

Shipping Review

GHANA'S AUTHORITATIVE QUARTERLY SHIPPING AND LOGISTICS JOURNAL

VOLUME 25 NO. 3

JULY - SEPTEMBER, 2023

ISSN: 0855-5148



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Published by:

7th Floor, Ghana Shippers' House
No. 12 Cruickshank Street,
Ambassadorial Enclave, West Ridge,
P. O. Box GP 1321, Accra
Tel. 233-302-666915/7

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Printed by:

Buck Press Ltd. - 030 240 8061



ASSESSING THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW SAFETY CODE FOR SHIPS CARRYING INDUSTRIAL PERSONNEL FOR SEAFARERS AND STAKEHOLDERS IN THE MARITIME TRANSPORT INDUSTRY

By: Captain Etoenyo Onassis Bankas, General Secretary of the Ghana Merchant Navy Officer Association (GMNOA).

A new mandatory safety code for ships carrying industrial personnel – aimed at ensuring the safety of people transported to work on offshore facilities including windfarms – has been adopted by the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 106), which met from 2nd to 11th November 2022.

The new Chapter XV of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) and the associated new International Code of Safety for Ships Carrying Industrial Personnel (IP Code) were developed by the IMO Sub-Committee on Ship Design and Construction.

The aim is to provide minimum safety standards for ships that carry industrial personnel, as well as for the personnel themselves, and address specific risks of maritime operations within the

offshore and energy sectors, such as personnel transfer operations. Such personnel may be engaged in the construction, maintenance, decommissioning, operation or servicing of offshore facilities, such as windfarms, as well as offshore oil and gas installations, aquaculture, ocean mining or similar activities.

The amendments and Code are expected to enter into force on 1st July 2024.

So, one would ask, why is the new SOLAS Chapter XV focused on Industrial Persons and the ships which transports this category of personnel; and what are the implications of the new chapter to seafarers and stakeholders in maritime transport industry?

A Historic Overview of Maritime Safety Development - SOLAS

The history of governmental and international involvement in

safety is very often the history of maritime tragedies. Governments will seldom act unless spurred on by public outrage at a catastrophe. For example, in 1909, the White Star liner Republic sank following a collision in fog after leaving New York. It was the first time a successful radio (CQD) distress message had been used. All the 1,500 passengers on board were saved, so the authorities did nothing, even though shortcomings in the system were apparent.

In 1912 when the Titanic sank and 1,500 people lost their lives in the most tragic circumstances. The International Ice Patrol was formed almost immediately and the irregularities in the radio watch system was resolved. Also, in response to the Titanic disaster, the first International Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) conference was held in 1913. The

second and third SOLAS conferences were held in 1929 and 1948 respectively. The main objective of the SOLAS Convention is to specify minimum standards for the construction and operation of ships, compatible with their safety.

Safety Related Maritime Accidents- Deep Sea.

On 6th March 1987, the Herald of Free Enterprise was a tragic loss of a cross Channel ferry (193 deaths) which capsized just after leaving the port with its bow doors still open. This caused most Ro/Ro ferry operators to improve their safety procedures and to ensure that bow doors are closed or opened on the berth. It also caused the IMO to take a hard look at the potentially unsafe features in the design of this type of ship. The loss of the Scandinavian Star in 1990 and the Estonia (900 deaths) in 1994 emphasised the urgency for action in this area.

To address the lapses in the safe operation of ships, the IMO introduced the International Safety Management (ISM) Code, which became mandatory for passenger ships, tankers, and bulk carriers over 500 GT on 1st July 1998.

In July 2002, the ISM Code became mandatory for all vessels over 500 GT.

Security Related Maritime Accidents- Deep Sea.

On 7th October 1985, the Achilles Lauro, a cruise vessel in the Mediterranean, was taken over by terrorists. One person was killed, and it had a great effect on the Mediterranean cruise market. It also caused the passenger ship industry to take stock concerning its security measures. Although tragic, governments or the IMO did not come forth with a regulation to address the threat of terrorists to



the safety of ship operations until May 2002 after the terrorists' attack on the World Trade Centre in the USA on 11th September 2001.

The attack on the World Trade Centre was not maritime related, but it sparked anger and outrage with calls for wide-ranging security measures to counter terrorist threats. Consequently, in May 2002, the IMO proposed 12 measures to bolster ship and port security. In October of the same year, the Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC) Limburg, was damaged by a terrorist bomb (boat) off the coast of Yemen. The incident spurred the speedy adoption and coming into force of the International Ships and Port Facility Security Code and the creation of Chapter XI-2 of the SOLAS 1974 convention. The implementation of Chapter XI-1 and Chapter XI-2 and their respective codes have

contributed to an improved management of maritime safety and security by ship owners and operators.

Having said so, it is equally important to mention that, these codes namely the International Safety Management (ISM) and the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) codes are considered as controversial because many have argued that the IMO's SOLAS have centred much more on deep sea safety and security enhancement ahead of other areas in the maritime industry. One area is the offshore maritime sector where there are many different settings in which people work, and all have inherent risks that can lead to accidents, injuries, and even fatalities. Indeed, transporting offshore workers to and from their work stations comes with inherent risks with high consequences.





The next section explores accidents and fatalities associated with jobs in the offshore maritime sector to offer a possible explanation to the creation of SOLAS Ch. XV and the corresponding IP Code.

Offshore Maritime Accidents

There are many ways in which accidents can occur on offshore rigs and platforms. Accidents that cause environmental damage most often make the news and these are largely drilling accidents. When drilling for oil or gas at the bottom of the ocean, a misstep can lead to a leak or a gush of oil or petroleum with devastating consequences for ocean environments. For Instance, the Deep-water Horizon incident in 2010 in the Gulf of Mexico blowout was one such spectacular incident. An explosion on the offshore rig led to a huge oil spill and the worst environmental disaster in the history of the U.S. The accident also injured 16 workers and killed 11 others. The bodies of the 11 were never recovered and they were thought to have been near the explosion when it happened.

There have been several major accidents, but **the leading cause of accidents and fatalities to Industrial Personnel are believed to occur when they are being transported to or from rigs and platforms. Some of the causes of accidents are bad weather, operator error,**

mechanical failures of equipment, fatigue caused by long working hours, improper training of workers or lack of safety training and poorly maintained equipment. Accidents also occur when people are being transferred from a ship to a rig or vice versa.

The weather can cause hypothermia or falls overboard, while accidents with equipment can lead to head, neck and shoulder injuries, loss of limbs, amputations, and lacerations.

Finally, workers being transported to or from offshore rigs and platforms are also at risk of being exposed to dangerous and toxic chemicals, including oil and gas. In fact, the offshore renewable energy sector is growing, with a commensurate increase in demand for ships to combine safe and secure

accommodation with transportation of industrial personnel that work offshore.

Thus, in consideration of the risks to which workers in maritime offshore sector are exposed, the creation of this new chapter is timely if not long overdue.

SOLAS CH. XV and IP Code.

The key terminology in this chapter and code is 'Industrial Personnel', meaning all persons who are transported or accommodated on board a ship for the purpose of offshore industrial activities performed on board other vessels and/or other offshore facilities. Under SOLAS 1974, a passenger is a person on board the ship who is not engaged to work on the ship. Ships carrying more than 12 persons, not engaged on board, are passenger ships. As such, industrial personnel should not be considered or treated as passengers under SOLAS regulation 1/2(e).

There are currently no international regulations for cargo ships carrying more than 12 personnel who are not engaged on board.





Industrial Personnel shall provide a regulatory framework for national administrations to apply to cargo ships transporting Industrial Personnel. It is also expected to provide minimum safety standards to be met by cargo ships certified to transport and accommodate Industrial Personnel.

It is expected to minimise the risks to which Industrial Personnel are exposed during transfer to or from workstations in the offshore marine sector. It will also contribute to reduce to the barest minimum accidents involving cargo ships transporting Industrial Personnel to offshore support vessels and others below 500GT, as well as a reduction in accidents in the offshore maritime sector.

So, for a ship carrying personnel not engaged to work on board, the non-mandatory Special Purpose Ships (SPS) Code has been accepted by flag administrations for such vessels, instead of full passenger ship compliance, although the SPS Code is not explicitly intended to enable the carriage of persons not working on board.

Furthermore, the SPS Code is not accepted by all flag administrations. These regulatory gaps have resulted in the inconsistent application of requirements by various flag administrations, and a confusing compliance regime for ship-owners and operators. To address the aforementioned lapses, the IMO developed the draft of a new SOLAS Chapter XV and a related mandatory draft of a new IP Code for the carriage of more than 12 Industrial Personnel on cargo ships and high-speed cargo craft.

