



The Power to Empower

PORTS OF POSSIBILITIES: STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN MARITIME INDIA





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ABOUT FLO

THE WOMEN'S WING OF FICCI

Founded in 1983 by a group of visionary women, FICCI FLO has grown into one of India's most influential women's organizations. With over 14,000 members across 20 chapters nationwide and its headquarters in New Delhi, FLO has been a catalyst for change, empowering women through entrepreneurship, leadership, and personal growth for over 41 years.

As India moves towards Viksit Bharat @2047, FICCI FLO aligns its mission with our Honourable Prime Minister Shri. Narendra Modi's vision of women-led development. Every year, FLO impacts the lives of lakhs of women, driving transformation through its national initiatives.

With an ever-growing membership, FLO is a force of change. Every chapter works tirelessly to uplift women through grassroots initiatives, capacity-building programs, and advocacy efforts. Together, we are shaping an inclusive, progressive India where women are at the forefront of development.

At FICCI FLO, empowerment is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Women at different stages of their personal and professional journeys have unique needs, and FLO works strategically at three levels-Grassroots, Mid-level, and Senior Leadership-to ensure comprehensive impact.

01



Grassroots Level:
Empowering Women
at the Foundation

02



Mid-Level: Supporting
Women Entrepreneurs
& Professionals

03



Senior Leadership:
Advancing Women in
Decision-Making Roles



Grassroots Level: Empowering Women at the Foundation



FLO believes that true transformation starts at the grassroots, where opportunities for education, skill development, and financial independence can break cycles of poverty and inequality. Our grassroots programs focus on:

- **Rural Livelihood & Entrepreneurship** - Helping rural women build sustainable businesses in agriculture, handicrafts, and local industries.
- **Digital Skilling & Financial Literacy** - Bridging the knowledge gap by teaching digital skills, online entrepreneurship, and financial management.
- **Handloom, Textile & Handicrafts Initiatives** - Reviving India's rich artisanal heritage by training women in weaving, embroidery, and traditional crafts, ensuring economic self-reliance.
- **Legal Awareness & Advocacy** - Educating women on their rights, legal protections, and avenues for justice.

These initiatives equip women with the skills, confidence, and resources to become self-sufficient contributors to their families and communities.



Mid-Level: Supporting Women Entrepreneurs & Professionals



Many women in India start businesses or enter the workforce but face challenges in scaling their ventures, accessing finance, or breaking into leadership roles. FLO supports them through:

- **FLO MSME Assist Cell** - A dedicated platform for women-led small and medium enterprises to get mentorship, funding guidance, and networking opportunities.
- **FLO Start-up Cell** - Supporting women entrepreneurs with incubation, funding access, and training in business strategy.
- **Capacity-Building & Leadership Development** - Organizing workshops, networking events, and skill enhancement programs for professionals and businesswomen.
- **Sector-Specific Mentorship** - Providing expert guidance in industries like textiles, manufacturing, technology, and retail to help women scale their businesses.

By bridging the gap between ambition and success, FLO enables mid-level professionals and entrepreneurs to grow, expand, and create more employment opportunities.



Senior Leadership: Advancing Women in Decision-Making Roles



Women in senior leadership often face barriers in corporate boardrooms, policymaking, and governance. FLO is committed to increasing women's representation at the highest levels of influence through:

- **FLO Women Directors Initiative** - Training and mentoring women for boardroom roles, supporting gender diversity in corporate leadership.
- **Policy & Advocacy** - Partnering with policymakers and industry leaders to shape gender-inclusive business and economic policies.
- **Leadership & Executive Training** - Empowering women in top positions with advanced leadership programs, peer networking, and access to influential platforms.
- **Representation in National & Global Forums** - Amplifying the voices of women leaders in business summits, industry panels, and international delegations.

Foreword by FICCI FLO PRESIDENT



As President of FICCI FLO, it is with immense pride that I present this comprehensive report on "**Ports of Possibility: Strengthening Women's Representation in Maritime India**" the idea for this study was inspired by Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Minister of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, himself. When I called him after taking over as National President of FLO, he grew curious about the role of women in his sector. This conversation led to deeper reflection on the gender gap in the maritime industry and the pressing need to bridge it. This study also aligns perfectly with our

Honorable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's visionary agenda of women-led development and the transformative journey toward **Viksit Bharat @2047**.

Traditionally, the shipping and maritime sectors have been overwhelmingly male-dominated, with key job roles such as ship captains, marine engineers, navigators, port operators, dock workers, crane operators, logistics managers, and stevedores largely occupied by men. The physically demanding nature of some roles, coupled with historical biases and a lack of gender-sensitive infrastructure, has resulted in the exclusion of women from critical operational and leadership positions. However, with the advent of modern technology, automation, and enhanced safety protocols, these roles are no longer restricted by gender and should be allocated purely based on skills and capability.

The Government of India has demonstrated remarkable foresight through transformative initiatives like the Maritime India Vision 2030, Sagarmala Programme, and Sagar Mein Samman, which are reshaping our maritime landscape. This report builds upon these progressive efforts, identifying strategic interventions to foster a more inclusive and skill-driven workforce.

During this study, we encountered inspiring stories of women leaders in the maritime and shipping industry, which have been compiled into a dedicated compendium.

I am deeply encouraged by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways' commitment to inclusive growth. While pioneering steps have already yielded impressive results, **there remains a significant opportunity to ensure that women are not just accommodated but actively encouraged and empowered to participate in the sector.** FICCI FLO is privileged to contribute to this national mission by providing data-driven insights and targeted recommendations that advocate for systemic change in maritime employment structures.

This report presents a three-pronged strategy to achieve gender diversity in the sector:

- **Employment:** Reforming recruitment policies to actively integrate women into maritime professions, including roles in marine navigation, port operations, shipping logistics, and marine surveying.
- **Gender-Sensitive Infrastructure:** Ensuring that port facilities, vessels, and workplaces incorporate necessary provisions for women's safety, hygiene, and overall accessibility.
- **Skilling Initiatives:** Developing specialized training programs in maritime engineering, navigation, logistics, and supply chain management to equip women with the technical expertise needed to excel in the industry.

At FICCI FLO, we firmly believe that achieving Viksit Bharat requires the **full and equal participation of women in every industry, including the maritime and shipping sectors.** We remain committed to supporting the Government's transformative agenda by leveraging our network of 12,000+ women leaders across 20 chapters nationwide to champion gender diversity in this crucial economic domain.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways for their support in visiting and collecting the primary data from Ports across the country, to all the port authorities, terminal operators, and maritime professionals who contributed valuable insights. **Together, we are determined to build a maritime ecosystem that not only upholds the principles of women-led development but also establishes India as a global leader in inclusive and skill-driven maritime excellence.**



Regards,

Joyshree Das Verma
President, FICCI FLO



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Introduction

SETTING THE CONTEXT

The maritime sector forms the backbone of global trade, with ports serving as critical nodes connecting sea routes to land transportation networks. In India, this sector has evolved into a vital economic driver, demanding attention not just for infrastructure development but also for ensuring inclusive growth that leverages the full potential of its workforce, including women who remain significantly underrepresented.

India's maritime sector underpins the nation's economic architecture, facilitating approximately 95% of trade by volume and 70% by value¹. Beyond mere trade facilitation, the sector serves as a lifeline for industries ranging from manufacturing and agriculture to energy, enabling the efficient movement of raw materials and finished products across global supply chains. The sector's economic footprint has expanded substantially, with cargo handling capacity at major ports doubling to 1,630 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) by March 2024². This impressive growth trajectory is further evidenced by India's emergence as a leading exporter of shipping vessels, commanding a 33% global market share and underscoring the country's growing influence in the international maritime economy³.

The robust expansion of India's maritime operations is clearly reflected in its cargo traffic statistics. From 885 million tonnes in 2010-11, cargo volumes have surged to 1,410 million tonnes in 2022-23, demonstrating the sector's resilience and adaptability amid global economic fluctuations⁴. In the fiscal year 2023-24 alone, major ports handled over 819 million metric tons (MMT) of cargo, highlighting their indispensable role in trade facilitation⁵.

¹ Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (Sagarmanthan 2024: India's Maritime Vision (2024, November 19). Retrieved from PIB: <https://pib.gov.in/PressNoteDetails.aspx?Noteld=153432&ModuleId=3®=3&lang=1>

² Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (Year End Review of Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways 2024 (2024, December 31). Retrieved from PIB: [https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2089049#:~:text=The%20cargo%20handling%20capacity%20at,Major%20Ports\)%20is%202690%20MMTPA.](https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2089049#:~:text=The%20cargo%20handling%20capacity%20at,Major%20Ports)%20is%202690%20MMTPA.)

³ Ministry of Finance (2025). Economic Survey 2024-25 (Section: Diversification of India's exports to new markets Pg. 98). Delhi : Government of India. Link: <https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/economicsurvey/doc/echapter.pdf>

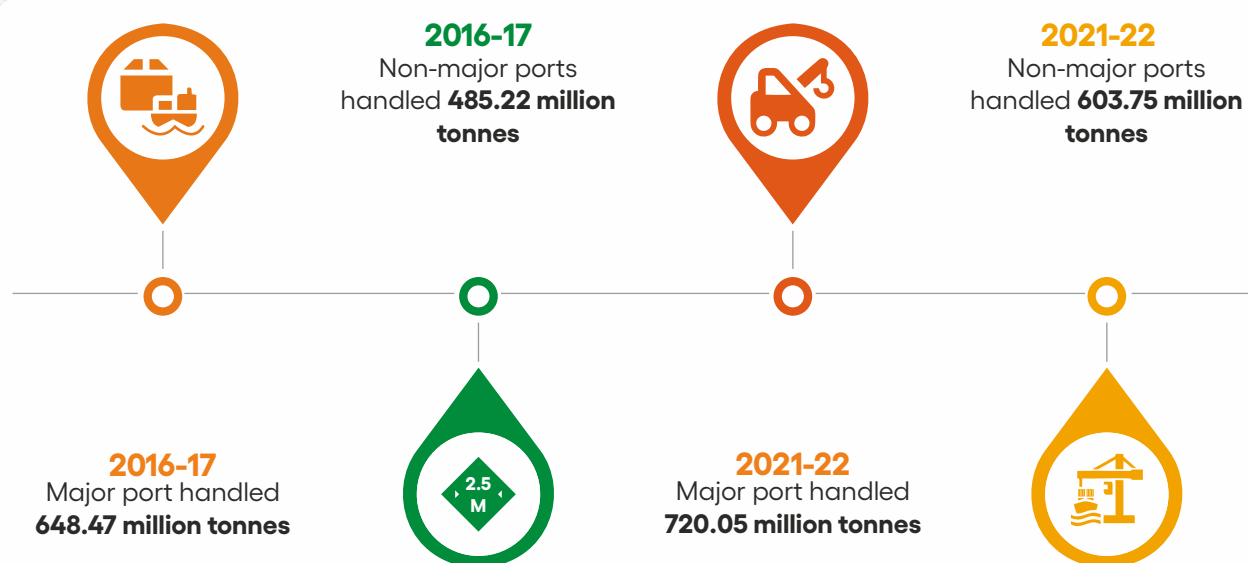
⁴ De, P., & Barman, A. (2024). Assessing Performance and productivity of Major Ports of India. Research and Information System for Developing Countries.

⁵ ANI. (2025, Feb 23). India's ports sector set for major growth with 500-550 MTPA capacity expansion annually by FY2028. Delhi, Delhi, India. Link: <https://www.aninews.in/news/business/indias-ports-sector-set-for-major-growth-with-500-550-mtpa-capacity-expansion-annually-by-fy202820250223122013/>



Total cargo volume handled by ports increased by 24.5% from 1,133.69 million tonnes to 1,323.8 million tonnes over five-year period 2016-2017 to 2021-2022 (as seen in Figure 1). While major ports maintained dominance with 54.4% market share in 2021-22, their growth rate of 11% lagged behind non-major ports, which experienced 24.4% growth. This disparity has shifted the market landscape, with non-major ports increasing their share from 42.8% to 45.6%.

Figure 1: Cargo Volume Growth in Indian Ports between 2016 and 2022



Source: Basic Port Statistics of India Reports- 2016 to 2022

1.1. Maritime Infrastructure and Governance

India's port infrastructure has undergone a remarkable transformation from basic facilities to a sophisticated, technology-enabled network. Today, the country's maritime landscape comprises 13 major ports and over 200 non-major ports, collectively handling diverse cargo types including containers, bulk materials, and liquid cargo. The total port capacity stands at approximately 2,604.99 million tonnes per annum, with an annual container handling capacity of around 17 million TEUs⁶. Major ports like Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT),

⁶ Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (2023, Feb 07). Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030 estimates investments of Rs. 1,00,000–1,25,000 crore for capacity augmentation and development of world-class infrastructure at Indian Ports. Delhi, India.

Chennai Port, and Mundra Port rank among the busiest, while private operators such as JM Baxi and DP World have significantly elevated the development and performance of non-major ports.

The governance structure of Indian ports has evolved considerably, with major ports transitioning from the traditional service model to the more efficient landlord port management approach. Under this model, port authorities retain ownership of land and essential infrastructure while private operators manage cargo handling and commercial operations through concession agreements⁷. This strategic shift, supported by legislative reforms like the Major Port Authorities Act of 2020, has enabled greater operational flexibility and responsiveness to market demands. Meanwhile, the increasing privatization of minor ports has introduced more agile operational models backed by technical expertise, global best practices, and substantial capital investments, collectively enhancing the sector's efficiency and competitiveness.

1.2. Inland Waterways and Maritime Sector Expansion

India's Inland Water Transport (IWT) system represents an underutilized yet promising component of the maritime sector with significant economic and environmental advantages. The country possesses an extensive network of 14,500 km of navigable waterways, of which 5,200 km are suitable for mechanized vessels. The National Waterways Act of 2016 officially designated 111 waterways as national waterways, with primary routes including the Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly River system (NW-1), Brahmaputra (NW-2), and the West Coast Canal (NW-3). The Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP), supported by the World Bank, aims to develop NW-1 for commercial navigation, enabling larger vessel movements and alleviating road and rail congestion.

The maritime sector's scope has expanded beyond traditional cargo operations to encompass a diverse range of activities that create new economic opportunities. The development of state and national waterways has established alternative routes for inland transportation, offering environmentally favorable options compared to road and rail. Concurrently, passenger and cruise shipping segments have gained momentum, with dedicated terminals being developed at ports like Mumbai, Mormugao, and Cochin. The

⁷ Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways.
<https://shipmin.gov.in/division/ports-wing>

extension of the maritime value chain through container freight stations, inland container depots, and multimodal logistics parks has generated diverse employment prospects across the logistics spectrum, including areas such as supply chain management, customs clearance, warehousing, and distribution.

1.3. Government Initiatives and Strategic Vision

The Government of India, through the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, has implemented progressive initiatives to position the country as a global maritime leader. The Sagarmala Programme represents a flagship effort focused on comprehensive coastal development, port modernization, and connectivity enhancement through strategic investments in road, rail, and inland waterways infrastructure. This program has been instrumental in driving operational improvements and capacity expansion across the maritime network, with particular emphasis on developing coastal economic zones to stimulate regional economic growth.

Figure 2: Study Team Visit to the Chennai Port



Source: Study Team

The Maritime India Vision 2030 represents a transformative blueprint for India's maritime sector through strategic interventions across ports, shipping, and waterways that collectively aim to elevate national maritime capabilities to global standards⁸. The vision

⁸ Maritime India Vision 2030
<https://sagarmala.gov.in/sites/default/files/MIV%202030%20Report.pdf>

outlines over 150 initiatives focused on developing world-class mega ports, enhancing operational efficiency through improved vessel turnaround times, and integrating digital technologies to create smart ports with system-driven performance monitoring. These port-centric developments are complemented by strategic shipping sector enhancements that target improved shipbuilding capacity, leadership in vessel recycling, and increased participation of Indian seafarers in the global maritime workforce.

The waterways component of Maritime India Vision 2030 strategically prioritizes the development of high-potential National Waterways to create an integrated transportation network that enhances domestic connectivity while facilitating cost-effective international trade. This focused approach has already yielded significant results, with cargo volumes handled by National Waterways increasing from 108 MMT in FY 2022 to 133 MMT in FY 2024⁹. By developing the Eastern Waterways Connectivity Transport Grid to connect major waterways and neighboring countries, while simultaneously exploring opportunities in river and ocean cruise tourism through terminal development and rationalized port charges, Maritime India Vision 2030 demonstrates a comprehensive approach to waterway utilization that balances commercial freight operations with tourism potential.

