentage of ferry trips on high-demand routes for women.	
<p>Connectivity between maritime and land transport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve bus and ferry coordination, pedestrian access, and bike-friendly infrastructure at terminals.• Provide demand-responsive transport (for example, shuttle services, shared minibuses, and cars) from urban centers to remote port locations, including women-specific transport options during early or late shifts, as required by cultural norms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of multimodal transport hubs integrating ferry services.• Number/percentage of women reporting improved connectivity in passenger surveys.• Number of dedicated shuttle services introduced, incorporating women's preferences.• Number/percentage of women using shuttle services.	

Case Study 18

Transforming South Asia's Waterways to Empower Women³

The Challenge

Eastern South Asia boasts a vast inland waterway that links India's northeast with Bangladesh and Bhutan. For many communities, these waterways provide vital access to jobs, school, and healthcare. Spanning 3,500 kilometers, a modern, efficient Eastern Waterways Grid has the potential to revitalize the economies of the eastern subcontinent to the benefit of the region's 600 million residents.

The World Bank's Assam Inland Water Transport (IWT) Project⁴ is improving ferry infrastructure and services, making IWT safe, accessible, inclusive, and reliable. A key focus is to help women gain from these improvements through trade and ownership of water transport vessels.

A comprehensive study of the region's workforce gap showed that women face significant barriers working in inland water transport. In parts of Assam, 71 percent of men said they used IWT for trade and transportation, compared to just 28 percent of women. Women commuters contend with poor access to terminals, a minimum of waiting areas, toilets, and drinking water, infrequent ferry services, a risk of sexual harassment, and no way to formally complain. These issues discouraged women from using IWT and kept them from participating in economic activities such as trade.

The Intervention

The project designed terminals and ferries to make them more useful and comfortable for women. These designs include well-lit spaces, a nursing room, wheelchair-accessible and separate toilets for women and men, and CCTV cameras in ferry terminals. On the ferries themselves, the designs include gangways and jetties with handrails, dedicated seats for women, separate and wheelchair-accessible toilets, and life jackets and other life-saving equipment.

The project is expanding ferry services from 10 to 15 hours per day on key routes and changing some schedules based on feedback from women users. Future terminals and jetties will be designed with space to sort and store goods.

³ This case study is based on this report: World Bank. 2024. Connecting Economies, Empowering Women: A Partnership of the World Bank—Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, (2015–2024) South Asia Regional Trade Facilitation Program.

⁴ Assam IWT Project (P157929). The team thanks Ninan Oomen Biju, Rashi Grover, and Jaishree Jindel (World Bank Transport Team) for their input and clearance of the case.

The Jibondinga Incentive Scheme offers boat owners substantial subsidies to retrofit their engines. This program includes dedicated money for women and women-led enterprises, including women’s self-help groups. There was a push to promote women in decision-making positions as part of setting up an “Inland Water Transport Regulatory Authority.”

The Progress

So far, the results are promising. Ferry service operation hours increased, and ridership doubled from 1 million in 2019 to 2 million in 2022, with an average of 27 percent of users being women. Out of 825 applications for the Jibondinga program, 35 came from women, helping them become boat owners while, at the same time, modernizing the fleet.

The Assam IWT Project demonstrates how addressing barriers to women’s participation, improving safety and accessibility, and positioning women as entrepreneurs and leaders, modernized ferry services and empowered women in a male-dominated industry.

Affordability

Affordability challenges significantly impact women’s access to maritime transport, often compounding broader mobility barriers. Women, especially those in low-income or informal employment, are more likely to rely on cost-sensitive transport options. However, maritime transport services often lack flexible fare structures, making daily commutes unaffordable for many. The absence of discounted tickets, multiride passes, or family fare packages disproportionately affects women who travel with dependents or need to make multiple trips. When combined with limited connectivity to ferry terminals and the high cost of private transport alternatives, these affordability constraints reduce women’s ability to access education, employment, and essential services via maritime routes. Table 6.2 highlights some key interventions to address maritime affordability barriers for women and not only.