Furthermore, it is recognized that the transportation of a large number of Industrial Personnel will take place either within the confines of a particular coastal state or between a base port and an offshore installation outside its territorial waters. So, to facilitate international movement and safe operations of ships carrying Industrial Personnel, administrations are encouraged to also apply this code to ships operating only on such voyages. The flag administrations may also apply the IP Code and issue Industrial Persons (IP) certificates to ships below 500 GT if they comply (as far as practicable) to the satisfaction of the administration, with all relaxations indicated on the certificate.

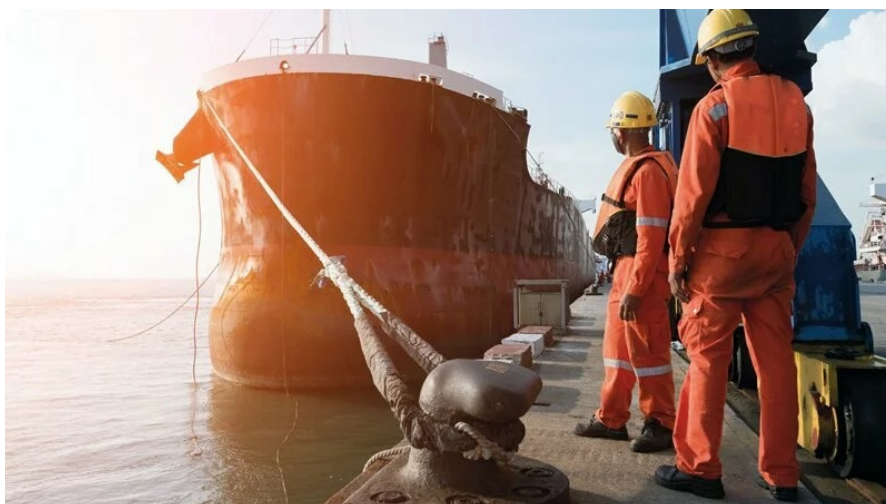
Expectations

Generally, it is expected that the new Code for Ships carrying

Impact on Stakeholders

The code is likely to have an impact on all category of persons who go to work in the offshore sector. When the code comes into force on 1st July 2024, persons working in the offshore sector will be regarded as Industrial Persons (IP) under SOLAS 1974 as amended, which makes it mandatory for the Industrial Persons to be transported and accommodated by vessels complying with the IP code. It is hoped that there will be a reduction in the number of

The IP Code is expected to clarify the regulatory gap between SOLAS cargo ships and SOLAS passenger ships. It is expected therefore, that all ships to which the IP Code applies shall (prior to the carriage of more than 12 Industrial Personnel on board) have on board an Industrial Personnel Safety Certificate, from the entry-into-force date.



accidents stemming from the risks associated with work in the offshore maritime sector, with a corresponding reduction in the number of Industrial Persons getting injured or losing their life from fatalities at the work place.

Conclusion

The IMO's SOLAS have centred much more on deep sea safety and security enhancement ahead of other areas in the maritime industry. One area is the offshore maritime sector where the leading cause of accidents and fatalities to Industrial Persons occurs when they are being transported to or from rigs and platforms. The means of transporting Industrial Persons is neither regulated by SOLAS cargo ships nor SOLAS passenger Ships. Thus, the IMO has developed a new SOLAS Chapter XV and a related mandatory draft of the new IP Code for the carriage of more than 12 Industrial Personnel on cargo ships and high-speed cargo craft. The IP Code is expected to clarify the regulatory gap between SOLAS cargo ships and SOLAS passenger ships.

Recommendations

As a seagoing professional, any



development associated with SOLAS 1974 as amended brings into mind the seafarer. The ILO in 2006, through its Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006 defined the word “Seafarer” to mean, a person who is employed or engaged in any capacity on board a vessel and in the business of the vessel. This definition has been generally accepted and does not preclude offshore labour personnel in the maritime sector. IMO has through the IP code designated employees in the maritime offshore labour sector as Industrial Persons and has promulgated regulations to mitigate the risk Industrial Persons are exposed to in their line of work. This is a step in the right direction.

SOLAS 1974 as amended is quite clear on vessel types. The convention defines two vessel types, i.e. Cargo vessels and Passenger vessels. However, since the 1950s, through technology and innovations, there is an array of categories of cargo ships in operation. One can assume that the safety and security of persons employed on board a vessel for the business of a vessel is factored into the design, construction, and operation of every SOLAS vessel, as in this very latest example of cargo ships certified to accommodate and transport Industrial Persons. Therefore, other seafarers are obliged to ask about the safety of persons employed on cargo ships for the business of the cargo ship. Thus,

it is important for the IMO to come out clearly on this for seafarers, particularly for those on other special purpose-built cargo vessels. Cargo vessel designs are continually changing to meet the changing demands in maritime trade stemming from the increasing variety in seaborne goods and the need to cut cost. So, it has become necessary to separate the common risks to seafarers from those risks specific to vessel type and trade.





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SAILING AGAINST THE TIDE: CELEBRATING THE RESILIENCE OF GHANAIAN FEMALE SEAFARERS – MISS NADIA NARTEY

GSA Desk Report



Miss Nadia Nartey on the campus of the Regional Maritime University (RMU) During the Dean's List Awards

In the vast expanse of the world's oceans, where horizons stretch endlessly, there exists a group of remarkable individuals breaking stereotypes and navigating uncharted waters with unwavering determination. Among them are the unsung heroes of the maritime world, Ghanaian female seafarers. In a profession historically dominated by men, these women defy expectations, proving that the call of the sea knows no gender. Their stories, filled with passion, resilience, and a thirst for adventure, paint a vivid picture of the challenges they face and the triumphs they achieve.

Picture the bustling port of Tema, where the salty breeze carries tales of dreams setting sail. Here, against the backdrop of towering ships and the rhythmic lull of the waves, Ghanaian women have been setting out to sea, embracing a life that demands both physical and mental strength. In an industry traditionally dominated by men, there's a rising tide of change, and at the forefront is the resilient and pioneering spirit of female seafarers. Yet the reality appears discouraging in terms of the ratio of male to female seafarers.

In mid-2020, a report by The Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO) revealed that 1.2% of the global seafaring workforce comprises women,

signifying a 45% increase compared to the statistics from 2015. A subsequent survey conducted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 2021 showed that the percentage of female seafarers worldwide had risen to 2%.

Key amongst the reasons for the increase in the number of female seafarers is the performance of Ghanaian female seafarers. This was revealed by the Acting Vice Chancellor of the RMU, Dr. Jethro W. Brooks Jr. when he paid a courtesy call on the Ghana Shippers' Authority (GSA).

Miss Nadia Nartey is one of the few Ghanaian female seafarers who are highly sought after. Her journey, like many others transcends not only the vast oceans but also societal expectations. As a female cadet-seafarer, Nadia faces a unique set of challenges, yet her determination and passion for the maritime profession propels her forward. For her, the decision to embark on a seafaring career is not merely a choice; it's a bold proclamation of her capabilities. As she navigates through the traditionally male-dominated maritime industry, each journey has become a testament to her perseverance.

For Nadia, the flame of inspiration was kindled by remarkable women who have paved the way in the maritime sector, with Ms. Benonita Bismarck, CEO of the Ghana Shippers' Authority (GSA), standing prominently among them.

Their paths crossed at a pivotal juncture in Nadia's educational journey (post-SHS) as she faced financial challenges, and she was required to work to support the family while schooling at the same time. It was a moment fraught with challenges that threatened to steer her away from her maritime dreams.

She received financial assistance as well as motivational counselling from Ms. Bismarck who took it upon herself to give her reason to not give up on her dreams. Through this divine "guardianship" and additional support from the Ghana Ports & Harbours Authority (GPHA) as well as the Ghana Scholarships Secretariat, Nadia continued her education by pursuing her dream to be a Nautical Scientist at the Regional Maritime University



Miss Nadia Nartey on gangway duty on her first day as a Cadet-Seafarer on board the Bulk Carrier Vessel Franz Schulte

(RMU). By dint of hard work and the comfort of the assurance of Ms. Bismarck's counsel and support, Nadia sailed through her four (4) years course successfully and graduated with a B.SC Nautical Science in June 2022.

As is said, "She who climbs a good tree deserves a good push".

“On Friday, 7th April 2023, while workers across the globe were just beginning their Easter holidays, Ms. Nadia Nartey commenced her duties as a Cadet-sea farer on the Bulk Carrier Vessel Franz Schulte.