1.4. Objectives and Scope of the Study

Given this background, this study on women's participation and leadership in India's ports, shipping, and inland water transport sectors was conducted to address the critical need to understand and overcome gender barriers in maritime employment. Commissioned by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Government of India, and conducted by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry Ladies Organisation (FICCI FLO) with Nikore Associates as the technical partner. By analyzing the current landscape of women's employment across different port categories, identifying obstacles to entry and advancement, and documenting successful inclusion initiatives, this study establishes a foundation for strategic interventions to enhance gender diversity.

This study aims to examine women's representation in India's maritime sector and develop strategies to enhance their participation. The objectives of the study include:

1. Assess the current status of women's participation across ports, shipping, and inland water transport sectors

⁹ MARITIME INDIA VISION 2030
<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2080012>

2. Identify barriers and opportunities for women in technical and leadership roles
3. Document success stories and best practices from ports with higher women's representation
4. Evaluate infrastructure and facilities from a gender perspective
5. Develop actionable, evidence-based recommendations for stakeholders to foster gender inclusion
6. Establish a baseline for measuring future progress in women's participation in the maritime sector. The findings and recommendations presented in this study aim to catalyze meaningful changes in the maritime sector's approach to gender inclusion.

By identifying infrastructure needs, policy gaps, and capacity-building opportunities, the research provides practical guidance for port authorities, private operators, industry associations, and government agencies seeking to create more equitable and diverse workplaces. Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader national objective of women-led development, recognizing that the maritime sector's future competitiveness depends on its ability to attract and retain talent from the entire workforce, regardless of gender.

Figure 3: Study Team Visit to the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority, Mumbai



Source: Study Team

Study Methodology

The study on women's participation and leadership in India's ports and inland waterways sectors employed a comprehensive mixed-methods approach designed to develop a nuanced understanding of gender dynamics across the maritime ecosystem.

2.1. Secondary Research

The research process began with an extensive review of secondary literature to establish the contextual foundation for the study. The team analyzed Maritime Vision 2030 and Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047, annual reports of India's major ports, and academic research to understand the maritime sector's economic significance, infrastructure landscape, governance structures, and existing gender composition. This review informed the selection of 12 strategic locations across seven states for field visits, ensuring representation across different port categories, governance models, and geographical regions. Selection criteria included cargo volume, employment levels, operational history, strategic importance for trade, and existing representation of women at the facilities.

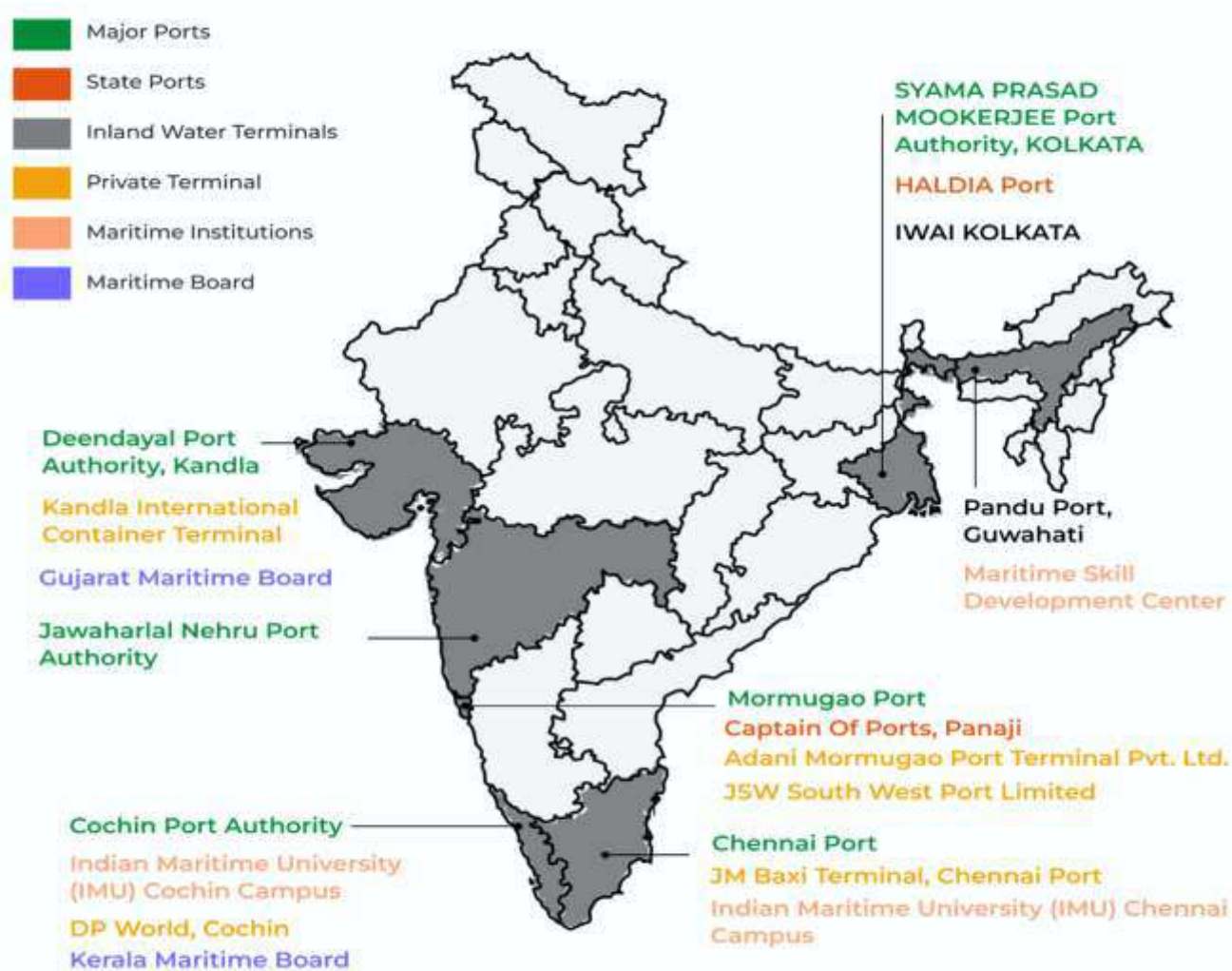
Following the secondary research phase, the team developed specialized research instruments including semi-structured questionnaires for Key Informant Interviews with port leadership and department heads, Focus Group Discussion guides for women employees, and an Infrastructure Audit Checklist to assess physical facilities and operational environments from a gender perspective. These tools were designed to gather comparable information across diverse port operations while remaining sensitive to site-specific contexts and operational differences.

2.2. Field Research Implementation

Field visits constituted the core of the research methodology, conducted between late December 2024 and early March 2025. The study team visited major ports, state ports, and inland waterway terminals across Maharashtra, West Bengal, Goa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, and Assam. At each location, the research followed a structured protocol beginning with consultations with port leadership (Chairpersons, Deputy Chairpersons, and/or Port

Secretaries) to understand institutional priorities and policy frameworks. The team then conducted interviews with department heads across various functional areas, focusing on departmental gender composition and operational challenges.

Figure 4: Field Visit Locations selected for the Study



Source: Prepared by Study Team

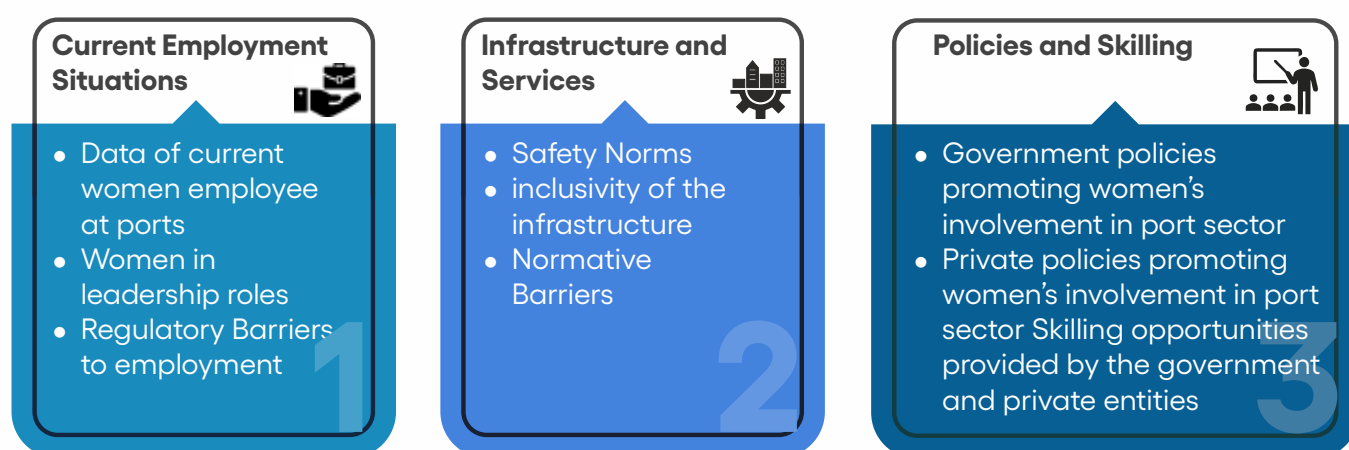
Focus Group Discussions with women employees allowed for collective exploration of workplace experiences, infrastructure adequacy, safety concerns, and work-life balance issues. These sessions typically included women from diverse departments, hierarchical levels, and tenure durations to capture multiple perspectives. Each field visit concluded with an infrastructure audit through a guided tour of port facilities to assess physical infrastructure and operational environments.

2.3. Framework for Analysis and Policy Recommendations

The collected data was analyzed using a comprehensive assessment framework structured around three core dimensions:

1. Current employment situations - examining women's representation across hierarchical levels, leadership positions, and employment challenges
2. Infrastructure and services - assessing gender-inclusivity of physical facilities, safety measures, basic amenities, and operational environments
3. Policies and skilling initiatives - evaluating both government and private sector interventions designed to promote women's participation

Figure 5: Framework for Assessment of Key Findings from Field Visits



Source: Study Team

This framework enabled systematic evaluation of women's representation and experiences across different port contexts while identifying patterns, disparities, and potential intervention points for enhancing gender inclusion in the maritime sector. The findings from the analysis informed the development of a three-step recommendations framework addressing key intervention areas for women's maritime participation:

1. Policies to enhance women's representation across technical roles and leadership - focusing on leadership mentorship programs, standardized grievance mechanisms, and technical training with employment pathways
2. Gender-sensitive infrastructure and services - emphasizing improved surveillance and lighting systems in operational zones and development of dedicated women's facilities throughout port premises
3. Gender-sensitive skilling initiatives and training - proposing periodic skill enhancement programs, dedicated maritime skill centers, and public-private partnerships for specialized training

This structured approach to recommendations development ensured that proposed interventions directly addressed identified barriers while leveraging existing best practices observed during field research. The recommendations were designed to be practical, scalable, and adaptable across different port contexts, providing actionable guidance for stakeholders seeking to enhance gender inclusion in India's maritime sector.

Progress in Gender MAINSTREAMING AT INDIAN PORTS

India's implementation of gender mainstreaming initiatives at ports represents a strategic response to the persistent underrepresentation of women in the maritime sector, with focused interventions designed to transform port operations into more inclusive workspaces. The Maritime India Vision 2030 incorporates comprehensive gender policy measures that extend beyond mere numerical targets, addressing structural barriers through infrastructure modifications, policy reforms, and cultural shifts within port environments. These efforts are beginning to yield results, with female participation in the maritime workforce showing promising growth—evidenced by the 514% increase in registered women seafarers from 1,699 in 2014 to 10,440 in 2023—though women still comprise less than 1% of the overall maritime workforce across ports, shipping, and inland water transport sectors.

Port authorities across India are implementing targeted interventions to overcome the sociocultural barriers limiting women's participation, while similar approaches are being extended to the waterways sector through the development of National Waterways. Gender-sensitive infrastructure improvements include appropriate facilities and secure transportation for shift workers, alongside revised recruitment practices that previously disadvantaged women. The waterways component of this transformation focuses on creating shore-based opportunities for women as part of the broader National Waterways development, which has seen cargo volumes increase from 108 MMT to 133 MMT between FY 2022-2024. The "Women in Seafarer" program further supports these changes through educational scholarships and dedicated grievance mechanisms, collectively aiming to create more inclusive environments across the maritime ecosystem while working toward tripling women's participation in Merchant Navy roles by 2026.

3.1. Internal Complaints Committees and POSH Implementation

India's sea ports have institutionalized Internal Complaints Committees (ICC) in compliance with the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act, with ports such as Haldia Dock Complex, Haldia, West Bengal and Cochin Port, Kerala implementing women's safety

mechanisms even before legal mandates. Cochin Port's early establishment of a Women's Cell in 2004, later reconstituted as an ICC following the POSH Act, exemplifies how established systems typically result in better employee awareness and more structured complaint handling procedures.

The effectiveness of ICCs varies considerably, reflecting differing institutional priorities regarding gender safety and inclusion. While ports such as Chennai Port Authority have set industry benchmarks through strict zero-tolerance harassment policies, well-documented procedures, regular training, and confidential reporting systems, few facilities maintain ICCs that exist primarily on paper with limited accessibility and insufficient action on complaints. This inconsistency highlights the need for standardized implementation practices to ensure POSH policies are actively enforced rather than merely adopted formally, ultimately creating genuinely safe and supportive work environments for women across India's maritime sector.

Table 1: Status of ICC and POSH Committees at Ports selected for Field Visits

Port	Year of ICC Establishment	POSH Committee Status
Jawaharlal Nehru Port	2013	Active with quarterly meetings
Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port and Haldia Dock Complex	2010	Regular functioning with dedicated secretary
Mormugao Port	2014	Active with theme "COUNT IN HER"
Cochin Port	2004 (as Women Cell)	Reconstituted as ICC with expanded scope
Chennai Port	2013	Active with zero-tolerance policy
Deendayal Port	2014	Operational with formal grievance

3.2. Women's Committees and Support Networks

Beyond formal complaint mechanisms, ports have established women's committees and peer support networks that significantly enhance workplace inclusivity. These groups create spaces where women employees can connect, share experiences, and collectively

advocate for gender-sensitive policies and infrastructure improvements. At Kandla Port, the Women's Welfare Committee serves as both a team-building facilitator and an informal advisory body to management on gender issues, while JNPA's committee focuses on professional development through skill-building initiatives and mentorship programs. These committees have implemented practical improvements such as installing sanitary napkin vending machines, organizing wellness sessions, and advocating for dedicated restrooms and transportation facilities.

Women's committees effectively complement formal Internal Complaints Committees by addressing broader aspects of workplace inclusion. While ICCs like Cochin Port's (established as a Women's Cell in 2004 and later restructured under the POSH Act) focus on addressing harassment through defined legal frameworks, peer support networks create informal spaces where women can openly discuss experiences and identify shared challenges. Field discussions revealed that these committees serve as advocacy platforms where women can actively shape workplace policies and culture. By fostering solidarity and facilitating professional growth opportunities in a traditionally male-dominated industry, these networks play a crucial role in creating environments where women can pursue and thrive in maritime careers.

Figure 6: Study Team Visit to the Cochin Port



Source: Study Team

3.3. Gender-Sensitive Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure quality and availability serve as tangible indicators of ports' commitment to gender inclusion, revealing significant variations across facilities. The most fundamental concern across all ports is the provision of adequate washrooms and sanitary facilities, particularly in operational areas away from administrative buildings. While Cochin Port Authority has demonstrated leadership by systematically providing dedicated women's washrooms throughout its premises including operational zones, many ports still struggle with this basic necessity. Similarly, rest areas and dedicated spaces for women remain inconsistent across the sector, with positive examples from Haldia Dock Complex's residential apartments and recreation rooms, and DP World's Sanjeevani initiative at JNPA introducing bunk beds for employees to rest during breaks.

Deendayal Port's comprehensive infrastructure approach demonstrates how thoughtful design can remove practical barriers to women's workplace participation. The port provides first-aid rooms with privacy considerations, appropriate restroom facilities, well-illuminated pathways throughout operational areas, and strategic surveillance systems, illustrating that physical infrastructure barriers are solvable through intentional planning rather than inherent to port operations.

Most ports have installed CCTV surveillance but amongst the best examples, Kandla Port has systematically implemented washroom facilities on every floor of administrative buildings and strategically positioned them in operational areas, adopting standard designs that prioritize privacy, security, and sanitary disposal systems. These leading practices demonstrate that with proper planning and institutional commitment, gender-sensitive infrastructure can be effectively integrated into port operations, creating environments where women can fully participate and advance in maritime careers.