Table 6.2. Addressing Affordability Barriers for Women in Maritime Transport

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable fare options: Introduce family passes, off-peak discounts, and multiride tickets that allow women and dependents to travel affordably on maritime transport. • Integrated transport packages: Bundle ferry services with last-mile transport (e.g., buses, shuttles) at discounted combined rates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/percentage of women using discounted or multiride ferry passes. • Number of transport hubs offering integrated fare packages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/percentage of women traveling in maritime transport with dependents. • Number/percentage of women reporting increased access to jobs and essential services as a result of improved affordability of maritime transport.

Accessibility

Women users of maritime transport often face physical accessibility challenges due to maritime infrastructure that is not designed with their specific needs in mind. For instance, poorly designed embarkation points, inadequate boarding facilities, and a lack of accessible pathways to reach ferry terminals or ships can hinder their ability to travel safely. Many ports and terminals still lack ramps, elevators, or other features that would make it easier for everyone—particularly those with children, elderly passengers, or those carrying heavy loads—to access ships and transit services. Additionally, the absence of clearly marked paths, proper seating at waiting areas, or designated spaces for passengers with diverse needs further exacerbates these challenges. Table 6.3 highlights some key interventions.

Table 6.3. Addressing Accessibility Barriers for Women in Maritime Transport

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p>Infrastructure: Develop safe and accessible infrastructure along routes to maritime facilities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Improving Boarding Infrastructure:</i> Upgrade embarkation points and boarding facilities to include ramps, elevators, and clear pathways. • <i>Enhancing Waiting Areas and Terminals:</i> Design and build accessible seating, properly marked paths, and waiting areas at ferry terminals. • <i>Ensuring Women-friendly Design:</i> Include women-specific needs in the design process, such as safe spaces for children, breastfeeding facilities, or female-only waiting areas. • <i>Developing Multimodal Access:</i> Ensure easy access from public transport (buses, taxis, etc.) to ferry terminals, with clearly marked routes and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of embarkation points with upgraded ramps and elevators. • Number of seating areas and waiting facilities equipped with accessible features (e.g., spaces for people with disabilities, designated seating for women). • Percentage of ferry terminals with designated signage and accessible features (e.g., wheelchair ramps, tactile surfaces). • Number of accessible pathways and walkways between transport modes (e.g., from buses or taxis to ferry terminals). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/percentage of women using improved boarding facilities (e.g., ramps, elevators, accessible pathways). • Number/percentage of women using accessible seating and waiting areas at terminals. • Average time spent by the passengers waiting in accessible areas compared to previous periods. • Number/percentage of women reporting ease of access from public transport to ferry terminals.

Safety and Personal Security

The isolated location of many maritime facilities, combined with 24/7 operational requirements, creates unique security vulnerabilities. Poor lighting in operational areas, inadequate surveillance systems, and limited security personnel presence, especially during night shifts, heighten these risks. The situation is further complicated by the industrial nature of port environments, where safety hazards extend beyond personal security to include occupational risks that may affect women differently due to inadequate safety equipment and protocols. Table 6.4 highlights some key interventions.

Table 6.4. Addressing Safety and Personal Security Barriers for Women in Maritime Transport

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p>Establish protocols to tackle gender-based violence (GBV) in maritime transport services, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting mechanisms via hotlines, mobile apps, and/or in-person points. • Counseling, legal support, and referral services for survivors. • Training for transport staff and law enforcement on empathetic and nonjudgmental responses. • Ongoing monitoring and evaluation, incorporating survivor feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maritime employer developing standard operating protocols (SOPs) for managing reports of harassment. • Number/percentage of vessel conductors, ticket collectors, maintenance staff in front-facing positions trained on new SOPs focusing on survivor-centered responses. • Number of reports filed through different means (hotline, mobile app, in person). • Number/percentage of survivors of sexual and other forms of harassment receiving timely and adequate support. • Number/percentage reduction in response time to the survivors. • Number/percentage of survivors' satisfaction rate with support services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in number/percentage of women who feel safer using maritime transport after the introduction of safety measures. • Shift in women's perception of safety leading to an increase in their increased use of maritime transport.

