

Groundbreaking Study Charts Course for Enhanced Gender Equality in Sri Lanka's Maritime Industry

A landmark research report, "INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN THE SRI LANKAN MARITIME INDUSTRY – A 2025 STUDY," was officially launched on 24th July 2025, at BMICH, Colombo. This pioneering initiative, spearheaded by MaritimeSheEO in collaboration with Ceyline Group and with the backing of the Director General of Merchant Shipping Sri Lanka (DGMS), marks a significant step towards fostering greater equality within the nation's maritime sector.

This comprehensive study stands as the first of its kind, offering an in-depth examination of women's experiences across the Sri Lankan maritime industry. Its core objectives were to map the current landscape of women's participation, pinpoint existing barriers, and formulate actionable recommendations to cultivate a more inclusive environment, aligning with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Key areas of focus included assessing the representation of women and roles they undertake in the maritime industry, identifying obstacles such as gender bias, limited access to training, and insufficient supportive policies, and devising practical strategies to enhance gender diversity and inclusion.

This report highlights the achievements and challenges for women in Sri Lanka's maritime sector and intends to drive necessary changes to empower women in the sector" stated Sanjam Sahi Gupta, Founder of MaritimeSheEO. "The findings will establish a crucial baseline for future research, policy development, and industry initiatives, ultimately ensuring a more equitable and conducive environment for all who contribute to this vital industry."

The study furnishes data that will inform policies promoting gender equality, identifies best practices for integrating women into all facets of the maritime industry, and establishes a benchmark for future research and progress monitoring.

The Deputy Minister of Women and Child Affairs in Sri Lanka, (Hon) Dr. Namal Sudarshana, and Deputy Minister of Ports and Civil Aviation, (Hon) Eng. Janith Ruvan Kodithuwakku, attended the event as the Chief Guest and the Guest of Honour and emphasized the importance of gender inclusion across Sri Lanka's maritime industry. Their presence underscored the government's commitment to supporting initiatives that empower women and promote diversity within key economic sectors. Both ministers highlighted how crucial it is to break down existing barriers and create pathways for women to thrive in all roles within the maritime and logistic industry, recognizing their vital contribution to national development.

Participants in this extensive study included a wide array of stakeholders: employers (ship owners, operators, ports, navy, service providers), seafarers (both commercial and naval personnel), and shore-based maritime employees (administrative, technical, and support roles).

The success of this project was significantly bolstered by the involvement of key Endorsement partners, Ceylon Association of Shipping Agents (CASA), The Women's International Shipping and Trading Association (WISTA), Sri Lanka Association of NVOCC Agents (SLANA), Society of Chief Engineers Marine (SOCEM), Institute of Marine Engineering Science & Technology (IMAREST), Freight forwarders association (SLFFA), Association of Clearing Forwarding Agents (ACFA) and Young Ship Sri Lanka. Their contributions, alongside the support of

numerous other maritime associations, are instrumental in fostering a more equitable and diverse maritime workforce across Sri Lanka.

A particularly inspiring highlight of the launch event was the notable attendance of female cadets from leading Maritime Training Institutes such as the MSTI Maritime Academy, SMTI (Southern Maritime Training Institute), CINEC Campus, NDT from ITUM of University of Moratuwa. Their presence underscored the unwavering commitment of these institutions towards cultivating a diverse and inclusive maritime workforce for the future.

The Honorable Prime Minister, Dr. Harini Amarasuriya, emphasized the study's dual role, stating, "This study serves as both a valuable resource and a resolute call to action. I strongly encourage all stakeholders – government bodies, industry leaders, training institutions, and civil society organizations – to engage deeply with its findings and commit to concrete, sustained steps to advance gender inclusion across Sri Lanka's maritime and blue economy sectors."

Maritime SheEO is an organization dedicated to empowering women in the maritime industry globally. It aims to create the next generation of women leaders and promote gender equality, through its work in research reports, a global annual conference, leadership programs to empower women to become great leaders, and a community of over 700 women from across the world.

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