Figure 7: Study Team Visit to the Deendayal Port, Kandla, Gujarat



Source: Study Team

3.4. Employee Welfare Measures

Indian ports have implemented diverse welfare measures recognizing that women's participation depends on holistic support systems beyond basic employment provisions. Educational initiatives represent a significant focus area, with ports like Chennai and Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata (SMPK) offering merit-based scholarships for employees' daughters. These programs cover tuition fees and educational materials, addressing financial barriers while investing in future gender equity through educational advancement. Concurrently, recreational programmes has emerged as an important component of workplace culture development, with facilities like Mormugao Port hosting regular sports competitions and training programs designed to encourage women's involvement, helping to break gender barriers through team-building activities while establishing informal support networks.

Box 1: JNPA's Two-Year Childcare Leave Policy¹⁰

Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority has implemented a progressive childcare leave policy that directly addresses one of the most significant barriers to women's career advancement in India's maritime sector. With women performing eight times more care work than men in India, the burden of childcare often forces difficult career choices. JNPA's solution offers women a flexible two-year paid leave that can be utilized anytime before their child turns 18 years old—an approach that recognizes childcare needs extend beyond infancy.

Health and wellness initiatives specifically addressing women's needs demonstrate the sector's evolving approach to gender-inclusive workplace design. Cochin Port has implemented specialized health check-up camps and awareness programs focused on women's health issues, while Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority provides comprehensive medical coverage extending to employees' families and continuing post-retirement. These multifaceted welfare measures reflect a growing understanding that women's retention and advancement in maritime careers requires addressing their educational, recreational, and health-related needs through intentionally designed support systems. By creating environments where women can thrive both professionally and personally, these ports are establishing foundations for a more inclusive and equitable maritime sector that recognizes diverse employee needs as essential to operational excellence.

3.5. Private Terminal Operators' Gender Initiatives

Private terminal operators function as valuable partners in advancing the Government of India's vision for gender diversity in ports through strategic initiatives that complement national gender mainstreaming efforts. These operators implement progressive policies aligned with their corporate social responsibility commitments while supporting the government's broader maritime development agenda. Their collaborative approach recognizes that workforce diversity delivers tangible business benefits including enhanced productivity, innovation, and employee retention, thereby strengthening the entire port ecosystem in accordance with the Maritime India Vision 2030's gender inclusion objectives.

¹⁰ Study Team finding

Figure 8: Study Team Visit to the Haldia Port, Kolkata



Source: Study Team

DP World has implemented comprehensive gender diversity initiatives that directly support the Government of India's maritime inclusion vision. Their approach includes integrating mandatory female workforce participation clauses into concession agreements with minimum representation requirements, offering incentives for meeting diversity targets, and reducing experience requirements for women in technical roles. Their flagship "Sanjeevani" program further advances these efforts by creating dedicated rest facilities, establishing career growth pathways through the "Bridging Businesses" initiative, and facilitating direct engagement between women employees and senior management through "skip-level meetings"—collectively creating an ecosystem where women can thrive in port operations.

Box 2: DP World's Sanjeevani Initiative - Creating Safe Spaces for Women at JNPA

At India's largest container trade gateway, DP World Nhava Sheva at Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority has pioneered the "Sanjeevani" initiative—a dedicated resting space addressing the distinct needs of women working in port environments. This low-investment, high-impact solution provides women with a private room featuring proper furnishings, a study table, and an attached washroom, all maintained to high standards of cleanliness. Field observations confirm that providing this alternative to shared resting areas—which often create safety concerns and accessibility barriers for female employees—significantly improves women's workplace experience and productivity while establishing a valuable model for other terminal operators throughout India's maritime network.

JM Baxi has developed comprehensive gender diversity initiatives across its maritime operations that strengthen the implementation of national inclusion policies, with particularly notable advancements at its Tuticorin terminal. Their approach focuses on building technical expertise among women through specialized training pathways designed to address their underrepresentation in engineering and port operations. At the Tuticorin terminal, these efforts are further enhanced through targeted hiring initiatives, skill development workshops, and leadership training programs.

Box 3: JM Baxi's Multi-Faceted Approach to Maritime Gender Inclusion¹¹

JM Baxi, a leading Indian maritime company, has implemented a comprehensive gender inclusion strategy across its operations, with Tuticorin Container Terminal (TICT) serving as its flagship success story. TICT has achieved 40% women's representation across critical operational functions—including planning, gate operations, quay crane operations, HR, IT, finance, and security—setting a new industry benchmark in a traditionally male-dominated sector. The company's approach combines structured mentorship programs connecting junior women employees with senior leaders, a dedicated "Women in Maritime" network facilitating knowledge-sharing and professional development, and strategic collaborations with industry bodies to advance gender diversity. This multi-layered strategy demonstrates how integrated approaches—spanning recruitment, retention, advancement, and industry advocacy—can successfully transform gender representation in maritime operations while creating sustainable career pathways for women in specialized technical and operational roles.

¹¹ JM Baxi Tidings

https://www.jmbaxico.com/uploads/notifications/newsletters/JANUARY%20-%20MARCH%202023_jmbaxi.pdf?1690915755

Box 4: Maersk's Women-Run Warehouse in Dadri ¹²¹³

Maersk's 100% women-operated Container Freight Station in Dadri, Uttar Pradesh represents a groundbreaking initiative in India's logistics sector. This 100,000 square foot facility addresses both gender employment gaps and societal barriers faced by women in a traditionally male-dominated industry. The warehouse demonstrates Maersk's commitment to its "Promote, Nurture and Advance" gender inclusion framework, featuring comprehensive support systems including dedicated washrooms, resting areas, creche facilities, medical assistance, and transportation for female supervisors. The company provides three-month paid training for new female workers across all skill levels and mandates women-friendly morning shifts (9:00 am - 6:00 pm) to facilitate work-life balance. This initiative forms part of Maersk's broader gender equality strategy, which aims to increase female recruitment from 7.6% in 2021 to an ambitious 50% by 2027—efforts that earned the company inclusion in the Bloomberg Gender Equality Index in 2020 for its policy development, representation improvements, and transparency commitments

¹² Maersk

<https://www.maersk.com/about>

<https://safety4sea.com/maersk-part-of-bloombergs-gender-equality-index/>

¹³ Turning the tide: How Maersk is steering diversity and shattering gender stereotypes in the marine, logistics industry

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/shipping/-/transport/turning-the-tide-how-maersk-is-steering-diversity-and-shattering-gender-stereotypes-in-the-marine-logistics-industry/articleshow/99111933.cms?from=mdr>

Key Insights from FIELD VISITS

The field visits conducted across selected major and state ports, and private terminals in India revealed a complex landscape of gender dynamics within the maritime sector, where progress coexists with persistent challenges. These visits provided firsthand insights into women's experiences across hierarchical levels, departments, and roles, capturing both the structural barriers and individual success stories that characterize women's participation in ports and inland waterway operations.

This section synthesizes these insights to present a comprehensive analysis of the current state of women's participation in the maritime sector, highlighting both advances and areas requiring intervention. The analysis examines women's representation in administrative versus operational roles, identifies regulatory barriers that may have disproportionate effects on women's participation, assesses the adequacy of safety and infrastructure provisions at the facilities and explores how family responsibilities interact with professional demands.

4.1. Current Representation of Women in Ports

Women's participation in India's maritime sector has shown encouraging growth in recent years, though significant representation gaps persist across the industry ecosystem. The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways has driven notable progress through targeted initiatives under Maritime India Vision 2030, resulting in the increase of registered women seafarers from 1,699 in 2014 to 10,440 in 2023—a remarkable 5X growth. Despite this substantial improvement, women still constitute less than 1% of India's seafaring workforce, indicating that while government initiatives have created momentum, additional interventions may be needed to achieve gender parity in the sector.

Field assessments across major Indian port authorities reveal varying levels of women's representation, with distinct patterns emerging in employment distribution across staffing classifications. Chennai Port demonstrates the highest female employment with 403 women across all classifications, while Jawaharlal Nehru Port and Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port show more modest representation with 105 women each. Analysis of the employment



data indicates a concentration of women in Class 3 positions (62.3% of all women employed), primarily in administrative and operational roles, with significantly lower representation in Class 1 managerial positions (only 4.2% of the female workforce). This distribution pattern suggests opportunities for enhanced vertical integration of women into leadership roles across port authorities.

Table 2: Statistics of Women's Employment across Port Authorities visited

Port Authority	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Total
Jawaharlal Nehru Port	6	25	65	9	105
Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port	9	13	83	N/A	105
Mormugao Port	8	24	112	35	179
Cochin Port	N/A	33	78	N/A	111
Chennai Port	23	25	273	82	403
Deendayal Port	8	49	90	64	211

Women in the maritime sector occupy diverse roles across both freight and passenger operations, demonstrating the broad spectrum of opportunities available for enhanced female participation. As seen in Table 2, women are engaged in positions ranging from documentation officers and logistics coordinators on the freight side to cruise tourism coordinators and terminal operations managers on the passenger side. In inland waterways, women serve as transportation planners, safety officers, and tourism coordinators, highlighting the sector's potential for expanded female employment through targeted recruitment and training initiatives aligned with Maritime India Vision 2030's gender inclusion objectives.

Table 3: Sample list of Job Roles taken up by Women at Ports and Inland Waterways

Category of	Job Roles in Freight Side	Job Roles in Passenger Side
Ports	Documentation Officer Logistics Coordinator Supply Chain Analyst Freight Forwarding Manager	Cruise Tourism Coordinator Customer Service Representative Ticketing Officer Terminal Operations Manager
Inland Waterways	Transportation Planner	Ferry Operations Manager Tourism and Hospitality Coordinator Safety Officer Customer Service Supervisor

Women in maritime careers face interconnected structural and social barriers that limit their advancement despite government's inclusion initiatives. Their concentration in contractual Class 3 and 4 positions—resulting from curtailed direct recruitment at port authorities—creates job security concerns and career advancement limitations that affect retention. These challenges are compounded by inadequate vessel accommodations, extended family separations, safety concerns in male-dominated environments, and disproportionate career interruptions during family formation. Persistent occupational segregation further restricts women to office-based roles in finance, HR, and administration while technical waterfront positions remain predominantly male, requiring coordinated government-industry efforts to overcome these barriers and achieve the gender inclusion objectives outlined in Maritime India Vision 2030.

Figure 9: Study Team Visit to IWAI, Kolkata



Source: Study Team

4.2. Women in Leadership Roles

Government initiatives such as the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways' "Sagar Mein Samman" program demonstrate clear policy commitment to gender inclusion, while implementation variations present opportunities for enhanced sector-wide adoption. This flagship initiative has established valuable leadership development programs and mentorship networks that align with Maritime India Vision 2030's gender objectives. Implementation patterns show varying degrees of program penetration across different ports, suggesting potential for strengthened coordination between policy formulation and practical implementation to maximize women's leadership development opportunities throughout the maritime ecosystem.

The leadership advancement pathway for women narrows due to interconnected structural factors that can be addressed through targeted policy interventions. These factors include limited access to operational experience often considered prerequisite for senior roles, fewer connections to informal networks where mentorship opportunities emerge, opportunities to standardize promotion criteria, and potential differences in performance evaluation approaches. Women pursuing leadership positions often navigate both technical and cultural considerations, demonstrating exceptional capabilities while adapting to established leadership frameworks—dynamics that help explain current representation patterns despite increasing entry-level participation.

The proportional decrease in women's representation at higher leadership levels highlights the strategic importance of the gender mainstreaming actions outlined in Maritime Vision 2030. Contributing factors include challenges in accumulating continuous sailing experience during career development periods, intensified family responsibilities during key qualification phases, limited availability of same-gender mentors in senior positions, and traditional leadership expectations. Addressing these interconnected factors through coordinated government and industry initiatives would strengthen the leadership pipeline, building upon the solid foundation established by current policies to achieve the sector's inclusion objectives.

4.3. Regulatory Barriers

Technical qualification requirements for operational roles frequently function as implicit gender filters that preserve male dominance in key positions. Experience requirements in specialized roles historically held by men create circular barriers to entry—women cannot gain the required experience because they are not hired without it, perpetuating occupational segregation through seemingly neutral qualification criteria.

A perception of gender bias in recruitment practices despite gender-neutral recruitment, disincentivises women to pursue a maritime career. Women interviewees at ports like Chennai and Kandla reported questioning about their marriage plans and family intentions—inquiries rarely directed at male candidates—revealing how seemingly objective hiring processes can embed discriminatory practices that can actively discourage women's participation.

Maritime certification requirements designed around traditional male career patterns create structural barriers to women's professional advancement in offshore roles. The mandatory 1-2 years of continuous sailing time for professional certification coincides with family formation years for many women, effectively forcing a choice between career progression and family responsibilities due to the absence of flexible qualification pathways.

The infrequency of specialized maritime examination opportunities creates heightened risk and consequences for women's career progression. Missing an examination due to pregnancy, childcare, or family responsibilities can delay professional advancement by 6-12 months, a significant penalty that disproportionately affects women due to their greater likelihood of experiencing career interruptions, effectively slowing their advancement relative to male peers.

Figure 10: Study Team Visit to the Panaji Port, Goa



Source: Study Team

4.4. Safety, Infrastructure, and Services

Physical infrastructure deficiencies at ports and waterways terminals can create accessibility and inclusiveness related challenges that limit women's full workplace participation and operational effectiveness. While newer administrative buildings generally include adequate facilities, many operational sites lack appropriate sanitation facilities, changing rooms, and rest areas, creating substantial practical impediments to women's integration into operational roles. Female employees reported avoiding participation in operational site visits specifically due to inadequate washroom facilities and the need to travel long distances back to office buildings to access basic facilities, effectively excluding them from crucial operational experience that can impact career advancement.

Safety infrastructure gaps in lighting and surveillance can impact women's willingness to participate in operational roles, particularly for evening shifts. Inadequate lighting in operational zones, such as those at Haldia Dock, creates security risks that discourage women from taking technical or field-based positions. Women employees identified specific dark spots at facilities that can pose safety risks, particularly during evening shifts, yet the absence of a gendered lens in the annual safety audits means these vulnerable areas typically remain unaddressed until incidents occur, constraining women's work schedule options.

Figure 11: Study Team Visits IWAI, Guwahati



Source: Study Team

Limited communication capabilities during voyages create isolation that disproportionately impacts women seafarers' wellbeing and professional integration. The study found that restricted connectivity during voyages particularly affects women, who often have fewer same-gender colleagues onboard for support, face greater difficulty accessing support networks during challenging situations, and experience heightened vulnerability when communication channels are limited, creating psychological barriers to pursuing maritime careers.

Vessel design based on the assumption of only male-usage creates obstacles that cumulatively discourage women's maritime participation. Specific issues include shared bathroom facilities without privacy provisions, insufficient security features on cabin doors, inadequate storage for feminine hygiene products, and limited changing areas—seemingly minor considerations that collectively create an unwelcoming environment signaling that women are unexpected and unaccommodated guests in maritime spaces.

4.5. Unpaid Care Work and Normative Barriers

The operational schedules in ports and maritime industries can conflict with women's disproportionate family care responsibilities, creating structural advancement barriers that require targeted policy interventions. Research indicates that Indian women perform up to 8 times more unpaid care work than men¹⁴, creating "time poverty" that significantly limits

their ability to dedicate time to professional advancement and skill acquisition¹⁵. This imbalance in domestic responsibilities establishes fundamental challenges for women pursuing maritime careers, particularly when operational schedules involve extended hours or irregular shifts that are incompatible with family care demands.

The non-uniformity in implementation of childcare support systems reveals opportunities for enhanced workplace accommodations that could significantly improve women's maritime career sustainability. Despite expressed needs across several port facilities, on-site childcare facilities remain limited, with management suggestions about utilizing distant childcare options or returning home during breaks reflecting a disconnect from operational realities. Investment in appropriate care infrastructure and services represents a strategic opportunity to unlock women's economic potential in the maritime sector, as safe, affordable, and accessible childcare services are fundamental enablers of sustained female workforce participation in port and shipping operations¹⁶.

Extended sailing deployments create fundamental structural considerations for women's maritime careers by necessitating difficult choices between professional advancement and family responsibilities. Maritime voyages lasting several months present distinct challenges for women who maintain significant family care responsibilities within Indian society. This structural dynamic influences many qualified women to select shore-based maritime positions over seafaring roles despite professional interests in offshore careers. These career selection patterns help explain current gender distribution in seafaring positions, highlighting an area where supportive policy frameworks could expand women's career options.