Employment

Women in the maritime sector face significant barriers in recruitment, retention, and career advancement. Recruitment is hindered by limited awareness of opportunities, particularly in technical roles, and by gender stereotypes and biases. Long shifts, especially at sea, and physical demands often conflict with women's caregiving responsibilities, limiting their ability to stay in seafaring roles. Rigid routes, lack of mentorship, and limited access to seagoing opportunities challenge career progression. Women in leadership roles also face resistance to their authority, creating additional barriers to advancement. Inadequate workplace infrastructure, including the lack of women-friendly facilities and personal protective equipment (PPE), further compounds these challenges, contributing to the gender gaps in the sector.

Outreach and Recruitment

Limited awareness about maritime career opportunities for women represents a fundamental barrier. Most women in the industry work in administrative roles, such as finance and clerical work at ports, while a few are appointed as ship surveyors. The sector's traditional image of being dominated by men, combined with insufficient outreach to women students in maritime education and training institutions, creates a significant information gap. This is particularly evident in technical and operational roles, where women's representation in naval academies and training programs remains low. The lack of visible female role models in operational positions further perpetuates this awareness deficit, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of low participation.

Recruitment practices often reflect deeply entrenched biases regarding women's ability to handle physically demanding operational roles. These biases manifest in both explicit and implicit forms, from direct discrimination in hiring processes to subtle discouragements during recruitment. Recruiters frequently express skepticism about women's ability to manage jobs like marine piloting, cargo handling, or engineering, despite evidence of successful female performance in these positions. This bias is particularly pronounced in operational roles, where physical strength is often perceived as a primary requirement, despite technological advancements that have significantly reduced physical demands.

Onboard positions typically require four- to six-month deployments at sea, a schedule that conflicts with societal expectations about women's family responsibilities. Similarly, port operations often involve irregular shift patterns and extended exposure to harsh weather conditions, creating work-life balance challenges that disproportionately affect women. The lack of flexible working arrangements or job-sharing options further compounds these difficulties, particularly for women with caregiving responsibilities. Table 6.5 presents some interventions that the maritime employers can implement to attract and employ women, along with their corresponding indicators.

Table 6.5. Addressing Outreach and Recruitment Barriers for Women in Maritime Transport

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p>Assessment to identify barriers for women in maritime jobs and an action plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct an analysis of the barriers women face in recruitment, retention, and promotion in the maritime sector, broadly, and more concretely, collect sex-disaggregated maritime workforce data across a wide array of domains, such as women’s and men’s employment in total, across different positions, age, training and development, use of leave, duration of employment, and so on. • Develop an action plan that includes targeted activities, such as training programs, HR policy enhancements, and communication strategies, to address the identified barriers. 	<p>Assessment undertaken resulting in actionable recommendations and a time-bound and budgeted action plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/percentage of women’s maritime sector employment in total and across different job roles. • Number/percentage of female interns hired within X time of internship completion. • Number/percentage of women who secure jobs in the maritime sector within X time of completion of a professional certification program.
<p>Outreach: Launch community outreach initiatives with seafarers and maritime associations, combining professional maritime counseling, family engagement sessions, and public awareness campaigns to showcase job opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of female participants in career awareness programs. • Number of career awareness programs conducted annually. 	

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p>Nurturing female talent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Education talks:</i> Employer (ports and maritime companies) visiting schools and universities to talk about the value of work in maritime and the importance of promoting women in the sector. • <i>“Open days:”</i> Organizing “open days” where potential candidates (especially women and young people) are invited to visit the workplace and talk to staff. This could help challenge or demystify some aspects of careers in maritime, in addition to bringing potential reputational benefits. These will also help employers demystify false perceptions about the sector’s image, implying it is only suitable for men, because of the culture and working conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of girls contacted through education talks and “open days”. • Links deepened or created between maritime employers and education institutions through an MoU. 	
<p>Internship and professional certification programs: Establish internships and professional certification programs (for example, in navigation, and so on) for women entering maritime careers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/percentage of female interns who enroll and complete internship programs. • Number/percentage of women who enroll in and complete professional certification programs. 	

Human Resources Policies and Practices

Legal restrictions in numerous jurisdictions explicitly limit women’s participation in specific maritime roles or during certain working hours. For instance, in some countries, regulations prohibit women from working night shifts in ports or restrict their access to certain vessel areas, ostensibly for safety reasons. These regulatory barriers, often framed as protective measures, effectively exclude women from crucial operational experiences necessary for career advancement.