Since then, she has navigated to ports in South American countries, including Argentina, Peru, Brazil, and Chile. The anticipated duration of her first voyage is eleven (11) months after which she would return to shore to continue with her professional development. For her, it has been “a dream come true experience” and the beginning of real fulfilment!

Nadia's story, much like those of the trailblazing women she admires, exemplifies the transformative power of mentorship and shared experiences. **In the spirit of mentorship, Nadia envisions a future where she would also become an inspiration for other female sea farers as well as females seeking to pursue their dreams.** Through her experiences, challenges, and triumphs, she aspires to become a guiding light for the next generation,

who would ensure that the seas of opportunity are navigated with courage, determination, and the unwavering belief that women belong at the helm of maritime excellence.

Reasons for the Lack of Interest in Sea faring by Women

Research in aid of this report revealed that historical gender norms have shaped perceptions leading to a bias that favours men in recruitment processes within the industry. The prevailing stereotype links physical strength and endurance primarily with men, perpetuating the misguided belief that these attributes are crucial for success at sea.

Unfortunately, these ingrained biases significantly impact the hiring practices, limiting opportunities for qualified female candidates. For instance, during physical assessments for seafaring roles, certain criteria may disproportionately favour strength-related tasks, such as lifting heavy loads on deck or engaging in strenuous activities. This bias hinders the recognition of women who excel in other critical areas like navigation, communication, and problem-solving.

Women who choose maritime professions encounter a myriad of challenges that stem from historical underrepresentation, persistent gender bias, and deeply ingrained stereotypes. These hurdles sometimes impact their experiences at sea significantly and limit their career growth within the maritime industry. The demanding nature of



Miss Nadia Nartey after completing her anchoring duties

seafaring, characterized by long voyages and extended periods away from home further compound these challenges, posing unique obstacles for women, especially those with familial responsibilities. For example, a female seafarer with young children may face difficulties in maintaining regular communication and being physically present for important family milestones due to her work being characterized by long voyages.

The persistent lack of gender-sensitive facilities and accommodation on vessels significantly exacerbates the hardships women face in seafaring. Inadequate provision for personal space, restroom facilities, and suitable work attire contribute to an environment that undermines the comfort, safety, and privacy of female seafarers. Female seafarers have shared experiences where the uniforms provided (overall) did not align with their body types, leading to discomfort during their duties and creating a need for the industry to invest in gender-inclusive work attire.

Several studies have revealed instances where vessels lacked separate and well-equipped restroom facilities for female seafarers, leading to difficulties in maintaining hygienic standards and compromising their overall well-being.

Being the minority onboard leads to feelings of isolation and loneliness for female seafarers. This sense of isolation, combined with the pressures of the job, can significantly impact their mental and emotional well-being. In the case of Nadia for example, she is one of two (2) females amongst nineteen (19) men.

Changing Tides

The maritime industry is gradually witnessing a positive shift with the increasing inclusion of women seafarers. While this progressive step towards gender equity is commendable, it is essential to recognize and address the unique challenges faced by female seafarers in this male-dominated profession.

Organizations are increasingly acknowledging the value that diversity brings to the workplace, including varied perspectives, problem-solving approaches, and enhanced team dynamics. Efforts are underway to challenge stereotypes, address biases, and create a more inclusive environment for all professions and careers in the maritime sphere. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has been actively advocating for gender equity and has promoted the participation of women in the

maritime industry. The organization recognizes the importance of empowering women in the sector and has taken various initiatives to address the challenges faced by female seafarers.

One of the significant initiatives is the "Women in Maritime" program, which was launched by the IMO to support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) on gender equality. The program aims to encourage more women to join the maritime sector and to highlight the significant contribution of women within the maritime community.

Conclusion

Embarking on a maritime career as a woman is a challenging yet transformative journey in the hitherto male-dominated industry. Despite the stereotypes and biases, aspiring female seafarers are encouraged to take a cue from Nadia's sterling example to cultivate unwavering confidence to transcend gender boundaries. Embracing mentoring from experienced female seafarers and other female professionals within and outside the maritime industry would enable the essential guidance required, and also instil confidence and resilience for both professional and personal development.

Knowledge is highlighted as a potent tool. Aspiring seafarers are thus encouraged to invest time and resources into understanding the maritime sector intricately as they seek hands-on experiences. Balancing ambition with realism is crucial, therefore, acknowledging challenges as inherent and fundamental for growth and advancement in the industry is an enabler that must not be overlooked. Adopting a pragmatic and positive outlook would ensure triumph in the face of any hurdles that women may need to navigate their maritime endeavours successfully.



Miss Nadia Nartey at work on board the vessel, removing rust using an air powered wire brush.



REVOLUTIONIZING THE MARITIME SECTOR – THE CASE FOR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (A.I)

By Justin K. Daniels

In an era characterized by rapid technological advancement and digital transformation, industries across the globe are embracing innovative solutions to enhance efficiency, reduce operational costs, and streamline processes. The maritime sector, which plays a pivotal role in global trade and commerce, is no exception. With the advent of artificial intelligence (AI), Port Management is undergoing a profound revolution, unlocking new avenues for optimization and growth.

The Traditional Port Landscape

Traditionally, Port Management has been a complex and labour-intensive endeavor, involving intricate coordination of numerous processes, from cargo handling and customs clearance to vessel scheduling and security. The manual nature of these operations often led to inefficiencies, delays, and increased operational expenses. As global trade volumes continue to surge, the need for modernization has become imperative.

The Emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

– a game-changing technology that holds the potential to transform the Port Management landscape is worthy of note. AI encompasses a range of capabilities, including machine learning, predictive analytics, computer vision, and natural language processing, all of which can be harnessed to address the challenges faced by ports worldwide.

- *Predictive Maintenance:* AI-powered predictive maintenance systems monitor the condition of port equipment and





Challenges and Considerations

While the benefits of AI in Port management are substantial, the adoption of such advanced technology is not without its challenges. One major hurdle is the integration of AI systems with existing infrastructure and processes. Training personnel to effectively use and interpret AI-generated insights is also essential for successful implementation. Moreover, concerns related to data privacy, security,

and the ethical use of AI must be carefully addressed.

The Way Forward

The integration of AI into Port Management signifies a paradigm shift in the maritime industry. As AI technologies continue to evolve, ports that embrace these innovations stand to gain a competitive edge by significantly improving operational efficiency, reducing costs, and enhancing overall customer satisfaction.



Government agencies, port authorities, and industry stakeholders must collaborate to establish guidelines and standards for the responsible deployment of AI in Port Management.



By fostering an environment that encourages innovation, knowledge sharing, and continuous learning, the maritime sector can unlock the full potential of AI and drive the future of port operations.

Conclusion

The impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on Port Management is undeniable. From predictive maintenance and intelligent scheduling to enhanced security and real-time analytics, AI offers an array of solutions that can revolutionize the efficiency and effectiveness of port operations. Embracing these technologies not only enhance operational processes but also contribute to the growth and resilience of the global trade ecosystem. The journey toward a smarter, more efficient maritime industry is underway, and AI is steering the course.

infrastructure, enabling operators to identify potential failures before they occur. By analyzing historical data and real-time sensor inputs, AI algorithms can predict maintenance requirements, minimizing downtime and reducing repair costs.

- **Intelligent Scheduling:** Optimizing vessel arrivals, departures, and cargo handling is a complex task that requires meticulous planning. AI algorithms analyze a plethora of variables, such as weather conditions, tide levels, berth availability, and cargo types, to create intelligent scheduling systems that maximize port capacity and minimize congestion.
- **Efficient Resource Allocation:** Port operations involve allocating resources such as labour, cranes, and trucks. AI-driven algorithms can optimize resource allocation by considering factors like real-time demand, labour availability, and equipment efficiency, resulting in cost savings and improved productivity.
- **Enhanced Security:** With the help of AI-powered video surveillance and computer vision, port security can be significantly enhanced. AI algorithms can identify and alert security personnel to potential threats or unauthorized activities, ensuring a safer environment for both personnel and cargo.
- **Real-time Analytics:** AI enables the analysis of vast amounts of data in real-time, providing port managers with insights that can inform decision-making. From predicting traffic patterns to optimizing cargo loading strategies, AI-driven analytics empower port operators to make informed choices that enhance overall efficiency.


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A Safety-Centred Design for Canoe Transport on the Volta Lake

By: George Obeng, Regional Maritime University

Introduction

Navigating the waters of the Volta Lake continues to pose challenges for canoes and patrons of lake transport despite various interventions by the agencies mandated to superintend that mode of transport. The disturbing reality has had adverse impacts on safety, livelihoods, and overall efficiency of Lake transportation.