Family and societal expectations regarding women's maritime career choices create additional considerations beyond workplace factors, reflecting broader social dynamics that influence sector participation. These expectations, stemming from safety concerns, social considerations, and marriage traditions, introduce decision factors largely absent from men's professional journeys. The interplay between professional opportunities and cultural expectations illustrates how broader social norms influence women's maritime participation patterns, suggesting that comprehensive gender mainstreaming approaches that address both workplace and societal factors would best advance the inclusion objectives outlined in Maritime India Vision 2030.

¹⁴ Building India's Economy on the Backs of Women's Unpaid Work (Mitali Nikore, ORF Occasional Paper No. 372, October 2022)

¹⁵ Nikore, M., et al. (2024). Formulating a Strategy for India's Care Economy: Unlocking Opportunities. Karmannya Counsel, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), and Nikore Associates, with support from the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

¹⁶ Mitali Nikore et al., "Leveraging Care Economy Investments to Unlock Economic Development and Foster Women's Economic Empowerment in G-20 Economies," T²⁰ Policy Brief, June 2023.

Recommendations to Enhance Women's Participation in the Maritime Sector

As observed in the report, the maritime sector has long been recognized as a critical growth driver for India's trade and economy, yet it remains one of the industries where gender diversity still continues to remain low. In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the need to create more inclusive and equitable opportunities for women in this field. In this section, the report discuss select actionable recommendations (summarised in the figure below) for the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Inland water ways, that can help in addressing the barriers to women's participation and can significantly contribute to a more diverse, innovative, and resilient maritime industry.

Recommendations to enhance women's participation in the Maritime sector

Pillar 1: Employment Policies to enhance women's representation across technical job roles and leadership	Pillar 2: Gender sensitive infrastructure Invest in gender sensitive infrastructure & services to enhance women's safety & inclusion	Pillar 3: Skilling Gender inclusive skill training, especially in non-traditional job roles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review model concession agreements for private terminal operators and introduce incentives for increasing representation of women staff in terminal operations • Review regulatory barriers which prevent women's promotions and recruitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake regular women's safety audits at all ports/IWT terminals • Develop checklist/minimum standards for availability of gender sensitive infrastructure and services (e.g. lighting, washrooms, rest areas, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate and incentivise industry -academia partnerships through a Maritime Skills Development Program • Prioritise introduction of skilling programs at women's ITI in high potential industry

Recommendations to enhance women's participation in the Maritime sector

Pillar 1: Employment Policies to enhance women's representation across technical job roles and leadership	Pillar 2: Gender sensitive infrastructure Invest in gender sensitive infrastructure & services to enhance women's safety & inclusion	Pillar 3: Skilling Gender inclusive skill training, especially in non-traditional job roles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce role rotation and leadership programs targeting women staff at port trusts • Establish Women's Committees at port trusts and IWT terminals • Introduce incentives for all-women managed passenger terminals and warehouses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce daycare facilities within ports/IWT terminals - community-run or on PPP basis • Introduce helpdesks for women traders, women logistics service providers at ports/IWT terminals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> segments -especially passenger (IWT & cruise lines) and state level IWT • Introduce women's entrepreneurship development programs for the ports and logistics sector-in partnership with industry

5.1 Pillar 1: Employment

5.1.1 | Review model concession agreements for private terminal operators and introduce incentives for increasing representation of women staff in terminal operations

Encouraging women's participation in terminal operations is vital for fostering gender diversity within the maritime sector, particularly as Major and Minor ports move towards a landlord model. As observed in the sections above, several private terminal operators such as DP World and JM Bakshi are strongly committed to increasing representation of women staff in core port and terminal operations – especially cargo handling and warehousing operations.

Moving forward, it is suggested that the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Inland Waterways (MoPSW) can undertake a review of the model concession agreements governing public private partnerships for terminal operations, and can incorporate incentives for private terminal operators who prioritize training, recruitment, and retention of women staff – especially in technical and leadership roles.

Several global ports and terminal operators have implemented successful initiatives to increase women's participation in the maritime sector. These practices can serve as an exemplar for India's efforts:

Box 5: Port of Rotterdam, Netherlands – "Women in Maritime" Program

The Port of Rotterdam launched its "Women in Maritime" program in 2018 to address the underrepresentation of women in technical and operational roles. The initiative focuses on mentorship, leadership training, networking, and educational partnerships, offering scholarships and internships to encourage female participation. This initiative included structured mentorship, where female employees were paired with senior leaders for guidance, skills training through technical and leadership workshops, and executive coaching to build confidence and competence. These methods were selected to tackle systemic barriers by equipping women with the necessary skills, networks, and confidence required for leadership advancement. As a result, the program has led to a steady increase in female representation in technical and leadership roles, making women more visible in decision-making processes and breaking long-standing gender barriers in the maritime sector¹⁷. By breaking barriers through skill development and professional support, the program has increased women's presence in technical roles by 25%, fostering a more inclusive maritime sector in one of Europe's largest ports.

Box 6: Port of Los Angeles, USA – "Women's Leadership Council"

The Port of Los Angeles launched the Women's Leadership Council in 2015 to boost female representation in leadership and technical roles like cargo handling and crane operations. Women in these fields face workplace biases, limited training, and restricted leadership access. The council addresses these challenges through career development, mentorship, and specialized training programs, enabling women to transition into traditionally male-dominated roles. This initiative has increased female leadership by 30% and improved retention rates, positioning the port as a leader in gender diversity in maritime operations.

¹⁷ Port of Rotterdam Authority, Annual Report 2022, <https://www.portofrotterdam.com>.

Box 7: DP World Global Initiatives – "Women in Logistics" Program

DP World launched the "Women in Logistics" initiative in 2020 to address the underrepresentation of women in leadership and technical roles within maritime logistics. The sector has long struggled with gender diversity due to workplace culture, hiring biases, and a lack of inclusive policies.

To drive change, DP World set a goal of 30% female leadership representation by 2030, supported by structured training, mentorship, and inclusivity initiatives across operations in 40+ countries. By integrating gender diversity into corporate strategy and actively measuring progress, the initiative ensures accountability.

Since its launch, female leadership representation has risen by 15%, significantly improving workplace inclusivity. This success highlights how measurable targets, mentorship, and training can create lasting change in corporate gender diversity.

Box 8: International Maritime Organization (IMO) – "Women in Maritime" Program

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has championed gender equality in maritime industries since launching its Women in Maritime program in 1988. Unlike port-specific initiatives, the IMO focuses on global advocacy, policy influence, and capacity-building, particularly in developing nations where formal policies supporting women remain scarce.

To address this, the IMO collaborates with member states to promote inclusive policies and offers training programs to equip women for roles in port operations, logistics, and seafaring. By setting global standards and closing skill gaps, the initiative has established regional networks, trained over 1,000 women in port operations, and influenced gender-inclusive policies in 50+ countries, making it a key force for diversity in maritime sectors.

5.1.2 | Review regulatory barriers which prevent women's promotions and recruitment

It is well-understood that under the landlord model, direct recruitment at major port trusts and minor ports will remain muted in the coming years. However, even in available employment opportunities in on-shore and off-shore operations, especially in the private sector, regulatory barriers are observed that prevent women's advancement.

The study shows that several onshore job roles have very stringent seafaring experience requirements per regulations of the MoPSW, which may even be higher than global standards. For instance, the role of a sea pilot, which involves guiding ships through congested or dangerous waters, requires extensive sea-time experience. Similarly, positions such as harbor master, marine surveyor, and port operations manager demand prolonged offshore experience. However, during staff shortages in the mid-2010s, the Kolkata Ports undertook a re-examination of experience requirements for the Sea pilot job role and relaxed the requirement for sea pilots to have to have sea faring experience. This helped Reshma Niloufer, India's only woman sea pilot to secure her job. Reshma has 7 years of seafaring experience, as against the regulatory requirement of around 10 years. And yet, she has been performing in an exemplary manner since the past 14 years. Therefore, there is a need for a systematic re-examination of seafaring experience requirements for on-shore job roles.

Box 9: Reshma Nilofer - India's First Woman Sea Pilot at Kolkata Port

Reshma Nilofer's maritime journey began with a rare dual specialization in deck and engine operations, setting her apart in a field where most professionals focus on one. Sponsored by Maersk, her training in Singapore and India prepared her for a groundbreaking career. Instead of following the traditional path requiring a master's license and extensive cargo experience, she joined Kolkata Port, where a pilot shortage led authorities to adjust entry criteria. However, this opportunity came with restrictions, tying her exclusively to port operations.

In 2011, Reshma became India's first woman sea pilot, navigating large vessels through Kolkata and Haldia's challenging waterways. Securing a permanent position took six years, and as the sole woman in a male-dominated industry, she faces scrutiny, bias, and systemic barriers. Her expertise is often questioned based on gender, not ability, while policies remain blind to women's needs—lacking maternity leave, adequate sanitation, and effective harassment prevention. Career progression is uneven, with women considered “exceptions” rather than equals.

Despite these challenges, Reshma advocates for reforms: maternity policies, gender-inclusive regulations, clear advancement pathways, and better safety measures. Her journey highlights systemic issues while proving they can be overcome. As she skillfully navigates vessels, she also charts a path for future women in maritime, striving for a time when their presence is no longer seen as unusual but as the norm.

In addition, some off-shore job roles which require physical presence at sea or in rivers do not allow for shift based or roster based systems. For instance, inland waterways surveyors are deployed in their survey vessels for a continuous period of 3 months. Each round trip for their crew typically ranges between 10-15 days. In such a scenario, if a roster based system for inland waterways survey crew is introduced, women can choose to tap in and tap out and pick an assignment where instead of 2 trips per month, or being continuously off-shore for 3 months, they undertake 1 trip per month, and come back on-shore. A similar roster based system may be considered for other job roles as well.

Countries like Norway, the United Kingdom, and Australia have implemented successful initiatives addressing issues such as inflexible work schedules, maternity support, and professional networking, leading to improved retention and career progression for women. In India, steps like the introduction of Short-Service Commissions in the Navy have expanded women's participation, but further reforms are needed to ensure sustained growth in gender diversity across maritime professions. By drawing from global successes, India can develop comprehensive strategies to dismantle barriers and create a more equitable maritime workforce.

Box 10: Best Practices in the Indian Navy increasing Women's Participation

Several best practices from national and international contexts illustrate how various organizations and governments have tackled barriers to women's recruitment and promotions in the maritime sector. The Indian Navy introduced Short-Service Commissions (SSC) in fields such as logistics, education, air traffic control, and law, allowing women to serve for a limited tenure rather than requiring lifelong commitment¹⁸. This flexible model, initiated in the early 2000s, has successfully increased women's participation in naval roles and paved the way for permanent commissions.

¹⁸ <https://www.joinindiannavy.gov.in/en/page/recruitment-rules.html?locale=en>

Box 11: The Norwegian Maritime Authority Addressing Women's Participation

In Norway, the Norwegian Maritime Authority addressed the challenge of long work durations and inflexible schedules, which discouraged women from offshore roles, by implementing flexible work schedules, including shift rotations and shorter sea stints¹⁹. Since its launch in 2010, this initiative has significantly improved recruitment and retention rates for women in offshore maritime positions.

Box 12: Gender-inclusive policies of United Kingdom's Maritime & Coastguard Agency

The United Kingdom's Maritime & Coastguard Agency has implemented gender-inclusive policies to address discrimination and the lack of maternity support in maritime careers²⁰. Strengthened in the late 2010s, these policies include anti-discrimination measures, parental leave benefits, and structured return-to-work programs for women in shipping roles, leading to higher retention rates for women post-maternity.

Box 13: The Women in Shipping and Transport (WiST) Network in Australia

In Australia, the Women in Shipping and Transport (WiST) Network was established in 2015 to combat the lack of mentorship and professional networking opportunities for women in the maritime sector²¹. This dedicated network connects women professionals, offers career guidance, and promotes gender-inclusive policies in shipping. By creating a strong support system, this initiative has increased visibility and career progression opportunities for women in the maritime industry. Each of these best practices demonstrates the potential impact of targeted policy changes, structured mentorship programs, and flexible work models in fostering an inclusive work environment.

¹⁹ https://word-edit.officeapps.live.com/we/wordeditorframe.aspx?ui=en-US&rs=en-US&hid=L3xqua%2FhGUm+rWpOny81WA.0.13.0&wopisrc=https%3A%2F%2Fwopi.onedrive.com%2Fwopi%2Ffiles%2F8478894374EAA1631008&wdo=2&wde=docx&sc=host%3D%2Fqt%3DDefault&wdp=&uih=onedrivecom&jsapi=1&jsapiver=v2&corrid=73ad286_5b35_4ed1a32f2fff9b24ad7&usid=73ad286_5b35_4ed1a32f2fff9b24ad7&newsession=1&sftc=1&uihit=editaspx&muv=1&cac=1&sams=1&mtf=1&sfp=1&sdp=1&hch=1&hwfh=1&dchat=1&wdorigin=Other&csc=1&instantedit=1&wopicomplete=1&wdredirectionreason=Unified_SingleFlush#_ftn2

²⁰ https://www.amsa.gov.au/gender-equity-action-plan-2022-2027_1

²¹ <https://www.wilat.org/gender-diversity-survey>

It is therefore imperative to identify and address the regulatory barriers that hinder women's advancement in the maritime sector. These barriers may include experience requirements, fixed tenure requirements, continuous service requirements, lack of flexibility, and other work conditions that are not conducive to women's needs. It may also be that job advertisements and descriptions are written without due consideration using terms such as “workman needed” or “seaman” needed – instead of more gender neutral terms such as “worker” or “seafarer”. It is recommended that the MoPSW can undertake a comprehensive review of regulatory barriers across job roles and create more supportive frameworks that facilitate equitable hiring practices and career progression for women in the ports and IWT sectors.

5.1.3 | Introduce role rotation and leadership programs targeting women staff at major ports

As has been observed in section 4.1, major port trusts have a high representation of women in class III and class IV positions – particularly in office administration roles. These women have spent several years in administrative roles and have developed a strong understand of port operations. If these cohorts of women are provided with career advancement opportunities, cross-departmental exposure, and mentorship for learning field operations, they can gain the confidence to take up more technical and leadership roles.

The stories of Ms. Manisha Jadhav, Secretary of the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Association (JNPA), and Ms. Premakumari of the Kochi Port Trust are stellar examples of how mentorship from seniors, leadership training, and exposure to multiple departments during their tenure helped them rise to leadership positions within the port trusts.

Box 14: Profile of Manisha Jadhav, Secretary, Jawaharlal Nehru Port Association

Manisha Jadhav began her public service career after earning a degree from TISS, working with Mahila Arthik Vikas Mahamandal and later the ICMR on an AIDS awareness project. In 1993, she entered the maritime sector as a Labour Welfare Officer at Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA) at just 22. Over 31 years, she has held key roles, including Chief Public Relations Officer and Deputy General Manager, and now serves as Secretary of JNPA.

A champion for employee welfare and gender inclusion, Ms. Jadhav has led initiatives like “Lunch with the Chairman” and the first-ever Secretaries' Conference for major ports. She actively pushes for women's participation in frontline maritime roles, working with PPP operators to address hiring biases.

Despite a demanding career, she earned an MBA, a law degree, and is pursuing a PhD on PPPs in port productivity. Inspired by her father's political career, she aspires to enter politics post-retirement to drive policy changes for women and infrastructure. Her mantra, “It's difficult but not impossible—I will do it,” defines her leadership in a male-dominated industry.

Box 15: Profile of Box: Ms. C. Premakumari – Secretary, Cochin Port

C. Premakumari joined Cochin Port in 1996 as a Research Officer, leveraging her M.Sc. in Statistics and Master's in Computer Applications to analyse maritime data for policy formulation. Rising to Senior Deputy Director (Research), she played a key role in data-driven decision-making before transitioning to administration as Deputy Secretary (CL), where she gained expertise in port operations, labour policies, and regulatory compliance.

Appointed Secretary in 2018, she now oversees estate management, HR, and legal affairs, managing ₹1,000+ crore in estate revenue while ensuring operational efficiency amid financial and workforce constraints. Despite initial scepticism, she proved her leadership through resilience and strategic reforms.