The sector demonstrates notable deficiencies in workplace policies that are supportive of women’s needs. Private terminal operators and port authorities frequently lack comprehensive maternity leave policies, parental leave provisions, or structured return-to-work programs. This gap is particularly pronounced at shipping companies, where the unique demands of seafaring careers create complex challenges for policy implementation. For instance, many vessels lack appropriate facilities for nursing mothers or fail to provide adequate health care coverage for women’s specific medical needs. The absence of childcare facilities at maritime workplaces, combined with inflexible scheduling practices, creates additional barriers for women balancing professional and family responsibilities.

Many maritime facilities lack restrooms for women, changing areas, or appropriately sized PPE. This infrastructural deficit is particularly acute in older port facilities and vessels, where physical space constraints and budgetary limitations complicate retrofitting efforts. The absence of these essential facilities not only creates practical difficulties but also sends a clear message about the sector’s limited commitment to gender equality. Table 6.6 presents some interventions that the maritime transport employers can implement to improve their HR policies and practices, along with their corresponding indicators.

Table 6.6. Addressing HR Policies and Practices Barriers for Women in Maritime Transport

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p>Flexible work-life policies: Revise or adopt HR policies to include provisions such as flexible working hours, parental leave, and childcare to balance professional and personal responsibilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies rolled out with staff-wide communication. • Number/percentage of staff trained on the sexual harassment policy. • Number of sexual harassment reports received through the formal redress mechanism and addressed. • Number/percentage of women utilizing flexible work options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/percentage of women retained with the organization, in total and by different job levels, including low-, mid-, and high-skilled technical roles. • Number/percentage of staff reporting improved job satisfaction, after the introduction or improvement of company’s HR policies and practices; disaggregated by sex and other key organizational metrics.
<p>Sexual harassment policy: Develop a sexual harassment policy, accompanied by an implementation plan, that is accessible to all staff and available on the company’s website.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/percentage of women utilizing flexible work options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/percentage of staff reporting improved job satisfaction, after the introduction or improvement of company’s HR policies and practices; disaggregated by sex and other key organizational metrics.

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p>Isolated worker policy: Develop an isolated worker policy, along with an accompanying implementation plan, that is accessible to all staff and available on the employer’s website.</p>		
<p>Childcare facility: Establish employer-provided childcare services, tailored to the organization’s business needs and workforce size. Additionally, consider offering financial support to employees—such as childcare subsidies or vouchers—to help cover associated costs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare facility established or upgraded in compliance with national standards. • Number of staff (women and men) benefiting from childcare facilities or subsidies. 	
<p>Workplace Infrastructure and PPE: Ensure the provision of gender-sensitive workplace infrastructure, including separate toilets and changing rooms, adequate lighting, and PPE that is appropriately designed to fit both women and men.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/percentage of workplace facilities equipped with separate toilets, changing rooms, and appropriate lighting. • Gender-sensitive PPE provided to all workers who require it. 	
<p>A staff satisfaction survey: Conduct periodic surveys to assess staff satisfaction with employment terms, working conditions, professional development, and perceptions of equal opportunity. Results should be disaggregated by sex and other demographics to inform and evaluate relevant initiatives and identify areas for improvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys are completed periodically. • Results disseminated and discussed among staff. • Percentage of recommendations acted upon. • Staff feedback on overall communication improved. 	

Career Progression

Career advancement in maritime operations demands multiple professional certifications and mandatory seafaring experience, creating layered barriers for women. For instance, progression to senior roles like harbor master or marine superintendent typically requires extensive sea time—often 10–20 years—combined with specialized certifications. This requirement poses particular challenges for women, who must not only navigate the technical demands of these qualifications but also overcome discrimination in gaining practical experience. This is further complicated by limited access to mentorship and professional networks traditionally crucial for career advancement in the maritime sector.

Many women find themselves compelled to transition from seagoing positions to shore-based roles or exit the sector entirely after several years of service, primarily due to family responsibilities or societal pressures. This transition often occurs at a critical career juncture when women are accumulating the essential experience needed for advancement to senior positions. The lack of structured programs supporting marine staff in transitioning back to sea or alternative progression pathways further compounds this challenge, effectively creating a permanent career ceiling for many women in maritime operations.