The Volta Lake, like other elements of creation is susceptible to weather patterns, including strong winds, storms, and sudden changes. These conditions combined with the state of the lake contribute to making canoe-travel on it risky, with the susceptibility accidents.

Canoes on the Volta Lake are often overloaded with passengers and goods, exceeding their intended capacity. Overloading not only compromises stability but also increases the risk of accidents especially in rough patches of the lake.

Also, many traditional canoes lack essential safety equipment, such as life jackets and emergency flotation devices.

In the event of an accident, the absence of proper safety gear puts passengers and crew at significant risk. The canoes that operate on Volta Lake are also not equipped with modern navigational aids.

In remote areas of the lake, there may be a lack of reliable communication systems, making it challenging for canoes to seek assistance in emergencies.

The Safe Voyage Canoe Concept

In a groundbreaking intervention to enhance maritime safety, a revolutionary canoe design has



Display of Marine innovations developed by students of the Regional Maritime University (RMU)



The group of students from the Regional Maritime University (RMU) involved in the Marine innovations.

been proposed to operate on the treacherous Volta Lake which . The innovative "Safe Voyage Canoe" model, developed by a passionate naval architect, promises to prioritize safety to prevent tragic accidents that have plagued the lake for years.

The proposed design is a significant departure from the design of traditional canoes that have been used on the Volta Lake for generations. It boasts of a spacious interior, complete with a comfortable seating arrangement, providing passengers a safer and more enjoyable journey. Navigation aids have been enhanced, ensuring better manoeuvrability and reducing the risk of collisions, especially during adverse weather conditions.

However, the most crucial aspect of the "Safe Voyage Canoe" lies in its life-saving features. The canoe is equipped with essential safety equipment, including life jackets and emergency flotation devices. In the event of an accident, these life-saving tools could stand between life and death for fishermen and passengers.

"This innovative design marks a new era for water transportation on the Volta Lake" said George Obeng, the naval architect behind the project.

Safety has been our utmost priority throughout the development process. We are confident that the 'Safe Voyage Canoe' will revolutionize small boat design and construction, and will make fishing and passenger transportation safer and more reliable.

However, to turn this visionary concept into a reality, support from the varied stakeholders in the transport industry is an essential requirement. The implementation of the "Safe Voyage Canoe" requires funding and cooperation from

governmental agencies, local communities, and private sector players in Ghana and beyond.

The proposal of the "Safe Voyage Canoe" is an exciting prospect for the people of Ghana and all those who rely on the lake's waters for their livelihoods. As the project gains momentum, hopes are high that it will bring about a positive transformation, save lives and bolster the maritime industry in the region.

The Volta Lake

Transportation on the Volta Lake is of immense significance to the communities it borders and those it serves. Being one of the largest artificial lakes in the world, the Volta Lake plays a crucial role in various aspects of life, contributing to the social, economic, and cultural fabric of its surrounding areas as well as the country at large.

- **Essential Trade and Commerce:** The Volta Lake serves as a vital transportation route for the movement of goods and commodities between southern and northern Ghana. It facilitates trade in agricultural produce, fish, and other local products by connecting remote communities to major markets and urban centers across the country.
- The efficient transportation of goods via the lake supports community, district, and regional economies, and fosters national economic growth.
- **Livelihoods of Fishermen:** For countless fishermen who reside along the shores of the Volta Lake, fishing is not just a means of survival but also a way of life. The lake provides a rich fishing ground, sustaining the livelihoods of numerous families who rely on fishing as their primary source of income.
- **Passenger Transportation:** The lake is a lifeline for passenger transportation, particularly in areas where road networks are limited or are non-existent. Canoes and boats serve as vital modes of transportation in such area, connecting people to schools, healthcare facilities, and other essential services.
- **Tourism and Recreation:** The scenic beauty of the Volta Lake is an attraction to

tourists and travellers who seek recreational activities such as cruises and sightseeing. Tourism on the lake contributes to the local economy, creates employment opportunities and fosters cultural exchange.

- **Water Supply and Irrigation:** The lake also serves as a significant water resource, providing water for domestic use, agriculture, and irrigation purposes for the communities that border it. It thus contributes to sustaining agricultural activities and food production in its surrounding areas.
- **Ecosystem Support:** The ecosystem of the Volta Lake supports biodiversity, providing habitats for various aquatic species, birds, and other wildlife. It also contributes to



The Marine innovation team of the Regional Maritime University (RMU) display their handiwork

Conclusion

Transportation via the Volta Lake is an essential part of the options of effective and efficient transportation for socio-economic and recreational purposes. It offers varied benefits that impact a wide spectrum of the lives of the citizenry.

As the "Safe Voyage Canoe" initiative gains momentum, it shines a beacon of hope for a medium that would not only enhance the safety of water transport, but would also bolster the maritime industry of Ghana and perhaps, the West Africa sub-region. To make this vision a reality, support from stakeholders, including governmental agencies, local communities, and private sector players cannot be over-emphasized. By working together, the challenges associated with water transport, especially travel via the Volta Lake can be surmounted to create a legacy of safety and prosperity for generations to come.



Proud innovators of the Safety-Centred Canoe.

maintaining ecological balance and promoting sustainable environmental practices.

- **Cultural Heritage:** The lake has a deep cultural significance for the communities that surround it. For most of these communities, the creation of the lake resulted in a significant altering of their original ancestral homes and a physical separation of some of their communities. The lake is often associated with traditional practices, folklore, and rituals of these communities and has become an integral part of their cultural heritage.
- **Social Connectivity:** Transportation on the Volta Lake fosters social connectivity among different communities, and promotes cultural exchange and societal cohesion.



Mr. George Obeng (the instructor) with a female student of the Marine innovation team.



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The Relevance of Women in Maritime Education and Training: Prospects and Challenges

Speech delivered by Mrs. Gertrude Ohene-Asienim, President, WISTA on the occasion of the 2023 World Maritime Day Celebration by the Regional Maritime University, Nungua - Accra on Thursday, 28th September 2023.

It is a great honour to be invited to be the guest speaker for today and to speak on the topic – “The Relevance of Women in Maritime Education and Training: Prospects and Challenges”.

I am greatly honoured and wish to thank the management of the University for this honour. I wish to congratulate the Regional Maritime University (RMU) for its 65th anniversary of providing maritime education and training. A proud alumnus having attended the only University with Diplomatic status, a brand we all should be proud of.

Today is World Maritime Day and globally the day is being marked on the theme “MARPOL @ 50 our Commitment goes on.”

Promoting safer and cleaner oceans should be our goal and we must all help to educate people on the need to keep our water bodies clean and safe, a common heritage of mankind which needs to be preserved for generations after us to benefit from. On such a day, I am wondering why we have chosen to speak about women and not the environment. But to deny the talk about women is to deny the very existence of ships and the maritime world.

The late Margaret Thatcher said, it may be the cock that crows, but

it is the hen that lays the eggs. When you take care of the ship well, it will also take care of you. A motherly figure who loads all things, discharges all things, carries all things, and is beautified to maintain her class, buoyance, and relevance.

To relate that to today's topic, I looked at the meaning of two key words from the Collins Dictionary. Relevance – “Having a direct bearing on the matter in hand”; Training – “The process of bringing a person to an agreed standard of proficiency”. It goes without saying that you can train people for skills but not attitude. If you have a bad attitude, you can be the best and most brilliant person in the world, but your attitude will give you away. Again, it is not enough to gain knowledge when it cannot be applied correctly. Knowledge applied correctly is wisdom.

Are women relevant in maritime education? The UN 2030 Agenda on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly goal 5 states “to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.” At this year's International Day for Women in Maritime held on 18th May 2023 on the theme, “Mobilizing Networks for Gender Equality”, the then IMO Secretary-General, Kitack Lim, described gender equality as “a prerequisite for a

thriving and resilient maritime industry” that would bring with it, he said, innovation, creativity, and sustained growth.

The maritime industry is conservative and massively male dominated. According to the Baltic International Maritime Council (BIMCO) and International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) Seafarer Workforce Report, we have about 1.89 million seafarers serving the world merchant fleet, operating 74,000 vessels around the globe, with an estimated 24,059 being women, representing 1.2% of the total STCW certified global workforce. (July 2021). Most of these women are however on passenger vessels. Few on FPSOs, Rigs, construction vessels, tankers, bulk carriers etc.