A strong advocate for women in maritime, she champions training programs to bridge gender gaps. Facing funding and workforce challenges, she drives modernization, digital transformation, and policy reforms to enhance trade competitiveness and secure Cochin Port's future as a key maritime hub.

In this regard, therefore, the MoPSW can consider introducing role rotation programs and leadership development programs for women staff. While role rotation programs could help women staff gain experience in various aspects of ports operations, leadership programs could include mentorship initiatives, specialized training sessions, and leadership development workshops designed to equip women with the skills and confidence required to take on senior roles.

Various organizations and governing bodies have implemented targeted initiatives to enhance gender diversity in leadership positions. These programs aim to break longstanding gender barriers by offering mentorship, skills training, and structured career progression models.

Box 16: Gender Diversity Programs at the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA)

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) identified a lack of gender diversity in strategic positions due to women's limited access to technical roles and leadership opportunities. To address this, AMSA introduced rotational training modules and leadership development programs in 2016. These included cross-functional exposure, where female employees were rotated across various departments such as maritime safety, policy, operations, and logistics^{22,23}

Box 17: Career Development Program at the Indian Railways

In India, Indian Railways, one of the country's largest employers, recognized the underrepresentation of women in operational and leadership roles, particularly in traditionally male-dominated areas like train operations and logistics. In 2019, Indian Railways introduced career advancement programs featuring field training to provide hands-on experience in operational roles, managerial skill enhancement through workshops and courses to build leadership capabilities, and mentorship by pairing women with experienced leaders. Field training was selected to give women practical exposure in male-dominated roles, while mentorship and skill-building components ensured they were adequately prepared for leadership positions. The initiative has led to a notable increase in the number of women in leadership roles, demonstrating the effectiveness of structured career progression models in addressing gender disparity²⁴.

²² Port of Rotterdam Authority, Annual Report 2022, <https://www.portofrotterdam.com>.

²³ Australian Maritime Safety Authority, Gender Diversity Report 2021, <https://www.amsa.gov.au>.

²⁴ Indian Railways, Annual Report 2020-21, <https://indianrailways.gov.in>.

Box 18: The Women in Maritime Associations (WIMAs) initiative by International Maritime Organization (IMO)

At a global level, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) identified a significant gender gap in leadership roles across the maritime sector, with women underrepresented in port authorities, shipping companies, and regulatory bodies. To address this, IMO launched the Women in Maritime Associations (WIMAs) initiative in 2015. This program included targeted training courses to build technical and leadership skills, networking opportunities to connect women with industry leaders and peers, and mentorship from experienced professionals. A global approach was chosen to address the widespread nature of the issue, ensuring women gain the necessary skills and visibility for leadership roles. The initiative has significantly increased the visibility of women in senior maritime roles and has influenced policy changes aimed at promoting gender inclusivity in the industry²⁵.

Leadership programs targeting women staff at port trusts are essential for nurturing a pipeline of female leaders within the maritime sector. By fostering a supportive environment that encourages women to pursue and succeed in leadership positions, the maritime industry can benefit from diverse perspectives and inclusive decision-making processes.

5.1.4 | Establish Women's Committees at port trusts and IWT terminals

Women's Committees at major ports, minor ports, private ports and IWT terminals can be envisioned as cross-departmental groups dedicated to advocating for the professional growth and welfare of women employees. As noted in section 3.1, major ports such as Kandla port, Cochin Port, Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port and Haldia Dock Complex already have women's committees in place since several decades.

Distinct from Internal Complaints Committees, which handle grievances related to sexual harassment and discrimination, Women's Committees can focus on creating opportunities for career advancement, addressing workplace grievances, and fostering a culture of

²⁵ International Maritime Organization, Women in Maritime Program, <https://www.imo.org>.

inclusivity. These committees can initiate programs that provide skill development, networking opportunities, and mentorship, ensuring that women employees have access to the resources needed to thrive in the maritime sector.

Furthermore, Women's Committees at major port trusts can include women working in private terminal operations as well. Collaborating with industry stakeholders, Women's Committees can advocate for equitable hiring practices, flexible work arrangements, and skilling initiatives tailored to women's career progression. These efforts will help build a more inclusive and diverse workforce, driving innovation and excellence within the maritime sector.

Globally, organizations are bringing in various initiatives to address these disparities and create a more inclusive maritime sector. India can draw valuable insights to enhance gender representation and inclusivity in its maritime workforce.

Box 19: Gender Equity Action Plan at Port of Los Angeles

The Port of Los Angeles identified an underrepresentation of women in senior management and operational roles, along with workplace culture barriers that discouraged female participation. To address this, the port developed a Gender Equity Action Plan that includes leadership training, equal pay audits, and proactive efforts to increase female recruitment. The plan also mandates that port contractors and associated businesses commit to gender diversity goals. Equal pay audits identify and correct wage gaps, while leadership training ensures women are equipped with skills to assume higher positions. Holding contractors accountable expands gender equity beyond direct port employees. The initiative is implemented at the Port of Los Angeles and influences policy changes in other U.S. ports. Since its formal launch in 2018, women's representation in management has increased, and the port has become a model for gender equity in the U.S. maritime industry²⁶.

²⁶ https://www.portoflosangeles.org/references/2022-news-releases/news_111622_wtsla_award

5.1.5 | Introduce incentives for women managed passenger terminals and warehouses at ports / IWT terminals

The MoPSW can consider introducing a scheme to establish women-managed passenger terminals at select cruise terminals and inland waterway transport (IWT) terminals. A similar scheme could also be introduced for women-managed and operated freight warehouses – again targeting both the ports and IWT sub-sectors.

The proposed programme could introduce financial incentives designed to facilitate greater participation of women in terminal management / warehouse operations roles for private operators at these select locations, with the highest level of incentives provided for passenger terminals / freight warehouses that are 100% operated and managed by women.

A few companies such as Maersk have already begun running 100% women managed and operated warehouses at inland container depots. A similar model can therefore be replicated in the ports and IWT sector.

Maersk launched India's first all-women operated warehouse in Dadri, Uttar Pradesh, in 2022. This pioneering facility, covering 100,000 square feet, is entirely managed and

Furthermore, Women's Committees at major port trusts can include women working in private terminal operations as well. Collaborating with industry stakeholders, Women's Committees can advocate for equitable hiring practices, flexible work arrangements, and skilling initiatives tailored to women's career progression. These efforts will help build a more inclusive and diverse workforce, driving innovation and excellence within the maritime sector.

Globally, organizations are bringing in various initiatives to address these disparities and create a more inclusive maritime sector. India can draw valuable insights to enhance gender representation and inclusivity in its maritime workforce.

operated by a workforce of 84 women, who were recruited from nearby villages and provided with comprehensive training to handle various roles, including operating material handling equipment, managing clerical tasks, and ensuring security and housekeeping. This project not only addresses the issue of low female participation in the logistics industry but also tackles societal barriers by offering a safe and supportive work environment, complete with dedicated facilities such as female washrooms, resting areas, and creches.

The proposed programme could begin with pilot implementations at select locations, particularly those near major urban centres, to facilitate the recruitment of skilled women

staff. Implementation could be executed in phases, with initial operations during standard working hours before potential expansion to additional time slots as attracting women to night shift slots in remote locations becomes easier. .

The initiative is projected to not only create significant employment opportunities for women in a traditionally male-dominated sector but also to enhance operational efficiency through diverse management perspectives.

Successful implementation would contribute meaningfully to India's sustainable development goals while establishing a replicable model for gender inclusion across other transportation infrastructure projects nationwide. Such an initiative would align with the Government of India's broader commitment to women led development and would position India as a progressive leader in gender-inclusive maritime operations within the South Asian region.

5.2 Pillar 2: Gender sensitive infrastructure

5.2.1. | Undertake regular women's safety audits at all ports and IWT terminals

The MoPSW can consider introducing a requirement to undertake regular safety audits across all ports (major ports / minor ports and also private ports) and IWT terminals, with specific focus on addressing the unique security challenges faced by women staff, traders, and logistics service providers – recognising that safety is not only a concern for women employees but also for women visiting the ports and IWT terminals.

Current port safety protocols present opportunities for enhanced integration of gender-specific considerations to complement existing comprehensive security frameworks. Stakeholder consultations undertaken during this study indicate that while ports maintain robust safety systems—with facilities such as Mormugao Port and Deendayal Port achieving ISO certification—these protocols could be further strengthened by incorporating dedicated gender components. The National Commission for Women (NCW) has developed effective methodologies for gender-specific safety assessments across various public spaces, including sample surveys and focused group discussions that result in Women's Security Scorecards.

Figure 12: Study Team Visit to the Mormugao Port, Goa



Source: Study Team

The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways could consider developing supplementary guidelines to incorporate gender-sensitive elements into the established safety audit systems at ports and IWT facilities. Building on the foundation established by the Ministry of Home Affairs' Women Safety Division since 2018, these guidelines could outline a gender-sensitive infrastructure checklist that enhances existing safety standards at maritime facilities²⁷ Such guidelines could recommend appropriate assessment frequencies (annual/bi-annual/quarterly) in consultation with relevant authorities, including private terminal operators who have demonstrated leadership in implementing progressive workplace policies.

The enhanced gender-sensitive safety assessments could be conducted by multidisciplinary teams comprising security experts, gender specialists, and port officials to systematically evaluate infrastructure, operational protocols, and reporting mechanisms through a gender lens. Alternatively, ports and IWT terminals might consider participatory approaches involving women from local universities and communities to provide diverse perspectives. These assessments would examine critical aspects including lighting adequacy, rest facility security, emergency response system accessibility, surveillance coverage, and complaint redressal mechanisms—complementing existing safety certifications with gender-specific

²⁷ Ministry of Home Affairs. Women Safety Division.
<https://www.mha.gov.in/en/divisionofmha/women-safety-divisio>

insights. The methodology for these enhanced assessments could be specified in supplementary guidelines that align with and strengthen current safety protocols.

Table 4 Safety Audit Methodology by Safetipin ²⁸

Key Areas	Definition of the Areas	Indicators
Lighting	Lighting for pedestrians measures brightness or illumination, ranging from dark to bright, from street lighting or other sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functionality/non-functionality of street lights. - Positioning of street lights on roads.
Openness	Refers to how open an area is and whether a person has a good line of sight in all directions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of blind corners on a road.
Visibility	Visibility is based on the principle of 'eyes on the street,' comprising built environments like windows/doors of shops, houses, street vendors, and hawkers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High boundary walls in the area. Presence of street vendors and hawkers.
People	Number of people around, which increases due to usage opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of people in sight in a particular audit area during late evening hours.
Walk path	Indicates whether a person can comfortably walk, referring to pavement quality or available space along a road.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of walk paths (unpaved, broken, or not present). Obstruction by vehicular parking, electric poles, and construction debris.
Transport	Refers to ease of accessing public transport (metro/bus/auto/taxi) measured by distance to the nearest mode.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking distance to the public transport stand (in minutes). - Presence of a public transport stand within a 10-minute walk.
Gender Usage	Diversity percentage, indicating women and children in the crowd, which increases due to safety perceptions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of women and children seen around bus stops during late evening hours.
Security	Refers to visible security offered by police or private security guards (e.g., near ATMs/banks).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presence of police or guards in hailing distance.
Feeling	Indicates how safe one feels in a place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a subjective parameter.

²⁸ Safetipin. Safety Audits in Sihanoukville.
<https://safetipin.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/safety-audits-in-sihanoukville-2021.pdf>

Implementation of this initiative can be accompanied by a robust monitoring framework that tracks key performance indicators related to actions taken post the women's safety audit. The Internal Complaints Committee formulated at ports and IWT terminals can oversee the implementation of audit recommendations and provide ongoing feedback.

Regular women's safety audits would not only identify potential vulnerabilities but also ensure continuous improvement in safety measures, thereby fostering an environment where women maritime professionals, traders and logistics service providers can work with dignity and security.

By institutionalizing these safety audits as a regulatory requirement rather than a discretionary measure, the Ministry would demonstrate its commitment to gender inclusion while simultaneously enhancing operational efficiency, as improved safety conditions have been empirically linked to increased productivity and retention of skilled personnel in the maritime sector.

5.2.2. | Develop minimum standards for availability of gender sensitive infrastructure and services

As mentioned in the section above, a women's safety audit checklist may be developed in order to communicate the minimum standards of gender sensitive infrastructure that are required at ports and IWT terminals. Ideally, this safety audit checklist can be formulated by the MoPSW through a consultative and participatory process, inviting suggestions from industry associations, private terminal operators, officials of Major port trusts, Minor port trusts, Private ports, and other key stakeholders.

However, going beyond the women's safety audit, the MoPSW can also consider developing minimum standards for availability of gender sensitive infrastructure and services at ports and IWT terminals. Some of the major areas that can be covered under these standards are produced in the box below.

Box 20: Sample of Minimum Standards for availability of gender sensitive infrastructure

Gender-Sensitive Infrastructure and Services at Ports - Key Elements

1. Physical Infrastructure

Separate, secure restroom facilities with proper lighting, locks, and hygiene amenities.

Private changing rooms and shower facilities for port workers of all genders.

Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) designed to fit different body types and sizes.

Ergonomic equipment and tools that consider physiological differences among workers.

Adequate lighting throughout port areas, particularly in isolated or less-trafficked zones.

Safe transportation options to and from port facilities, especially for night shift workers.

Digital connectivity and ensuring there are no dark zones with poor network coverage.

2. Security Measures

- CCTV coverage in all public and common areas, with special attention to isolated spots.
- Designated security personnel trained in gender-sensitive approaches.
- Clear reporting mechanisms for harassment or security incidents.
- Secure pathways between different port areas.
- Emergency call points throughout the facility.

3. Operational Considerations

- Flexible work options to accommodate caregiving responsibilities.
- Childcare facilities or allowances for workers with children.
- Equal access to training and skill development opportunities.
- Gender-balanced recruitment and promotion policies.
- Diverse work teams where appropriate to improve workplace culture.

4. Policy Framework

- Clear anti-harassment policies with effective implementation mechanisms of the Prevention of Sexual Harassment Act, 2013.
- Gender-sensitive hiring practices and job descriptions ensuring job advertisements reach women's industrial training institutes and colleges.
- Gender-inclusive language in all documentation and signage.
- Regular women's safety audits to assess ongoing needs and improvements.

5. Capacity Building

- Gender sensitivity training for all port staff and management.
- Mentorship programs to support career advancement for women.
- Regular consultation with diverse port users to identify emerging needs.
- Data collection disaggregated by gender to inform decision-making.

Implementing these elements helps create port environments that are safer, more accessible, and more equitable for people of all genders, while potentially increasing operational efficiency and workforce retention.

5.2.3. | Introduce daycare facilities within the port premises

Introducing childcare facilities across all ports in India represents a strategic investment in the future of India's maritime workforce. By establishing high-quality childcare facilities within the premises of ports and IWT terminals, the MoPSW would address a critical infrastructure gap while demonstrating leadership in creating inclusive workplaces. Childcare facilities can be created to cater to staff at ports trusts and IWT terminal management, staff of private terminal operators, and frontline staff.

Consultations with women staff across major ports shows that the lack of accessible childcare is a significant barrier to gender diversity in the port sector, limiting women's participation and career advancement opportunities. Women staff across major ports shared that they rely on family members, particularly their mothers or mothers in law for childcare, and feel the need to take emergency childcare leaves in situations where their children are unwell. In situations where family support is unavailable, women staff also shared incidents of their former women colleagues leaving their jobs.

Moreover, access to childcare facilities within ports premises would also encourage male employees to bring their children and create a support system for their families, especially since ports are often located in remote areas, with little access to commercial infrastructure.

These facilities would not only support working parents but also improve operational efficiency through reduced absenteeism, enhanced employee retention, and increased productivity, delivering substantial returns on investment. Major ports around the world have successfully integrated childcare services, reporting significant improvements in workforce diversity, employee satisfaction, and operational performance (refer box below).

Box 21: Port of Seattle's Childcare Initiatives

The Port of Seattle has launched two key childcare initiatives to enhance workforce retention and recruitment by addressing childcare challenges. The Childcare Navigator Program helps employees navigate the existing childcare ecosystem, offering culturally and linguistically appropriate services²⁹. Additionally, a feasibility study is underway to explore establishing childcare facilities near Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. This approach addresses the unique challenges of 24/7 operations and remote locations, providing accessible, affordable, and flexible childcare solutions tailored to airport workers' needs. The expected impact includes reduced absenteeism and enhanced operational efficiency by supporting working parents³⁰.