Many vessels lack proper medical support for women employees, particularly in addressing women's specific healthcare needs. This includes the absence of appropriate facilities or supplies, such as feminine hygiene products, which can make long-term seagoing careers challenging and less sustainable for women.

Unlike many other industries where lateral moves can facilitate advancement, maritime careers often follow strictly defined progression routes with limited flexibility. This rigidity particularly disadvantages women who may need to temporarily step back from operational roles or seek alternative routes to leadership positions. The situation is exacerbated by a lack of formalized cross-training programs that could enable women to build diverse skill sets while maintaining career momentum. Table 6.7 presents some of the interventions aimed at addressing barriers to women's retention and career progression in the maritime sector, along with their corresponding indicators.



Table 6.7. Addressing Career Progression Barriers for Women in Maritime Transport

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p>A performance review system: Develop a performance review system for staff with a standardized framework linking performance reviews to workforce competencies, skills development, and promotions.</p> <p>A range of actions can achieve this objective, such as: establishing a promotion committee comprised of both women and men, adopting a blind selection process where candidates' resumes do not include personal details, and testing participants without revealing their personal details so as to eliminate potential conscious or unconscious gender bias in promotion decisions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/percentage of promotion committee members completing training on unconscious bias and gender equality. • Gender balance in decision-making processes, ensuring a fairer and more diverse representation in promotion decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/percentage of women promoted within X months/years after the introduction of the formal performance review system. • Number/percentage of women promoted within X months/years after the introduction of the women's mentorship program. • Change in employee perceptions of organizational culture related to equal employment opportunities (measured through regular staff satisfaction surveys).
<p>Women's mentorship program: Implement a mentorship program pairing women with senior female and male professionals in maritime, focusing on various issues such as, improving technical and soft skills and addressing specific workplace challenges.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/percentage of women participating in the mentorship program. • Employer introducing the women's mentorship program. 	
<p>Women's networking: Create for women in maritime to connect, share experiences, and seek mentorship. Organize events for networking and building connections in the sector.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of women participating in networking platforms. 	
<p>Annual review process: Implement an annual review to track progress in women's promotion, using specific metrics to measure effectiveness and adjust initiatives as needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer introducing annual review process. 	

Leadership

Women in maritime leadership positions remain a rarity in emerging economies, especially as ship captains and port operations managers. Even when they do ascend to these positions, they contend with persistent resistance rooted in the sector’s biases toward women. In these traditionally male-dominated command structures, female leaders face subtle but constant challenges to their authority. Female ship captains often find their technical decisions subjected to extra scrutiny by subordinates, a pattern rarely seen with male counterparts, while women port managers must repeatedly prove competencies that are assumed in male leaders.

This continuous need to validate their expertise creates a significant psychological burden. These challenges not only affect current female leaders but also discourage women from pursuing leadership roles, perpetuating the cycle of underrepresentation in maritime leadership.

The traditional pathway to senior positions typically requires extensive operational experience, often including mandatory sea time and specific technical certifications. However, women face disproportionate challenges in accumulating this experience due to limited access to seagoing opportunities, bias in technical role assignments, and interruptions in career progression due to family responsibilities.

Women in maritime leadership positions must navigate the dual challenges of demonstrating technical competence in a male-dominated field while also exhibiting leadership capabilities. This dual burden often results in women being held to higher standards than their male counterparts. For instance, female technical directors in port authorities frequently report needing to possess both superior technical credentials and exceptional management skills to be considered for positions, while male candidates might advance based primarily on technical expertise. Table 6.8 highlights some interventions.

Table 6.8. Addressing Leadership Barriers for Women in Maritime Transport

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p>Women’s Leadership program: Establish a targeted leadership training program for women in maritime focusing on strategic planning, financial management, and team leadership.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number/percentage of enrolled participants who successfully complete the training program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number/percentage of women promoted to leadership roles within X months/years after the introduction of the women’s leadership training program.
<p>Annual review process: Implement an annual review to track progress in women’s representation in managerial and senior roles, using specific metrics to measure effectiveness and adjust initiatives as needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer introducing annual review process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in employee perceptions of organizational culture related to equal employment opportunities (measured through regular staff satisfaction surveys).