When we take other sectors, we can ask the critical question, how many women are in Marine survey, diving, operation of port equipment, ship chandelling, crewing agencies, logistics, fishing, ship management, sea tourism? Statistics in this regard are hard to find. A lot has been achieved in recent times but a lot more work needs to be done to empower women in technical and decision-making roles.

Why Women empowerment, inclusion, and diversity? If you are of the opinion that women empowerment started today, go and ask the daughters of Zelophehad who changed the cause of history on the law of inheritance over 2000 years ago during the time of biblical Moses. Their father had five daughters and no son and by Jewish law these women were not entitled to a share in the inheritance of land. The five (5) ladies went to Moses and asked why they should be denied something of right simply because they are women. Moses took the matter to God, who responded by unequivocally supporting the women's demand and promulgated a new law to secure inheritance for any daughters found in such circumstances in the future (refer to Numbers 27:1-5). These women changed the cause of history for me and every woman here present today.

There is ample evidence that investing in women is the most effective way to lift communities, companies, and even countries. Countries with better gender equality ratios have better economic growth. Companies with more women leaders perform better (see study, *The Bottom Line: Corporate Performance and Women's Representation on Boards*). Peace agreements that include women are more durable. Parliaments with more women enact more legislation on key social issues such as health, education, anti-discrimination, and child support. The evidence is clear: equality for women means progress for all, this is according to IMO's website article on "Women in Maritime". So, why do we still have few women in maritime education and training?

Challenges

Shipping is not visible in our schools. Most people in the maritime industry either got into

it because of family or friends' involvement or purely by accident. I believe I am a clear example of those who found our place in the maritime world by divine intervention. Born and raised in Adukrom-Akuapem without any contact with the sea. Our socio-cultural mindset has somewhat defined certain courses to be for men. I did a random check on the website of the RMU and clicked on departments and saw the display of pictures for certain courses – Nautical Science & Engineering – pictures of gentlemen only, Department of Business Studies – the picture of two ladies and a gentleman. Does that mean that Engineering is for men and Business Studies is for men & women?

The few women who venture into these areas are branded with name calling and tagging. It is always disheartening to walk into the Nautical Science or Engineering lecture rooms and see between two to five ladies only in the class. The hostility of the environment deters women from venturing into male dominated fields. People aspire to become what they see, so if young women cannot see older women in leadership positions and in technical roles, they cannot aspire to do same.

I recently read an article in *Trade Winds* dated 21st September 2023, in which a female cadet applied to 50 companies and received many refusals. Some of them asked her when she called to follow up whether she was calling on behalf of her boyfriend. The writer's message to the companies that rejected her is this *"You have rejected a wonderful, very talented, very eager person who is on her way to the top."*

Again, she wrote *"Once we have put down the first barrier and we have more women in shipping at*

shore and at sea and we see more women in leadership positions, that's more role models. It will become easier".

We pay tribute to women who have dared and have risen above the odds against them to achieve greater heights in maritime affairs. Just to mention a few: Capt. Beatrice Vermawoh who was the first female Capt. of the defunct Black Star Line, Capt. Hannah Abba Aggrey, Capt. Georgina Jopap, Capt. Catherine Haizel, Ms. Kadijah Amoah, the first Ghanaian female to lead an oil and gas exploration and production company, Mrs. Azara Prempeh the Chief of Staff, Office of the Secretary General at the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), Mrs. Sandra Opoku, Director of Port, Tema, Ms. Benonita Bismarck, Chief Executive Officer of the Ghana Shippers' Authority and many others.

Facilities which promote the survival of women in harsh working conditions offshore while onboard ships have not changed much. More sea time, less interface with shore. Some vessels have no or poor internet connectivity to facilitate communication, there are fewer female cabins, bullying and harassment. The work environment in most offices does not promote Family- Work Life balance. Most companies in Europe and other places are looking at ways to bring home close to the office by providing facilities which help to facilitate work flow no matter where one is located. They provide flexible work conditions like working from home and equipping staff to do this efficiently with the needed tools. Technology is being employed to make life flexible, providing flexible working hours to enable juggling between maternity and work.

Men outnumber women at managerial levels and in board

room and women leaders switch jobs at a higher rate than men in leadership positions. There are simply few women in senior positions. It's one thing attracting women to the maritime industry, and it is another thing to retain them, especially when they reach the top because it is rough out there and can it get lonely at the top.

There are inadequate policies to address women issues - quota for Board representation. The Petroleum Commission of Ghana for instance reserves one Board position for a woman. Even though this is inadequate, it is a starting point for others to follow. Norway provides 40% quota on Boards for women, and they enforce it.

With respect to inadequate funding and scholarships deliberately reserved for women to enable them to pursue career progression and development in maritime education, the IMO is doing well in this regard. What about Getfund and scholarship secretariats in our member countries? WISTA, in collaboration with the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers for instance provides scholarships for two ladies to study the ICS Foundation Diploma courses.

RMU recently launched its scholarship scheme. Is there any deliberate policy to consider more women in relation to motivating them to pursue Marine Engineering and the Nautical Sciences? We need more of such funding for technical subjects and in the promotion of Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) courses for women in our schools. This should start at the basic level to kill the phobia for these courses among ladies.

Our maritime agencies and organisations have recently employed only few of our graduates, let alone have considerable policy to employ

women. I must say that, recently, WISTA visited the Director of the Port of Tema and one of her priorities is to have more female Pilots employed at the Tema port. This is a laudable idea and should be replicated to include other technical areas.

We need more women to be employed by our maritime organisations, not because they are women, but because they qualify for these positions and will excel if given the chance. It is worthy of note that MPS has 11 women operating movable cranes for stacking containers at the Tema port's Terminal 3.

A lot has changed over the years, but we have a long way to go to bridge the gap between males and females in the maritime industry. There is still sexual harassment and discrimination. Some colleagues of mine once told me operations cannot wait for women in maternity wards. And I said to them, without the maternity wards you will not be alive today. What I say to every woman being sexually harassed in exchange for a job offer is to tell that man that, in 15 years your daughter will be looking for a job and I will be the one on your seat.

Threat of sea crimes and attacks which put women in much more vulnerable positions such as Maritime piracy persist. At one point or another a woman ought to take hard decisions with regards to family and work especially for those going onboard vessels, and often terminates their career abruptly. Most women have given up their dreams because of the lack of support or because they must make hard choices to sacrifice for their families.

We are not in competition with men. We have capabilities that can be nurtured and used. In certain jurisdictions there is disparity in salaries for same job

roles for women and men; a disincentive for women to venture into maritime careers.

Women in maritime are not often celebrated, perhaps because we are too silent about our industry. Recognition is key. It gives others the encouragement that some have done it, and they can also do it too.

Funding for women leaders in business needs to be looked at with a deliberate policy to back it.

Prospects

I believe we have narrowed our definition of maritime, with key areas of the maritime sector being ignored. Even our curricular is tailored in a particular direction. Have we looked at the maritime industry holistically? Engineering, Merchant Mariners, Navigators, Logistics and Ports and Shipping and others are not enough. We need to introduce more maritime courses which are problem solving and industry focused to meet current trends.

What about areas where women are doing well? According to the National Integrated Maritime Strategy (NIMS), the fisheries sector contributes about US\$1 billion in revenue each year and accounts for at least 5% of Ghana's agricultural gross domestic product (GDP), a contribution that is likely to increase if managed better. Ghana has been actively involved in exploration and subsequently the production of oil over the past 13 years. The world is moving towards renewable energy. What about Development in Maritime Tourism, Biotechnology, Admiralty law, Marine Insurance, Maritime Economics? Technology-based courses like Ship Chandelling, Freight Forwarding, Shipbroking? What about the linkages between academia and industry with regards to research and

development to provide industry-based solutions?

We must focus on innovation and how that can help in respect of the integration of the entire maritime supply chain development. We cannot award degrees and diplomas without considering vocational maritime certification where thousands of our women are concentrated. We often ignore the contribution of the women whose trade bring in about 30 full container loads every month, affecting lives positively, and feeding so many mouths. The women sitting on trucks to Niger and Burkina Faso to bring onions and tomatoes, the fish monger who has been plying her trade for years – they all need education and training and value addition to their businesses. We must as a maritime institution provide courses in Entrepreneurship focused on adding value to businesses. We need to identify the knowledge and skills that will be required for the future and fill the gap. We need education that brings creative problem-solving skills with good aptitude for technology.