The implementation of childcare facilities aligns with both national development goals and international maritime standards for gender-sensitive infrastructure. Childcare facilities within the port / IWT terminal premises may be operationalised through public private partnerships where local community-based organisations or private sector operators take responsibility for the operations and maintenance of the childcare facility. The physical space for running the childcare facility can be provided by the port authority or inland waterways authority. The CBO / private sector operator can be directed to adhere to the National Minimum Standards and Protocol for Crèches (Operation and Management), released by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in January 2024.

By taking decisive action to establish these facilities across all Indian ports, the Ministry would position India as a progressive leader in the global maritime community while creating additional employment opportunities within port communities. This initiative would strengthen India's competitive advantage in maritime commerce by attracting and retaining talented professionals regardless of their caregiving responsibilities.

²⁹ https://www.portseattle.org/sites/default/files/2025_02/Order_2025_04.pdf

³⁰ <https://www.aviationpros.com/airports/press-release/55267621/port-of-seattle-takes-two-steps-forward-on-increasing-airport-worker-access-to-affordable-childcare>

³¹ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2000712>

https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/7021693_National-Minimum-Standards-and-Protocol-for-Creches.pdf

5.2.4. | Introduce dedicated helpdesks for women traders, women logistics service providers at ports and IWT terminals

The introduction of dedicated helpdesks for women traders and women's logistics service providers at ports and IWT terminals is a crucial step in addressing the gender digital divide. With the advent of digital processes such as faceless assessment and electronic data interface systems, many women in the trading and logistics sectors face significant challenges. These digital advancements, while beneficial in streamlining operations, often require a level of technical proficiency that women traders, customs brokers, and freight forwarders may not possess due to limited access to digital education and resources. This disparity hinders their ability to effectively engage in the trade processes, creating a barrier to their equal participation in the maritime economy. By establishing helpdesks, the Ministry can provide much-needed support and guidance, ensuring that women can navigate these digital systems with confidence and competence.

Furthermore, helpdesks can significantly alleviate the time poverty experienced by women traders and logistics service providers, who must balance their professional responsibilities with unpaid care duties at home. Women often find themselves pressed for time, managing both work and household responsibilities, which can severely limit their capacity to engage fully in their professional roles. Helpdesks can streamline their interactions with port and terminal operations, enabling quicker resolutions to their queries and issues. Additionally, recognising mobility barriers is critical, as many women must leave port areas before nightfall due to safety concerns and cannot afford to stay late to complete necessary procedures. Helpdesks can expedite clearances and provide timely assistance, allowing women to conclude their tasks within safer, daylight hours, thereby enhancing their productivity and participation in the maritime sector.

Box 22: Bangladesh's dedicated helpdesks for women traders, women logistics service providers at ports and IWT terminals

Bangladesh has taken a significant step in supporting women traders by establishing a dedicated help desk at the Benapole border³⁸, a key trade gateway between Bangladesh and India. This initiative provides a platform for women to seek guidance on customs procedures and trade-related challenges, helping them navigate complex regulations and ensuring smoother cross-border transactions. By directly addressing bureaucratic hurdles and the lack of access to trade information, the help desk empowers women with the necessary resources to participate effectively in trade. Since its launch, it has improved trade facilitation, encouraged more women to engage in business, and contributed to a more inclusive economic environment. Additionally, Bangladesh has implemented gender-sensitive trade policies to further integrate women into trade infrastructure planning, reinforcing its commitment to economic empowerment and equitable opportunities.

5.3 Pillar 3: Skilling

5.3.1 | Facilitate and incentivize industry - academia partnerships through a gender intentional Maritime Skill Development Program

The MoPSW can develop policies to incentivizing robust industry-academia partnerships across India's maritime education landscape. Consultations undertaken with representatives from leading institutions such as the Indian Maritime University reveal a critical gap between theoretical education and practical application, where students consistently lack hands-on training and exposure to real-world port and shipping operations. This gap disproportionately impacts women students who need practical training on the latest equipment and technologies to excel in job interviews and secure positions in an industry traditionally dominated by men. Without structured exposure to operational environments, women maritime graduates face significant disadvantages when competing for positions in port operations, offshore roles, and other technical areas where their representation remains low.

The Ministry could establish a comprehensive Maritime Skills Development Program (MSDP) specifically designed to improve industry – academia linkages and increase women's participation in underrepresented roles. The MoPSW could establish an industry – academia forum to link leading maritime universities and private sector stakeholders in the maritime sector for regular dialogues on skill enhancement, especially for women and girls.

Moreover, the MoPSW could encourage maritime companies to host women students from maritime universities across India for internships under the MSDP. The program could feature specialized mentorship components pairing women students with women professionals already working in port operations, vessel management, or offshore installations.

Additionally, the MoPSW could incentivise partnerships between maritime companies and maritime universities, to establish state-of-the-art simulation centres that accurately replicate the operational environments of modern ports and vessels, ensuring women students gain proficiency with equipment and protocols before entering the workforce under the MSDP. Some of the other initiatives that may be included in the MSDP are elucidated below.

Figure 13: Indicative Initiatives which may be included in MSDP

 <p>Collaborative Research Projects:</p> <p>Objective: Align academic curricula with industry needs.</p> <p>Implementation: Industry professionals contribute to curriculum design, ensuring that graduates are job-ready with relevant skills.</p> <p>Gender intentionality: Ensure inclusion of modules on prevention of sexual harassment and gender sensitization.</p>	 <p>Curriculum Development:</p> <p>Objective: Conduct joint research projects that address specific maritime challenges, such as sustainable shipping practices or port efficiency improvements.</p> <p>Implementation: Universities and maritime companies collaborate to design projects, share resources, and publish findings.</p> <p>Gender intentionality: Ensure at least [X%] participation of women students in each project</p>	 <p>Joint Training Programs:</p> <p>Objective: Enhance skills of both students and industry professionals.</p> <p>Implementation: Universities and companies collaborate on training programs that focus on emerging technologies or industry best practices.</p> <p>Gender intentionality: Ensure at least [X%] of participating students are women</p>
 <p>Internships and Placements:</p> <p>Objective: Provide students with practical experience in the maritime industry.</p> <p>Implementation: Companies offer internships and job placements to students from maritime universities, helping them gain hands-on experience.</p> <p>Gender intentionality: Ensure at least [X%] of internships are for women students and at least [X%] are in technical roles</p>	 <p>Industry-Sponsored Scholarships and Grants:</p> <p>Objective: Support students pursuing maritime education.</p> <p>Implementation: Companies offer scholarships or grants to students, fostering talent development and encouraging research.</p> <p>Gender intentionality: Ensure at least [X%] of grants and scholarships for women</p>	 <p>Innovation Incubators:</p> <p>Objective: Encourage innovation and entrepreneurship in the maritime sector.</p> <p>Implementation: Establish incubators where students and entrepreneurs can develop innovative maritime solutions with industry support.</p> <p>Gender intentionality: Ensure at least [X%] of start-ups funded and at least [X%] of funding goes to women-led start-ups or start-ups with diverse teams</p>

Source: Maritime India Vision 2030³²; MHS India³³; PHD Research Bureau³⁴; RIS³⁵; PwC³⁶

³² Maritime India Vision 2030.

<https://sagarmala.gov.in/sites/default/files/MIV%202030%20Report.pdf>

³³ International Education Day: Need to Bolster Maritime Studies in India." <https://mhsindia.org/all/international-education-day-need-to-bolster-maritime-studies-in-india/>^{20047/}

³⁴ Framework of University-Industry Linkages in Research. Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India.

https://www.phdcci.in/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Framework-of-University-Industry-Linkages-in-Research-DSIR-16-Oct_-Forweb.pdf

³⁵ Propelling India's Maritime Vision: Impact of Government Policies.

<https://ris.org.in/sites/default/files/Publication/CMEC-Book.pdf>

³⁶ Strengthening India's Maritime Sector: The Role of GIFT IFSC. <https://www.pwc.in/assets/pdfs/strengthening-indias-maritime-sector-the-role-of-gift-ifsc.pdf>

For example, the collaboration between Gujarat Maritime University (GMU) and Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) represents a pioneering linkage in maritime education and research that has yielded significant benefits for both institutions and the broader maritime sector. Through joint initiatives including a Maritime Finance Research Center, specialized educational programs, a Maritime Technology Innovation Hub, collaborative policy research, and robust industry-academia exchange programs, this partnership has elevated Gujarat's position as a maritime education and finance hub while simultaneously increasing research output and creating employment pathways for maritime graduates. The synergy between GMU's maritime expertise and GIFT City's financial ecosystem has attracted international maritime businesses to Gujarat and contributed meaningfully to policy development supporting India's maritime growth strategy, demonstrating how specialized educational institutions can effectively partner with industry clusters to create mutually beneficial ecosystems that advance education, research, and economic development in the maritime domain.

The Centre for Maritime Economy and Connectivity (CMEC) is another premier example of successful academia-industry collaboration in the maritime sector, functioning as a dynamic hub where academic researchers, industry professionals, government representatives, and policy experts converge to address complex maritime challenges. Established specifically to bridge the knowledge-application gap, CMEC facilitates various collaborative mechanisms including joint research initiatives with shipping companies and port authorities, industry-informed curriculum development, policy advisory services to governmental and international maritime organizations, and innovation incubators for maritime technologies. These partnerships create tangible benefits for all stakeholders: academics gain access to real-world problems and data, industry partners benefit from cutting-edge research and a pipeline of well-prepared graduates, while government entities receive evidence-based policy recommendations that balance theoretical foundations with practical considerations. Through this integrated approach, CMEC demonstrates how strategic institutional connections can simultaneously advance scholarly knowledge and industry practices in specialized fields like maritime economics and trade connectivity.

5.3.2. | Prioritize introduction of skilling programs at women's industrial training institutes and maritime universities

Introducing skilling programs at women's industrial training institutes in high-potential industry segments such as passenger transportation (IWT and cruise lines) and state-level IWT can significantly enhance women's opportunities in these fields. By partnering with maritime companies, these institutes can provide specialized training that aligns with

current market demands, ensuring that women are equipped with the skills needed to thrive in these sectors. This initiative not only empowers women but also addresses the growing need for skilled workers in the maritime industry, thereby contributing to economic growth and development.

Moreover, the inclusion of skilling programs at maritime universities, which currently offer only degree courses, can be a game-changer. These universities can start offering short-term, industry-relevant courses that cater to the immediate needs of the maritime sector. Each of these programs should be designed with a gender-intentional approach, ensuring that a specific percentage of women are enrolled in each course. This strategy will promote gender diversity and inclusion, creating a more balanced workforce and fostering an environment where women can excel in maritime careers.

Box 23: International Best Practices for Skilling Programs in Maritime

One such practice is **WISTA International Networking**, which tackles the lack of professional networks and mentorship opportunities for women at the management level in maritime, trading, and logistics. WISTA provides a global network that facilitates mentorship and career development opportunities for women in the maritime industry. This approach is chosen because networking is crucial for career advancement, and WISTA's global reach helps bridge the gender leadership gap. Active worldwide with national associations in multiple countries, WISTA has been facilitating business relationships, knowledge sharing, and professional development for women in maritime leadership roles over the past two decades.

5.3.3. | Introduce women's entrepreneurship development programs for the ports and logistics sector

The Government of India offers a range of centrally sponsored schemes for promoting women's entrepreneurship – most notably the National Rural and Urban Livelihood missions that support self-help groups, the Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana and the Niti Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform. Several states also have schemes to support women's entrepreneurship through improved access to finance for women entrepreneurs.

Women traders and women logistics service providers (e.g. customs brokers, freight forwarders) often operate as solopreneurs, or as micro businesses. Their working capital

requirements are likely to be high, as they may need to pay upfront for cargo clearances and receive their payments with delay from clients. Further, as they are likely to be smaller, they may require greater support in terms of market access, exposure to processes at ports and IWT terminals and business development training.

Given this situation, the MoPSW may consider introducing a comprehensive entrepreneurship development, incubation and financial support program tailored for women in the ports and logistics sector. The program may be operationalised in partnership with select Maritime Universities, with the establishment of incubation centres, mentorship programs with both male and female business leaders in the maritime sector, and financial support for women entrepreneurs. Such initiatives will not only bolster women's participation in the maritime sector but also drive inclusive economic growth, fostering a more equitable and sustainable industry.

Box 24: UNCTAD's TrainForTrade Port Management Programme

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) launched the TrainForTrade Port Management Programme to enhance women's participation in leadership roles in ports by providing specialized training and promoting gender equality. The program includes training modules that empower women in port management, fostering their career advancement and leadership skills. In 2021, 35% of its trainees were women, demonstrating a significant increase in female participation. This initiative not only boosts gender equality but also contributes to more efficient and competitive port management, benefiting the broader maritime sector.

Box 25: APM Terminals' Women Empowerment Initiatives

APM Terminals has implemented various global and regional initiatives to foster gender equality and empower women across all levels in the maritime logistics industry. Programs such as the APMT-Maersk Women's Network and the Eclósión program in Costa Rica provide mentorship, workshops, and seed capital to support female entrepreneurs. These initiatives have led to increased female participation and leadership in the industry, contributing to a more inclusive and sustainable work environment.

Conclusion

India's maritime sector is a vital driver of economic growth, and increasing women's participation can further strengthen its potential. While there is growing recognition of the need for gender diversity, certain structural and cultural challenges continue to limit women's representation across ports, shipping, and inland waterways.

Encouraging progress has been made through initiatives such as the establishment of Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs), women's committees, and improvements in gender-sensitive infrastructure. However, women remain underrepresented in technical and operational roles, with leadership pathways often constrained by limited access to hands-on experience and professional networks. Addressing these gaps can create a more balanced and inclusive workforce.

Beyond workplace representation, factors such as recruitment policies, certification requirements, and infrastructure gaps present additional challenges. Ensuring safe and accessible working environments, including adequate sanitation, transportation, and security measures, can help support women's participation. Additionally, balancing professional and personal responsibilities remains a key consideration, highlighting the need for supportive workplace policies.

This report outlines a set of actionable recommendations under three focus areas: Employment, Gender-Sensitive Infrastructure, and Skilling. Encouraging private sector involvement, updating policies to facilitate career advancement, and expanding leadership programs can help create more opportunities for women. Infrastructure improvements, including regular safety audits and the provision of essential facilities, can enhance workplace conditions. Strengthening industry-academia partnerships and specialized training programs can equip women with the skills needed to thrive in the sector.

By adopting these measures, India's maritime industry can tap into a broader talent pool, fostering both economic growth and greater inclusivity. Learning from global best practices and adapting them to the Indian context will be key in shaping a sustainable and diverse workforce. Initiatives such as the safety audits conducted in Chennai provide valuable insights into creating secure and supportive work environments.

A collaborative approach involving government bodies, port authorities, private enterprises, and academic institutions will be essential in driving progress. With sustained efforts and thoughtful policy interventions, the maritime sector can evolve into a more inclusive space where both men and women contribute to its long-term success.

WOMEN'S LEADERS IN THE **MARITIME SECTOR** **IN INDIA**





Ms. Manisha Jadhav

Secretary
Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority



SECRETARY OF JNPA: DRIVING INNOVATION AND EXCELLENCE IN MARITIME ADMINISTRATION

Ms. Manisha Jadhav has made remarkable contributions to the maritime sector over a career spanning three decades. Starting as a Welfare Officer in 1993 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA), she has steadily risen to her current leadership position as General Manager (Administration) and Secretary. Her journey is characterized by a focus on inclusivity, operational efficiency, and aligning JNPA's objectives with national maritime policies.

Ms. Jadhav's early roles involved responsibilities in industrial relations, labor welfare, and employee engagement. Over time, she transitioned through diverse portfolios such as Personnel, Marketing, and Estate Management, where her strategic problem-solving skills contributed significantly to organizational growth. Among her key achievements are establishing welfare programs to enhance employee morale and founding the Women's Welfare Association to empower marginalized women. She also led

initiatives like structured training programs with the Port of Antwerp and the establishment of the Skill Development Center under PMKK, aimed at bridging the skill gap for project-affected persons (PAPs).

In her current role, Ms. Jadhav oversees port administration, strategic coordination with government agencies, and employee welfare. She has implemented digitized governance systems for efficient board meeting operations and continues to pursue her doctorate in Port Management at the Indian Maritime University, reflecting her dedication to continuous learning and innovation.