Entrepreneurship

Despite emerging opportunities in the ports, shipping, and inland waterways sectors, such as operating electric vessels, growing passenger and cruise ships, and greater automation in seaports, women encounter numerous challenges, including limited access to capital, training, and networks. Women can participate in sea trade either as merchandise traders or as suppliers of goods and services for sea-based trade, especially as suppliers to large ocean liners.

Business Skills Training and Advisory Services

Women face limited access to business skills training. The scarcity of trainings on trade processes, particularly digital trade facilitation mechanisms, creates barriers to entry. Furthermore, there is a notable lack of certification and training programs on providing logistics services, freight forwarding, clearances and maritime trading designed especially for women. This deficiency in targeted skill development opportunities significantly hinders women's career progression and advancement in the field. Women traders also face challenges related to regulatory compliances, quality testing requirements, and clearance processes. International, sea-based trade often requires a much higher level of compliance vs. land-based trade. Moreover, the products that women traders often engage in trading, such as processed foods or textiles, have very specific testing requirements, such that only a few testing agencies in emerging economies may exist for quality certification in line with standards in developed countries. These testing requirements also entail high costs, which making it harder for women traders to engage in sea-based trade. A knowledge of requisite compliances, coping with newly digitized customs clearance software, and ensuring duly filled paperwork for the shipments can also be barriers for women traders, especially those in small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Table 6.9 highlights some interventions to address these constraints.



Table 6.9. Addressing Business Skills Training and Advisory Services Barriers for Women in Maritime Transport

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Initiatives
<p>Launch a structured program to empower women in the maritime sector, especially in the passenger and cruise segments, as well as for women in merchandise sea trade, through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct regular business training covering essential business skills, such as planning, financial management, marketing, and passenger preferences and trends in the cruise and inland waterways segments. • Create an online platform with templates, guides, and toolkits for managing businesses in maritime transport, along with regulatory information and funding opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/percentage of women receiving training and business advisory support, disaggregated by women merchandise traders and women suppliers to the maritime transport industry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/percentage of women who participated in training, business advisory support programs, and subsequently launched or expanded businesses in maritime transport or merchandise trade. • Number and percentage of women who received training and business advisory support and report an improvement in their economic situation (e.g., increased revenue or profits).

Access to Finance

Financial barriers are particularly pronounced for women who attempt to enter the merchandise trade. Merchandise traders often have high working capital loan requirements so that they get their complete shipments (going into multiple container loads) cleared by port authorities, even if they do not have a buyer lined up for the entire shipment. Women find it harder to secure these working capital loans owing to enduring stereotypes, especially in the formal banking sector. Table 6.10 highlights some of the key interventions to address these constraints women face, and the earlier case study on the Assam IWT Project highlights the importance of affordable financing for women entrepreneurs to start their businesses in the maritime sector.

Table 6.10. Addressing Access to Finance Barriers for Women in Maritime Transport

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Initiatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loans: Launch a dedicated initiative providing loans tailored to women entrepreneurs in maritime trade (for example, collateral-free, low interest, and so on) with a streamlined application process. • Grants: Establish a competitive grant program to provide seed funding for women-led startups in the maritime trade sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/percent of women entrepreneurs who secure loans through the Access to Finance Initiative. • Number of women entrepreneurs who receive maritime trade grants for engaging in the maritime trade sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/percentage of women who received financial support and subsequently launched or expanded businesses in maritime transport or merchandise trade. • Number and percentage of women beneficiaries of the financial support who report an improvement in their economic situation (e.g., increased revenue or profits).

Market Access and Linkages

Additionally, market access and networking challenges hinder women’s ability to tap into business opportunities. Women entrepreneurs are often smaller and lack networks to enter into contracts to become suppliers of specific goods and services for ocean liners and shipping companies. Table 6.11 highlights some of the key interventions to address these constraints women face.

Table 6.11. Addressing Market Access and Linkages Barriers for Women in Maritime Transport

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Initiatives
Facilitate market-oriented networking and collaboration between women entrepreneurs and port authorities, customs agencies, and maritime trade associations through exhibitions and business matchmaking events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/percentage of women entrepreneurs participating in maritime networking platforms. • Number/percentage of women entrepreneurs participating in these platforms who secure contracts in maritime trade. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/percentage of women who report improved market access, secured contracts, and business partnerships as a result of networking engagement.