The late Mr. Lee Kuan Yiw of Singapore said, *“The development of Maritime Singapore is about anticipating the future, adapting to change, creating and seizing opportunities and the pursuit for excellence”*. Well trained, skilled, and educated human resources are the driving force of the development of an economy. Dynamic and sustainable development is not possible without skilled workforce and women cannot be excluded from that.

We need to educate policy makers to gain understanding into the maritime business. They have not understood the fact that *“For whosoever commands the sea commands the trade; whosoever commands the trade*

of the world commands the riches of the world, and consequently the world itself,” wrote English adventurer Sir Walter Raleigh in 1829. Mahan, a Naval strategist, and the author of *“The Influence of Sea Power Upon History”*, argued that national prosperity and power depended on the control of the world's sea-lanes. **“Whoever rules the waves rules the world”**.

If policy makers understood the maritime world and what it holds, they would not toy with our industry but would pursue forward looking policies that will enhance it and would also drive women's participation.

Technology - The world is moving towards digital data and information literacy. Investment in modern technological equipment and learning tools is the way forward for women.

Advocacy and Empowerment - We need to attract and support women at every level of their career. Learning is a lifelong experience and should go hand in hand with personal growth. Mentorship is key and Women associations such as WISTA, WIMA, WILAT and others should lead in that direction. Women issues are best understood by women. We must mentor our women on clearly defining long term career prospects. They need encouragement from us. Companies like Hafnia who have partnered with the RMU to employ our seafarers and absorb the women need commendation. We must look for more of such opportunities.

There is a need for improved diversity, equality, and inclusion in employment onshore and offshore especially in the technical areas.

Family-Work Life Balance: Creating more flexibility in maritime workplaces is key to the way forward, with good working conditions and of course good

salaries. We must develop and provide facilities that make it easier for women to work and have the peace of mind to do so. An area we often ignore is Mental Health support and the physical wellbeing of women, and men as well.

Sometimes things become too overwhelming and unbearable, and like the songwriter said, *“Lean on me when you are not strong”*, we need to lean on each other. Knowledge is not a stagnant pool of water but a flowing river, which needs to remain updated (Quote by my Colleague FICS Punit OZA in Singapore).

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) cannot be ignored. We invest very little in this regard. We must develop wholistically both personal and work skills continually. Learning is a lifelong experience, and as Henry Ford said *“Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young.”* We must be willing to take advantage of the few opportunities we get and make good use of them. Of course, we need the push from the men. Support and cheer us on. We can do it but not without your help.

You cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs, so let us speak up to make the maritime industry visible and attractive by telling others about it. Women should support each other. Michelle Obama in her recent book *“The Light We Carry”* said, *“You can have it all but not at the same time”*. Patience, endurance and perseverance are key to success. Keep your focus and stay focused.

I will end with a quote by Margaret Thatcher: ***“If you want something said, ask a man, if you want something done, ask a woman.”***



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Wooing More Women into Shipping and Logistics: Meet the 2022 Best ICS Student in Logistics and Multi-modal Transport – Miss Hannah Affel

A GSA Desk Report

Thursday, 13th October 2022, at the Trinity House in London, United Kingdom (UK) will remain etched in the mind and heart of Miss Hannah Affel (MICS).

“

Out of a total of 2,005 students who sat for November 2021 and May 2022 papers at 85 examination centres across the globe, the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers (ICS) recognized and celebrated Miss Hannah Affel Hannah for obtaining the highest mark worldwide in Logistics and Multi-modal Transport in the professional qualification examination.

”

The examinations were part of the 2021/2022 academic year requirements for certification by the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers (ICS) as a Chartered Shipbroker. **Hannah thus earned her place as a MEMBER of the ICS on an astoundingly memorable note!**

Award

At the Chartered Shipbrokers' 2022 International Annual Prize Giving Ceremony held in London, UK, Hannah became the first Ghanaian and West African to receive this prestigious recognition and celebration.

Sharing her journey to this remarkably outstanding achievement with the Shipping

Review, Hannah had this to say: *“Seven (7) years ago, I ventured into the Shipping and Logistics sector, and since then I have never looked back. When I started work at the Ghana Shippers' Authority (GSA) as a National Service Person, it didn't take a long time for me to acknowledge the important role the institution plays in protecting and promoting the interest of importers and exporters and how impactful the duties of staff are.”*

She developed an interest in the sector and decided to pursue a professional career in the sector.

Hannah recounted the intentional effort she invested into managing her time to enable

her to juggle work and school. On some occasions, she had to resort to saving course material on her cell phone to enable her to read whilst she traveled to and from work on public transport, as every minute of the day was valuable, and she had to make it count.

Paying her fees which was denominated in the UK's Pounds Sterling required stringent financial prudence on her part, and Hannah was determined not to let that kind of investment count for nothing. She was also determined to complete the program in record time and therefore did not contemplate the luxury of a limitless timeframe for completion.

With this mindset of purpose, focus, determination and perseverance, Hannah completed the professional course within a record one (1) year!

Why More Women Are Needed in the Sector

For Hannah, the Shipping and Logistics sector is demanding and requires resilience and adaptability. Thankfully, women have demonstrated their ability to thrive in challenging environments and have indeed proven this by contributing to the sector's overall success to date. She added that the sector is customer-centric, and women often excel in customer service roles due to their naturally endowed strong interpersonal skills. The industry thrives on customer satisfaction because, it is vital in maintaining positive client relationships, which is a



Miss Hannah Affel is admired by her mates during a special event to honour her for obtaining the highest score worldwide in Logistics and Multi-Modal Transport in the professional qualification examination.

critical aspect of shipping and logistics operations.

Career Development

After completing her Bachelor of Arts (B.A) Degree in Social Work at the University of Ghana, Hannah did her National Service at the GSA and has since then been in the employment of the organization. She worked in the Shipper Services and Trade Facilitation Department and the Freight and Logistics Department at the Head Office and the Tema Branch respectively. Hannah is currently stationed at the Shipper Compliant and Support Unit at the Kotoka International Airport (KIA) of the GSA.

In all these roles, she has been involved in providing real-time assistance to shippers in relation to the following:

- Receiving and providing solutions for shipper complaints and enquiries
- Managing the registration, updating, and categorization of shippers and shipping agents.
- Conducting research into shipping problems and matters of interest to shippers.
- Embarking on shipper outreach and visitations outreach programs.
- Monitoring and following



Miss Hannah Affel with President of the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers, UK Mr. Kevin Shakesheff, FICS.



Miss Hannah Affel with the Director of the Institute of Chartered ShipBrokers, UK Mr. Robert Hill, FICS.

The Shipping Review joins the ICS to doff our hats and cling glasses in celebration of the historic performance of Miss Hannah Affel!!!

May hers be an inspiring example and a guiding light to others who would opt to tread the path of self-driven self-development.

ICS

The Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers (ICS) is the only internationally recognized professional

body in the commercial maritime domain representing shipbrokers, ship managers, and agents in the shipping industry worldwide.

It is a prestigious organization that plays a vital role in the education, training, and professional development of individuals in the shipping and maritime business. It promotes excellence, ethical conduct, and expertise within the industry while providing a global platform for networking and knowledge sharing.

up on the clearance processes at key facilities at Port of Tema and its enclave and resolving challenges arising from the process.

- Engagements with service providers. Eg. regulatory agencies, shipping lines, terminal operators etc to address issues arising from the clearance process.
- Monitoring of transit trade at the Port of Tema
- Organising shipper committee meetings

women. They've helped me identify areas for improvement and guided me towards growth. I also hope for flexible work arrangements that consider family responsibilities and work-life balance, making it easier for women to pursue careers in shipping and logistics," she expressed.

Hannah extends her appreciation to all those who have been a part of her life's journey so far, both men and women, for their invaluable support.

Looking Ahead

Miss Affel is currently pursuing a Postgraduate Degree in Logistics and Supply Chain Management at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). According to her, Shipping is a linchpin in Logistics and Supply Chain Management, ensuring the smooth flow of goods throughout the supply chain. It involves strategic decision-making, cost management, risk assessment, and a focus on meeting customer expectations while considering sustainability and compliance. She is confident that her studies will provide her with more insight to enhance her career path.

Work Relationship

Hannah mentioned that her career has been significantly accelerated with the help of both men and women. She finds this particularly reassuring because active support from both genders in the shipping and logistics sector promotes diversity, inclusivity, and innovation. The positive effects of this collaboration go beyond individual careers, as they enhance the overall quality, competitiveness, and sustainability of the sector.

"I've received valuable feedback and opportunities for skill development from both men and

The institute plays a role in supporting the Shipping industry by contributing to discussions on industry challenges, trends, and regulatory matters. It serves as a knowledge hub for professionals seeking information on maritime issues.