Ms. Jadhav's leadership approach has evolved from transactional to transformational, emphasizing empowerment, collaborative decision-making, and fostering a culture of innovation. Her multidisciplinary expertise in human resource management, labor law, and organizational behavior, complemented by her academic pursuits, equips her to address complex challenges. She has spearheaded strategic interventions such as structured dialogues with union representatives, employee upskilling workshops, and collaboration with medical professionals at JNPA Hospital.

A champion of gender inclusivity, Ms. Jadhav founded the Women's Welfare Association at JNPA to provide skill-building platforms for underprivileged women. She

has implemented targeted recruitment policies promoting gender diversity, structured mentorship programs for female employees, and collaborative partnerships for specialized training. These initiatives have increased women's workforce participation at JNPA, fostering leadership opportunities and strengthening the organization's reputation as an inclusive employer.

Ms. Jadhav has successfully addressed challenges related to operational efficiency, industrial relations, community expectations, and healthcare services during the pandemic. Her governance framework ensures seamless integration across diverse portfolios, while her transparent communication fosters harmonious labor relations. Initiatives like the Skill Development Center and digitized governance systems underscore her ability to align community needs and organizational objectives.

Looking ahead, Ms. Jadhav envisions a maritime sector that thrives on agility, effective communication, and stakeholder-centric strategies. She remains committed to promoting gender equity and inclusivity through policies and frameworks that support women's professional development. Her leadership is defined by her unwavering dedication to creating an inclusive and progressive work environment while aligning JNPA's goals with national and global maritime objectives.

MILESTONES

1. **Establishment of Welfare Programs:** Ms. Jadhav established welfare programs that enhanced employee morale and productivity.
2. **Founding the Women's Welfare Association:** She founded the Women's Welfare Association to uplift marginalized women, demonstrating her commitment to social equity and inclusivity.
3. **Implementation of Structured Training Programs:** Ms. Jadhav implemented structured training programs through collaborations with international institutions, such as the Port of Antwerp, to enhance the technical competencies of JNPA personnel.
4. **Skill Development Center:** She established the Skill Development Center under PMKK, which bridged the skill gap for project-affected persons (PAPs) and aligned with national development objectives.
5. **Digitized Governance Systems:** As Secretary to the Board, she implemented digitized governance systems to improve the efficiency of board meetings, enabling quicker and more informed decisions.
6. **Ongoing Commitment to Learning:** Ms. Jadhav's ongoing doctorate in Port Management at the Indian Maritime University reflects her commitment to continuous learning and innovation in the sector.

CHALLENGES

1. **Fostering Harmonious Labor Relations:** She faced the challenge of fostering harmonious labor relations amidst rapid organizational modernization and automation. This required careful negotiation, trust-building, and the implementation of transparent communication mechanisms.
2. **Aligning Community Expectations with CSR Goals:** She had to overcome hurdles in aligning community expectations with JNPA's strategic CSR goals. Establishing the Skill Development Center was a strategic response to this challenge.
3. **Ensuring High-Quality Healthcare Services:** Ms. Jadhav faced the complexity of ensuring high-quality healthcare services at JNPA Hospital during the pandemic. She facilitated critical resource allocation and streamlined coordination with medical professionals to support the port workforce⁵.
4. **Maintaining Transparency and Efficiency:** Ms. Jadhav had to enhance board-level decision-making processes. As Secretary to the Board, she implemented digitized governance systems to improve the efficiency of board meetings, enabling quicker and more informed decisions.

VISION FOR CHANGE

Manisha Jadhav conceives a maritime sector that will be **inclusivity-driven, operationally efficient, and aligned with the global goals**. Her leadership style focuses on **transformational strategies, employee empowerment, collaboration, and innovation**.

As the founder of the Women's Welfare Association at JNPA, Ms. Jadhav integrates social responsibility with organizational practices, promoting **gender equity** through mentorship, recruitment, and supportive infrastructure like women-friendly facilities and childcare. She balances **efficiency with employee welfare** through structured training programs and creating a supportive work environment.

Ms. Jadhav is committed to **technological advancements**, promoting skill development for women in automation and digitization while encouraging flexible career paths. By prioritizing inclusivity and continuous improvement, she envisions a maritime sector that is innovative, equitable, and efficient.

LEGACY AND INSPIRATION

Ms. Manisha Jadhav's career in the maritime sector spans over three decades, marked by her commitment to inclusivity, operational excellence, and social responsibility. As the founder of the Women's Welfare Association at JNPA, she empowered marginalized women, creating employment and skill-building opportunities, significantly increasing their participation in JNPA's workforce.

Her leadership emphasized innovation, strategic empowerment, and collaboration, implementing initiatives like digitized governance and international training programs, enhancing operational efficiency. She also established a Skill Development Center under PMKK to address skill gaps for project-affected persons (PAPs).

Ms. Jadhav's focus on employee welfare, transparent communication, and continuous learning, including pursuing a doctorate in Port Management, shaped JNPA's workforce. Her efforts to break barriers in a male-dominated industry and promote gender equity inspire future generations. Her legacy offers a blueprint for integrating social responsibility with operational excellence, creating a more equitable and sustainable future.

Ms. Reshma Nilofer Visalakshi

Grade II Pilot
Kolkata Port Authority



TRAILBLAZER IN MARITIME PILOTING

Ms. Reshma Nilofer is a pioneering figure in the maritime industry, celebrated as India's first and only lady maritime pilot. Since beginning her career in 2011, she has navigated uncharted waters—both literally and figuratively—to break barriers in a male-dominated profession. Reshma's journey, which spans over a decade and a half, epitomizes resilience, skill, and an unwavering commitment to challenging systemic norms.

Reshma's maritime journey began with a B.E. in Marine Technology from Chennai, a dual course encompassing both deck and engine competencies—a rigorous program that typically focuses on only one specialization. Sponsored by the shipping giant Maersk, her education marked her as one of six women across six batches of trainees. Her training took her around the world, offering her a global perspective on maritime operations.

After completing her second mate license, Reshma joined Kolkata Port directly, bypassing the conventional requirement of cargo work experience for pilots. This unconventional path, supported by extensive training at the port, underscored her exceptional aptitude and determination to succeed in a highly competitive field.

Reshma's work as a river pilot involves navigating ships through the challenging waterways of Kolkata and Haldia ports through River Hooghly. Despite the inherent risks of the job and the systemic barriers she has faced, Reshma has consistently demonstrated expertise and professionalism. Kolkata Port's decision to lower entry qualifications enabled Reshma's recruitment as a junior officer without requiring a master's license. However, this also tied her to the port without the flexibility to explore other maritime opportunities. It took Reshma over six years to secure a permanent position, reflecting the slow pace of career progression for women in the industry. Reshma asserts that piloting is perfectly suitable for women, despite societal biases. She highlights the need for flexible working conditions, such as childcare leave and maternity provisions, to better support women professionals.

Reshma has emerged as a vocal advocate for systemic reforms in the maritime industry. Her experiences highlight the

gender biases, safety concerns, and administrative inefficiencies that hinder women's participation across the industry. Reshma faces daily sexism, including invasive questions about her marital status and family plans. She is often subjected to scrutiny over her competence, with trust issues arising due to her gender and age. India's maritime policies deem pregnant women unfit to sail, forcing them to take unpaid leave. Reshma contrasts this with international practices, where women are given the choice to work during their first trimester or until the employee is comfortable working a temporary light duty. Ship safety standards remain inadequate, posing significant risks to all employees. After an accident, Reshma spent three months offshore without any institutional support for recovering from PTSD which was later offered by The Nautical Institute of which she is a member. Despite her achievements, Reshma feels invisible within her own circles and organization. Official regulations often use male-centric language, excluding women from recognition and discussions. Other ports in India do not allow pilots without extensive seafaring experience or a master's license, limiting opportunities for women. There is no standardized maternity leave or childcare support for women sea farers. The absence of permanent regulations creates uncertainty, with opportunities for women often offered on a case-by-case basis.

MILESTONES AND CHALLENGES

1. Breaking Barriers:

- Reshma's appointment as a pilot at 23 demonstrated her capability and potential, paving the way for women in maritime roles.
- She successfully navigated systemic biases to become a role model for aspiring women pilots.

2. Safety and Welfare:

- Reshma's calls for stricter safety standards onboard ships and comprehensive welfare policies highlight critical gaps in the industry.

3. Advocacy for Standardized Policies:

- Reshma urges the inclusion of gender-neutral language in regulations and the introduction of standardized maternity and childcare leave provisions.
- She advocates for uniform entry criteria across ports to provide equitable opportunities for all candidates.

VISION FOR CHANGE

Reshma believes in creating a more inclusive and equitable maritime industry. She emphasizes the importance of visibility, stating, “Seeing is believing. Only when people see women in these roles can they believe it is possible.” Her recommendations include:

- **Policy Reforms:** Standardizing entry requirements and including provisions for maternity and childcare leave.
- **Safety Enhancements:** Conducting regular audits to ensure safe working conditions onboard ships.
- **Career Mobility:** Offering flexible licensing pathways and opportunities for professional growth.
- **Gender Equity Initiatives:** Launching mentorship and sponsorship programs for women in maritime education and careers. Capacity building and enhancing women into leadership roles where they can bring about changes in work culture for other women.

LEGACY AND INSPIRATION

Reshma's journey is a testament to her resilience and determination to succeed in a field that remains deeply unequal. Her advocacy for systemic change serves as a rallying cry for greater inclusivity in the maritime industry. By sharing her story, Reshma hopes to inspire the next generation of women to pursue their dreams and challenge societal norms.

As a trailblazer, she not only navigates ships but also steers the maritime industry toward a more equitable future. Her efforts to address gender disparities, improve safety standards, and advocate for employee welfare make her a true pioneer in her field.

Ms. Sarbari Das

**Commander
Kolkata Port Trust**



Ms. Sarbari Das is a distinguished senior officer in the Marine Department at Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata, with over 30 years of experience in the maritime and shipping industry. She holds a bachelor's degree in Physics and has become an iconic figure in the sector. She is known for breaking barriers as the first female trainee marine officer not only in Kolkata Port but also in Southeast Asia, leading the way for women in a predominantly male field.

Sarbari's career journey is a testament to her resilience and pioneering spirit. In 1992, she joined Kolkata Port as the first female trainee marine officer, marking a historic moment in India's maritime sector. Her journey was initially filled with obstacles, from intense physical training to dealing with isolation in a male-dominated environment. Despite these challenges, Sarbari's determination helped her rise through the ranks, eventually becoming a senior officer in the Marine Department. Over the years, she gained expertise in river surveys, navigation, pilot services, and dredging operations, contributing significantly to the modern-day operations of the port.

MLESTONES IN CAREER

- **1992:** Became the first female trainee marine officer at Kolkata Port, and the first woman in Southeast Asia to join the port sector.
- **Training Completion:** Successfully completed six months of rigorous on-the-job training, culminating in a Passing Out Parade at the Netaji Subhash Dock System.
- **First Assignment:** Embarked on her first voyage onboard RSV Haldia, where she conducted river surveys under challenging conditions.
- **Technological Transition:** Played a key role in transitioning the port's river survey system from manual to modern, digital methods, including the implementation of Electronic Navigational Charts (ENCs).
- **Leadership Role:** Became a Senior Officer in the Marine Department, leading independent surveys and contributing to the demarcation of shipping channels for the River Hooghly along with pilotage of Hydrographic Survey Vessels of SMPK.
- **Gender Advocacy:** Raised awareness and advocated for improved facilities and working conditions for women in the industry.

CHALLENGES FACED

- **Gender-Based Barriers:** Faced significant isolation and discrimination, as she was the only woman in a male-dominated industry.
- **Lack of Basic Infrastructure:** Struggled with inadequate washroom facilities and unhygienic conditions in the work environment, especially in dry docks and during vessel repairs.
- **Physical Strain:** Endured extreme physical discomfort during long sailing voyages, especially on small vessels, which caused nausea and exhaustion due to constant rolling and pitching.
- **Cultural and Behavioral Challenges:** Dealt with negative attitudes and behavioral challenges from male colleagues, who were initially resistant to working with a female officer.
- **Limited Technological Support:** Worked with manual processes for river surveys and position fixing, which were labor-intensive and prone to error before the introduction of digital systems.

VISION FOR CHANGE

Sarbari envisions a maritime sector that is inclusive and equitable for women. She advocates for gender equality in recruitment practices, believing that women should be encouraged and supported to pursue careers in maritime and technical fields. A key aspect of her vision is the creation of a more inclusive workplace, including better infrastructure for women, such as dedicated washrooms and hygienic facilities. Sarbari also emphasizes the need for continuous modernization in the sector, particularly in the use of digital technologies. She envisions a fully digitized maritime environment where processes like river surveys and navigational charting are streamlined and efficient. Additionally, Sarbari sees great potential in sustainable practices and the integration of safety innovations to ensure the long-term viability of the maritime industry.

LEGACY AND INSPIRATION

Sarbari Das has built a legacy as a pioneer for women in the maritime industry. As the first female officer to break through the gender barriers in both India and Southeast Asia's port sector, she has paved the way for future generations of women to enter and succeed in maritime roles. Her work in advancing the port's river survey methods, transitioning from manual to digital processes, has had a lasting impact on the operational efficiency of the port. Additionally, her advocacy for improved working conditions, including the establishment of better facilities for women, has set an important precedent for the industry. Sarbari's contributions continue to influence the maritime sector, and her leadership in ensuring safe and efficient navigation has made a significant difference in the development of Kolkata Port. Sarbari's journey is a source of inspiration for individuals, particularly women, pursuing careers in fields that have traditionally been dominated by men. Her story demonstrates the power of perseverance in overcoming adversity. She proves that one can break through societal and institutional barriers to succeed and lead. Sarbari's commitment to mentoring future generations of women in maritime and technical fields has made her a role model. Her life's work encourages others to challenge stereotypes, push boundaries, and pursue their passions regardless of gender or background. Sarbari continues to inspire through her vision of an inclusive, modernized, and sustainable maritime industry. Sarbari Das's career and achievements reflect the power of determination, technical excellence, and advocacy for change. As a trailblazer in the maritime industry, she has not only advanced the sector's operational capabilities but also fought for gender equality and better working conditions. Sarbari's legacy as the first woman to hold significant roles in the maritime field in Southeast Asia is an inspiration to all, showing that persistence and commitment can lead to groundbreaking change. Her contributions to the field of river surveys, navigation, and the modernization of port operations have left an indelible mark on the industry.

Ms. Jaita Kundu

Navigating Officer
IMU alumni



Ms. Jaita Kundu is a dedicated Navigating Officer in the maritime industry, with extensive experience in international shipping and trade. Over the past four years, she has navigated various challenges in a male-dominated industry while establishing herself as a skilled professional in vessel operations, cargo handling, and maritime logistics. Currently employed with a Hong Kong-based shipping company, Jaita specializes in managing product tankers that transport oil, gasoline, and chemicals across Asia, Europe, and the United States.

As one of the few female officers in the Indian shipping sector, Jaita has faced numerous obstacles, from gender biases in recruitment to the physical demands of life at sea. However, she has consistently demonstrated resilience and technical expertise, proving her capability in a field where women are still underrepresented. With two more licenses left to obtain her captancy, she is committed to advancing her career in the industry while advocating for greater gender inclusivity in maritime professions.

Jaita completed her bachelor's degree in Nautical Science from the Indian Maritime University (IMU), Mumbai, one of the most

prestigious maritime institutions in India. Her batch had only two female students out of 500, highlighting the extreme gender disparity in the field. While this made her initial journey challenging, it also strengthened her determination to excel. Throughout her academic training, she gained expertise in navigation, cargo operations, and international shipping regulations, equipping her with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive as a seafarer.

Jaita's work as a Navigating Officer involves ensuring the safe passage of vessels, monitoring cargo operations, and adhering to international maritime laws. She works with a multinational crew, gaining exposure to diverse professional cultures and learning from experienced seafarers across the globe. One of her key responsibilities is navigating complex trade routes, often transporting goods between Asia, Europe, and the United States.

CHALLENGES IN THE MARITIME INDUSTRY

- **Gender Disparity in Recruitment:** Many shipping companies hesitate to hire women due to concerns about workplace dynamics and harassment risks.
- **Extreme Gender Ratio:** In her batch at IMU Mumbai, only 2 women were admitted out of 500 students, highlighting severe underrepresentation.
- **Workplace Bias & Initial Discrimination:** Early in her career, Jaita faced rejection in job interviews solely based on her gender, as employers assumed women wouldn't be suited for long-term life at sea.
- **Physically Demanding Work:** The role of a seafarer requires lifting heavy cargo, operating complex machinery, and enduring harsh weather conditions, making it challenging for many women.
- **Safety & Harassment Risks:** Historically, women on ships have been vulnerable to workplace harassment, with few legal protections or reporting mechanisms available.
- **Lack of Monitoring & Legal Protections:** In the past, there were no CCTV cameras or satellite communication, making it difficult to report incidents of abuse or harassment at sea.
- **Work-Life Balance & Career Transition Issues:** Many women leave seafaring early due to family commitments or difficulties in transitioning to onshore roles, leading to limited long-term career growth.