As a chartered institute, ICS upholds high professional standards within the shipping and maritime business. It promotes ethical practices and compliance with industry regulations.



Customs Post Cargo Clearance Audit: A Nightmare for Shippers?

By: Osei Owusu Amankwaah

Introduction

In the face of economic challenges, some businesses and individuals may be tempted to cut corners to reduce the quantum of Duty payable on their imports or exports. The anti-social practice results in “Duty Shopping”: the practice of finding ways to minimize or evade Duties payable on imports or exports.

This practice, though seemingly beneficial in the short term, can have significant negative consequences for both the business as well as the national economy. It is for this and other reasons that the Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority is mandated by the Customs Act 2015 (Act 891), to conduct Post Clearance Audit (PCA) six (6) years after goods have been cleared from the country's entry points.

PCA is a crucial process carried out by Customs to ensure compliance with its laws, regulations, and procedures after goods have been released from its control.

This essential step helps to maintain the integrity of the Customs system and ensures that importers and exporters adhere to the applicable laws and regulations strictly.

Many shippers have expressed concern about the impact of PCA on their operations. One of the main grievances raised by shippers is the time-consuming nature of the PCA process. They say that the extensive checks and verification of documentation leads to delay and disruptions to the supply chain of their

businesses and invariably impacts their business operations adversely. Shippers further argue that these delays are particularly problematic for time-sensitive shipments and often result in financial losses.

What is PCA?

The PCA process involves checking the accuracy of Customs declarations, supporting documents, and related records submitted by importers and exporters during the Customs clearance process. Customs officers, specifically trained for this task, conduct thorough examination and verification on the documents to identify any errors, omissions, or irregularities.

Types of PCA

- *Comprehensive Audit (Systems-based Audit)*



A cross-section of participants at the seminar on Post Clearance Audit held in Kumasi.

This type of audit looks at the entire business control environment and the impact this might have on Customs compliance. A comprehensive post-clearance audit, also known as a full-scope audit or a thorough examination, is a detailed and in-depth review of Customs declarations and related documents. It is conducted by authorities of Customs after goods have been cleared. It aims to thoroughly assess the accuracy and compliance of Customs declarations and associated records. Some key aspects of a comprehensive post-clearance audit are:

a) Document Review: Customs authorities meticulously examine all relevant documentation, including import or export declarations, invoices, bills of lading, packing lists, Certificates of Origin, and any other supporting documents. The purpose is to verify the accuracy of the information provided.

b) Goods Inspection: In addition to reviewing documents, Customs officials may physically inspect samples of the imported or exported goods. The inspection is carried out to ensure that the physical goods

match the descriptions provided in the declarations, including their quantity, quality, and condition.

c) Valuation Verification: Customs authorities assess the declared value of the goods to ensure it accurately reflects the transaction value. They may investigate any discrepancies or inconsistencies in the valuation process.

d) Tariff Classification: The audit includes a detailed examination of the tariff classification assigned to the goods. Customs officials confirm that the goods were classified correctly under the appropriate Harmonized System (HS) code, which

determines the applicable duties and taxes.

e) Origin Verification: The origin of the goods is verified to determine eligibility for preferential tariff treatment under Trade Agreements(s) or to confirm compliance with the Rules of Origin. This may involve checking the country of origin for the goods and the manufacturing process.

- *Focused Audit (Issue-based Audit)*

Unlike a Comprehensive Audit, which covers all aspects of a Customs declaration, a Focused Audit narrows its scope to a particular area of concern. This could include aspects like valuation, tariff classification, country of origin, or compliance with specific regulations. Common examples of Focused post-clearance Audit include:

a) Price Verification Audit: Focusing on the accuracy of declared values and ensuring they align with market prices.

b) Classification Audit: Concentrating on the correct classification of goods under the Harmonized System (HS) code.

c) Origin Audit: Examining the accuracy of claims regarding the country of origin of the goods.



d) Anti-Dumping Duty Audit:

Ensuring compliance with anti-dumping duty regulations.

e) Free Trade Agreement Compliance Audit:

Verifying compliance with the Rules of Origin and requirements under Trade Agreements, such as the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

Focused post-clearance audits are a strategic approach used to efficiently address specific compliance concerns to mitigate risks associated with international trade. Importers and exporters should thus be prepared to provide documentation and information related to the targeted issue during such audits.

f) Desk Audit: This is a comprehensive examination of Customs declarations and related documents. It is conducted by Customs officials at their office. It involves a detailed review of the import or export documentation to ensure accuracy and compliance with Customs regulations.

g) On-Site Audit: Customs

officials may visit the premises of importers, exporters, or Customs brokers to conduct an audit in person. They physically inspect goods, records, and facilities to ensure compliance with Customs regulations.

h) Transaction-Based Audit: This type of audit focuses on specific import or export transactions. Customs officials select transactions for audit based on risk assessment or random sampling. The audit examines the accuracy of declarations, valuation, classification, and other relevant details for the selected transaction.

i) Post-Import or Post-Export Audit: Depending on the timing, post-clearance audits can be categorized as post-import or post-export audits. Post-import audits focus on goods imported into a country, while post-export audits examine goods earmarked for export.

These are some of the common types of post-clearance audits conducted by Customs to ensure that importers, exporters, and other stakeholders comply with relevant laws and regulations. The specific audit type and selection criteria can vary from

one country to another, depending on the policies and priorities of the Customs authority.

Objectives of PCA

As earlier stated, the objectives of post-clearance audit are to ensure the accuracy, legality, and compliance with Customs declarations and related documentation after goods have been cleared. The following are achieved through these objectives:

i) Revenue Collection:

Customs Duties and taxes are a significant source of revenue for governments. Post-clearance audit ensures that the right amount of revenue is collected through the verification of the accuracy of declarations made by importers and exporters.

ii) Trade Facilitation:

By promoting compliance with Customs regulations, post-clearance audit contributes to the facilitation of legitimate trade. It helps to streamline Customs procedures for compliant businesses, reducing delays and administrative burdens.

iii) Enhanced Customs Control:

Audits contribute to enhancing Customs control by ensuring that goods entering or leaving a country are correctly declared and meet all regulatory requirements. This helps to prevent illegal or prohibited goods from entering or leaving a country.

iv) Trade Policy Enforcement:

Post-clearance audit assists in the enforcement of trade policies, such as trade remedy measures (e.g., anti-dumping Duties) and trade agreements (e.g., free trade agreements). It ensures that businesses





adhere to the rules and obligations outlined in these policies and agreements.

v) Continuous Improvement: Customs authorities use the findings from post-clearance audits to improve their processes, procedures, and risk assessment methodologies. This ongoing improvement contributes to a more effective and efficient customs administration.

The Don'ts of Post Clearance Audit

a) Don't Neglect the Accuracy of Documents: One of the most critical aspects of post clearance audit is ensuring the accuracy and completeness of documentation. Avoid providing incorrect or incomplete information, as this can lead to delays and potential penalties.

b) Don't Ignore Compliance Requirements: Compliance with Customs laws and regulations is paramount. Failure to adhere to these requirements can result in

significant consequences, including fines and reputational damage.

c) Don't Delay Cooperation: Be proactive and responsive when Customs authorities request additional information or clarification during a Post Clearance Audit. Delaying or avoiding cooperation may raise suspicion and lead to further scrutiny.

d) Don't Overlook Record Keeping: Maintain detailed and organized records of all Customs-related transactions and documentation. Proper record-keeping is essential for demonstrating compliance and for resolving potential audit discrepancies.

e) Don't Underestimate Classification Accuracy: Ensure that goods are accurately classified according to Customs tariff codes. Incorrect classification can lead to incorrect Duty payments which would then trigger Post

Clearance Audit assessment.

f) Don't Misinterpret Rules of Origin: Understand the Rules of Origin and ensure that goods are eligible for preferential trade agreements, if applicable. Misinterpreting Rules of Origin can result in the loss of trade benefits or increased Duties.

By following these "Don'ts" and adopting a proactive and compliance-oriented approach, businesses can better navigate the Post Clearance Audit process and mitigate potential risks and challenges.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Customs Post Clearance Audits play a crucial role in promoting trade facilitation, revenue protection, and compliance.

By conducting thorough and fair audits, Customs authorities foster a transparent and efficient trading environment that benefits both governments and businesses engaged in international trade.

Many Shippers believe that a greater collaboration and communication between Customs authorities and the business community is needed for the smooth conduct of Post Clearance Audits. To them, it is by such collaboration that practical solutions that promote compliance and minimize disruptions to trade can be fashioned out for the mutual benefit of all stakeholders.