VISION & FUTURE GOALS

- **Improved Hiring & Inclusion Policies:** Advocate for structured recruitment programs that encourage more women to enter and advance in the maritime industry.
- **Mandatory Safety Policies:** Implement regulations requiring at least two female crew members on vessels to enhance security and reduce harassment risks.
- **Better Work Accommodations:** Introduce gender-inclusive physical work support, such as ergonomic tools and alternative role structures, to make seafaring more accessible.
- **Stronger Legal Frameworks:** Push for international laws protecting women at sea, ensuring legal accountability for any misconduct or workplace harassment.
- **Technology-Driven Safety Measures:** Expand CCTV surveillance, satellite internet, and real-time tracking systems to enhance workplace security.
- **Career Transition Pathways:** Develop structured career shifts from seafaring to onshore roles in logistics, port management, and maritime operations, ensuring women have long-term growth opportunities.
- **Mental Health & Support Systems:** Establish mental health programs, counseling services, and grievance redressal mechanisms for seafarers to cope with workplace stress and isolation.

Jaita Kundu stands as a trailblazer for women in maritime careers, proving that resilience, skill, and determination can help overcome systemic barriers. As she continues to navigate uncharted waters, she remains committed to both her personal career growth and the larger movement for gender inclusivity in the shipping industry. With her sights set on earning her Captain's license, she is paving the way for future generations of women to pursue careers at sea, ensuring a more diverse and equitable future in maritime professions.

Ms. Shruthi Vasudev Adpaikar

**Radio Officer
Panaji Port**



Ms. Shruthi Vasudev Adpaikar embarked on her career in the maritime sector on July 1, 2024, joining the Captain of Ports Department as a Radio Officer. She holds the distinction of being the first female officer in the department, having earned the position through the rigorous Goa Public Service Commission examination. With a master's degree in Electronics Communication and Instrumentation Engineering, Ms. Adpaikar possesses specialized expertise in communication systems. Prior to her maritime career, she accumulated five years of teaching experience as an Assistant Professor and served for one year as Project Scientist I in the Goa State Climate Change Cell. Her transition into the maritime sector has allowed her to leverage her technical knowledge to enhance communication systems, safety protocols, and overall maritime operations.

As the first female officer in a traditionally male-dominated department, Ms. Adpaikar encountered challenges in establishing credibility and gaining acceptance. Her strategic approach included demonstrating technical proficiency, maintaining professionalism, and fostering open communication. Through dedication and

consistent performance, she has earned the respect and support of her colleagues. This experience has not only reinforced her leadership capabilities but has also emphasized the importance of workplace diversity.

Ms. Adpaikar's leadership methodology is evolving with a focus on inclusivity and professionalism. Recognizing the absence of gender-specific policies in the department, she aims to foster a culture of mutual respect and collaboration. Although the department has a POSH (Prevention of Sexual Harassment) committee, she is working towards promoting a more open and inclusive atmosphere that values diverse perspectives and encourages effective teamwork.

As a new member of the department, Ms. Adpaikar has not yet implemented specific initiatives but is committed to fostering an inclusive work environment. She aims to promote collaboration and respect among all officers, which she believes will have long-term positive impacts on the organization.

Women remain underrepresented in senior leadership roles in the maritime sector. While entry-level and technical positions have seen an increase in female participation, leadership roles such as captains, senior officers, and port managers continue to lack significant female representation. The sectoral variations in women's participation can be attributed to societal expectations, the physical demands of certain roles, and limited gender-specific support systems.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN MARITIME

- Long working hours and extended periods at sea pose difficulties, especially for those with family responsibilities.
- Many maritime roles require physical strength, which can be a challenge for some women.
- Infrastructure gaps, including the lack of gender-specific accommodations, hinder women's operational effectiveness.
- The traditionally male-dominated culture makes it harder for women to access mentorship and career advancement opportunities.
- Digital transformation and technological advancements in maritime operations present new opportunities for increasing women's participation.
- Maritime Vision 2047 has set ambitious gender equity goals, promoting the inclusion of women in various maritime segments. Although progress is being made, persistent challenges necessitate ongoing efforts to reshape the industry and provide equal opportunities for women.

VISION FOR CHANGE

- Foster inclusivity and create equal opportunities for women in maritime careers.
- Advocate for gender-sensitive infrastructure, such as separate accommodations and better facilities.
- Support the development of specialized training programs tailored for women in maritime operations.
- Promote mentorship programs to encourage female leadership in the maritime sector.
- Encourage policy reforms that support work-life balance and career growth for women in the industry.

KEY PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIC APPROACH:

- Navigating the complexities of international recruitment in the highly competitive cruise and hospitality industries.
- Ensuring compliance with diverse regulatory frameworks across different countries.
- Maintaining high standards of candidate selection to meet client expectations.

Ms. D'Souza emphasizes ethical practices, respect, and service excellence. She fosters a culture of mutual respect and trust within her team, aligning with Kamaxi's core values. Her approach ensures that both clients and candidates receive personalized and professional service.

Kamaxi as an organization is committed to ethical recruitment and training practices, providing equal opportunities for all candidates. The company focuses on bridging gaps between individuals' skills and professional dreams, promoting inclusivity in the workforce.

The maritime sector, particularly in cruise and hospitality, has seen an increase in female participation. However, women remain underrepresented in senior leadership roles. Organizations like Kamaxi play a crucial role in promoting gender diversity by providing training and recruitment opportunities for women aspiring to enter and advance in this field.

CHALLENGES FACED:

- Balancing work-life commitments, especially during extended periods at sea.
- Overcoming traditional gender biases in a male-dominated industry.
- Accessing mentorship and networking opportunities to facilitate career advancement.
- Leveraging technological advancements to create more flexible and accommodating work environments.

Maritime Vision 2047 aims to enhance gender equity in the maritime sector. Initiatives under this vision are expected to create more opportunities for women, promote inclusive policies, and encourage organizations to adopt best practices in diversity and inclusion.

VISION FOR CHANGE

- Advocate for policies that support work-life balance for women in maritime careers.
- Promote mentorship programs to guide and support women aspiring to leadership roles.
- Encourage continuous professional development and training tailored for women in maritime.
- Foster partnerships with organizations committed to gender diversity and inclusion.



Ms. C. Premakumari

**Secretary
Cochin Port**



Ms. C. Premakumari is an accomplished professional with over 28 years of experience at Cochin Port, progressing from a Research Officer to her current role as Secretary. With an M.Sc. in Statistics and a master's in computer applications, she began her career in 1996 as a Research Officer, responsible for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating crucial data for the Ministry.

After two decades in research, she was promoted to Deputy Director (Research), later advancing to Senior Deputy Director (Research). Eventually, she transitioned into administration as the Deputy Secretary (CL), where she gained in-depth knowledge of major port operations and regulations under the Central Government. In 2018, she was appointed Secretary, overseeing multiple departments and ensuring regulatory compliance.

As Secretary, C. Premakumari has witnessed a significant workforce reduction at Cochin Port, with employees decreasing from 4,000+

to just 787, leading to increased workloads for the remaining staff. Despite this, she has efficiently managed operations and resources. She plays a crucial role in overseeing the estate division, which generates over ₹1,000 crores in annual revenue, a responsibility that falls under the Secretary's jurisdiction rather than the Chief Engineer, as seen in minor ports. She also navigates government policies on contract-based employment, ensuring operational efficiency in an evolving regulatory landscape. Under her leadership, Cochin Port maintains a 33% revenue-sharing agreement with DP World, benefiting from the port's growing cargo operations. However, financial challenges persist, as Cochin Port does not receive state funding, unlike Kolkata Port, and lacks the profit-driven projects seen at JNPA. Additionally, Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL) uses the port's channel but does not reimburse or pay a usage fee, further straining resources. Beyond financial management, she also plays a key role in handling strong labor unions in Kerala, ensuring smooth operations through strict adherence to rules, regulations, and documentation.

In her role, she has proved her capabilities by successfully managing administrative challenges, overseeing critical files, and ensuring smooth workflow despite long hours. While 10 files are sent to the Chairperson, several crucial ones remain under her supervision. Advancements in computerization and digital infrastructure have eased administrative tasks, enabling remote work when necessary.

BREAKING GENDER BARRIERS IN THE MARITIME SECTOR

C. Premakumari has worked in an environment with minimal gender bias, but when she was promoted from Senior Deputy Secretary, she faced skepticism from some who questioned, "Can she handle this role?" or "Can she work such long hours?" Through her dedication and perseverance, she overcame these doubts and proved her leadership capabilities.

However, she acknowledges the gender disparity in port operations. While women are present in Class 3 roles, cargo handling and terminal operations remain largely male-dominated. The Ministry is working towards increasing recruitment, but the hiring trend remains focused on contractual workers due to the nature of cargo handling jobs. There are very few mechanical engineers in the sector, with women primarily opting for civil engineering roles.

She strongly advocates for greater female participation in the maritime sector, emphasizing the need for training, awareness, and outreach from the school level to introduce young women to port-related careers. She notes that careers in nautical sciences have a long return on investment (ROI), taking 12-13 years to reach a position of financial stability, which may discourage women from entering the field. However, she believes this will change over time with increased awareness and institutional support.

CHALLENGES

- Declining Workforce & Increased Responsibilities – Employee count has dropped from 4,000+ to 787, significantly increasing workload and operational pressure.
- Financial Constraints & Unequal Funding – Unlike other major ports, Cochin Port does not receive state government funding, adding to financial difficulties.
- Labor Union Pressures – Strong labor unions in Kerala require careful regulatory adherence and negotiations to ensure uninterrupted port operations.
- Trade Competitiveness & Market Shifts – Nepal's trade has shifted from Kolkata to Visakhapatnam, and Cochin faces competition from JNPA and other profit-driven ports.
- Infrastructure & Accessibility Issues – While ferry and jetty transport exist, incomplete infrastructure affects seamless movement for both employees and cargo.

VISION FOR CHANGE

- Workforce Modernization & Efficiency – Advocate for increased hiring, skill development, and automation to optimize operations.
- Securing Better Financial Support – Push for state-level funding and fair cost-sharing agreements with organizations like CSL.
- Enhancing Trade Competitiveness – Strengthen Cochin Port's strategic position through policy reforms and better business incentives.
- Streamlining Port Operations – Improve digital processes to reduce paperwork delays and increase overall efficiency.
- Infrastructure Development – Support investments in public transport, jetties, and cargo handling infrastructure to facilitate better connectivity.
- C. Premakumari remains dedicated to modernizing Cochin Port, enhancing efficiency, and ensuring financial stability, reinforcing its position as a key player in India's maritime sector.

Captain Radhika Menon

Pioneering Leadership in Maritime Navigation



Captain Radhika Menon has emerged as a trailblazer in the maritime industry, breaking gender barriers and setting new benchmarks for women in seafaring roles. Beginning her career in 1991 as a Radio Officer with the Shipping Corporation of India (SCI), she transitioned into navigation in 1993 and steadily advanced in a male-dominated field. In 2012, she became the first female captain of an Indian merchant ship, a landmark achievement that reshaped perceptions of women in maritime leadership.

CAREER JOURNEY AND MILESTONES

Hailing from a family of engineers—her mother a civil engineer and her father a mechanical engineer—Captain Menon's technical acumen was nurtured early. She pursued a radio officer's course, specializing in marine electronics, a rigorous program that spanned nearly two years. Her professional aspirations soon led her to navigation, where she developed a keen interest in ship handling. After years of dedication and training, she assumed command of an oil tanker under SCI in 2012,

unknowingly making history as the first Indian woman to lead a merchant vessel.

Beyond her professional achievements, Captain Menon has been instrumental in driving gender inclusivity within the maritime sector. She founded the International Women Seafarers Foundation (IWSF) in 2017, an organization dedicated to mentoring and supporting women in seafaring careers. Recognizing her bravery and contributions to the industry, she was honored with the IMO Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea in 2016. Additionally, she played a key role in the creation of gender sensitization material for the Directorate General of Shipping, which has now been made mandatory for training programs.

CHALLENGES AND OVERCOMING BARRIERS:

Captain Menon's journey has been marked by perseverance in the face of systemic challenges. Early in her career, she encountered skepticism and bias from male colleagues who questioned the capabilities of women in seafaring roles. The maritime industry lacked essential infrastructure and policies for women, making career progression even more difficult. As the only woman onboard in many instances, she often navigated social isolation while adapting to new crews on every voyage. Despite these barriers, she remained resolute, advocating for equal opportunities and demonstrating exceptional leadership.

ADVANCING GENDER INCLUSIVITY IN MARITIME CAREERS:

Committed to fostering a more inclusive maritime sector, Captain Menon has worked closely with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and DG Shipping to promote women's participation in seafaring professions. Her efforts have led to the establishment of

mandatory gender sensitization training for seafarers. She also contributed to the 2019 DG Shipping guidelines, which introduced measures to create a more gender-responsive work environment.

Through IWSF, Captain Menon has been actively involved in mentoring young women in maritime careers, connecting them with job opportunities, and assisting companies in formulating gender-sensitive policies. IWSF also provides a structured platform for women to voice grievances and seek institutional support during workplace inquiries.

VISION FOR CHANGE AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

A strong advocate for gender equity, Captain Menon envisions a maritime industry that offers equal opportunities to women in both seafaring and shore-based roles. She highlights the need for gender-sensitive recruitment practices and calls for better workplace infrastructure, including hygienic facilities and dedicated washrooms for female seafarers.

Her recommendations for industry-wide improvements include:

- Encouraging campus recruitment of female engineers for port and shipping operations.
- Providing shore-based roles for women during maternity breaks, ensuring career continuity.
- Strengthening grievance redressal mechanisms to address workplace harassment effectively.
- Promoting inland waterways as a viable career option, offering a more stable work-life balance for women.

Captain Menon also advocates for aligning India's maritime policies with international standards, particularly in recognizing pregnant women's right to work in seafaring roles, similar to global best practices.

LEGACY AND INSPIRATION

As the first Indian woman to command a merchant ship, Captain Radhika Menon has set a precedent for future generations of women aspiring to maritime leadership. Her resilience and determination have shattered long-standing gender norms, making way for increased representation of women in the industry. Through her advocacy, policy contributions, and mentorship initiatives, she continues to shape a more equitable and progressive maritime sector. Her legacy stands as a testament to the power of perseverance, inspiring young women to challenge societal norms and pursue careers in traditionally male-dominated fields.

FLO, The Women's Wing of FICCI

CONTACTS :

Rashmi Sarita

Executive Director, FICCI FLO
rashmi.sarita@ficci.com

Ankurita Pathak

Additional Director, FICCI FLO
ankurita.pathak@ficci.com

ADDRESS:

FICCI, Federation House, 1 Tansen Marg, New Delhi 110001

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**This study has been commissioned by
FICCI FLO to Nikore Associates.**

Nikore Associates is a youth-led economics research group dedicated to critically examining policy frameworks across diverse sectors using a gendered lens, with our thought-provoking analyses featured in prominent national and international media outlets. Our vision is to emerge as a prominent influence in economic policy discourse, motivating governments and institutions to implement more effective and equitable strategies in a world where policies undergo continuous scrutiny and optimization for collective prosperity.

Through meticulous research and comprehensive consulting services, our mission is to systematically challenge existing sectoral policies, encourage informed debate, and develop innovative solutions that catalyse positive transformation in both national and international economic landscapes—all while maintaining our core commitment to evaluating policy effectiveness and developing enhanced policy architectures.

PROJECT TEAM:

Ms. Mitali Nikore, Founder of Nikore Associates (Team Lead)

Mr. Biprajit Roy Choudhury, Lead Author

Ms. Parami Chowlu

Ms. Aishwarya Kamilli

Ms. Dibyani Sinha

Ms. Sreya Dey



The Power to Empower

FICCI LADIES ORGANISATION

FLO, Federation House,
1 Tansen Marg, New Delhi 110 001
Tel: +91 11 2373 8760-70 Ext. 416 | Fax: +91 11 2375 2259
E: flo@ficci.com | W: www.ficciflo.com