Gorgidus Enterprise is located at Ogbojo Industrial Area, near Madina in Accra.



Saving the Used and Slightly Damaged Vehicle Industry from Collapse: The Need to Review the Ghana Automotive Development Policy

By George Dumenu, CEO of Gorgidus Enterprise

Ghana has been a major destination in West Africa for imported used and slightly damaged vehicles, due primarily to factors such as affordability, availability, and the absence of local automotive manufacturing industry. With the implementation of the Ghana Automotive Development Policy in August 2019, a comprehensive roadmap was introduced to address these issues and pave the way for economic growth, job creation, and a reduced dependence on the importation of used and slightly damaged vehicles. The policy also aimed to transform Ghana into a regional hub for vehicle manufacturing, assembly, and distribution, while promoting technological innovation and sustainable development.

The primary scope of the policy focused on establishing assembly and manufacturing capacity in Ghana, particularly for new passenger cars, SUVs, light commercial vehicles, pickups, minibuses, and cargo vans.

The importation of used and slightly damaged vehicles to Ghana has been significant, with thousands of cars being imported annually from

various sources, including Europe, the United States, Canada, and some Asian countries. Data from the Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority (GPHA) indicated that in 2022, 161,300 metric tonnes of vehicles (excluding trucks) were imported, with a large portion being Used or Slightly damaged vehicles. In an article published on Starr Fm Online (Starrfmonline.com.gh) on 25th May 2023, a dealer in Used and Slightly damaged vehicles who has been in the business for thirteen (13) years stated that

“over 100,000 cars are imported to Ghana every year mostly from the United States. And 90% of the cars on Ghana's roads are imported used cars. Many are either salvaged or obtained from accidents and most of them are more than a decade old.”

From the above, it is evident that the Used and Slightly damaged vehicles industry plays a crucial role in supporting Ghana's economy and society. By providing affordable transportation solutions,



generating employment opportunities, contributing to government revenue, fostering entrepreneurship, and promoting sustainable practices, this industry serves as a driving force for economic growth and social development.

In May 2023, Rana Motors, a leading automobile dealer in Ghana, commissioned one of the largest state-of-the-art KIA vehicle assembly plants in Amasaman, Greater Accra Region. This marked the eighth vehicle assembly plant in Ghana, attributable to the Ghana Automotive Development Policy, with other major international players such as Volkswagen (VW), Peugeot, Hyundai, Sinotruk, Nissan, Toyota, and Kantanka Automobile Company, the only indigenous local manufacturer. Despite the positive strides made after the launch of the policy, key industry players including the writer are of the view that although the policy is a progressive one, it needs to be reviewed to ensure the sustained growth of the industry.

As the CEO of Geogidus Enterprise, incorporated as a business entity in 1999 initially as an importer, I have “paid my dues” to the growth of the industry. I started my business as a dealer in household items until 2008 when my business relocated to the Ogbojo Industrial area. The change in office location coincided with the reorganization of the business to focus more on Used Vehicles and Vehicle spare parts as I sought to revive my import business, due to the lack of market for household items at the time.

I hold executive positions in a number of unionized groups including the Greater Accra Regional Shipper Committee of the Ghana Shippers' Authority (GSA, 2022-2024), the Chamber of Automobile Dealers Ghana (CADEG, 2022-2026) and the Union of Vehicle

Dealers (2022-2023); and I currently serve as secretary for each of the three (3) groups. I previously served as the secretary to the Korea Importers Association of Ghana (2020-2023).

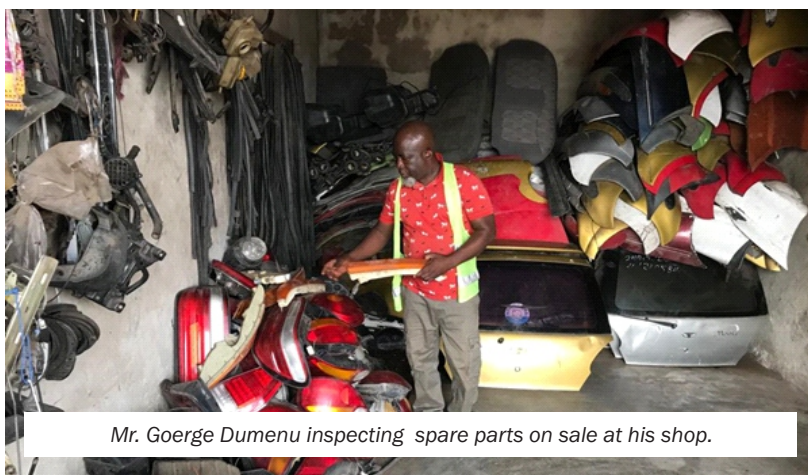
With fifteen (15) years' experience as a dealer in Used and Slightly damaged vehicles and vehicle spare parts, I am of the view that the Ghana Automotive Development Policy in its current state is problematic and could lead to the collapse of the Used and Slightly damaged vehicles industry, unless steps are taken to review its provisions.

Why the Need for a Review?

In the simplest of terms, the Ghana Automotive Development Policy brought into being two (2) regulations; the first is a set of standards for the establishment of assembly plants in Ghana, and secondly, the prohibitions on the importation of Used and Slightly damaged vehicles into Ghana.

The prohibitions, which include a ban on the importation of vehicles older than ten (10) years, slightly damaged and flood-damaged vehicles, new vehicles without destination certificate issued by an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) certifying that the vehicle is produced for the Ghanaian market as well as vehicles assembled from parts imported as spare parts, have been the bane of industry players for the past few years.

The introduction of a 35% additional Cost, Insurance and Freight (CIF) value as Duty on new and Used Vehicles raises a huge concern. The challenge is that, while the new vehicle assemblers in Ghana have been given tax exemptions, the Used and Slightly damaged vehicle importers have to contend with the complete reversal of the benchmark value policy. This coupled with the unstable dollar rate has created a financial burden for industry players and as a result, many importers



are slowly moving to other industries. Meanwhile the automotive assemblers continue to enjoy the money or the income that they generate and repatriate to their countries.

A collapse of the industry will have far reaching consequences on the economy, especially on the labour sector. This is because as the volume of import declines, businesses involved in the importation, distribution, and sales of Used and Slightly damaged vehicles may experience a decrease in workforce demand, which could worsen the unemployment situation in the country.

Government will lose revenue from the Used Vehicle and spare parts industry, which has been estimated to be worth about \$4.6 billion in 2023.

This is because the Duty paid by Used and Slightly damaged vehicle importers accounts for a chunk of the total revenue generated at the ports.

Interventions so far

As secretary to the oldest Shipper Committee (Greater Accra Regional Shipper Committee) of the GSA, I have been able to leverage on my position to organize a number of engagements with unionized groups who import Used and Slightly damaged vehicles to enable them to have a better understanding of the industry, and also apprise themselves of emerging trends and new policies such as the Ghana Automotive Development Policy. Feedback from these engagements have been positive as the importers of Used and Slightly damaged vehicles continue to show interest in the engagements, and thus give me reason to reach a wider audience with the engagements.

In furtherance of the objective to reach a wider audience with the engagements, I contribute regularly to discussions on the subject matter in selected media outlets. These interventions have yielded some positive results, in that, importers of Used and Slightly damaged vehicles have gained a better understanding of the operations of Ghana's security agencies, including the Economic and Organized Crime Office (EOCO), and are able to assist them in dealing with the issue of imported vehicles being reported as stolen. Through improved stakeholder engagements, the Canadian and

U.S. security agencies have also put in place new measures to prevent stolen vehicles from being exported to Ghana.

Way forward

From the regular engagements with industry players, importers continue to appeal to government to review the benchmark value to offer discounts on import Duty for Used and Slightly damaged vehicles, and also scrap the 1% Covid-19 levy charged, considering that the pandemic is no longer a public health concern. Importers would greatly appreciate it if the government could reconsider the policy.

Stabilizing the exchange rate and enforcing the Bank of Ghana's directive for Shipping Lines to use the pre-approved rates of their banks are also crucial to support the industry.

It is important for stakeholder engagements to be held before formulating and implementing policies to ensure the support and cooperation of all industry players. Establishing a more "friendly" working relationship with Used and Slightly damaged automobile dealers and conducting regular stakeholder engagements can help rebuild confidence among importers and encourage further investments in the sector.

In conclusion, while the Ghana Automotive Development Policy aims to transform the automotive industry and reduce dependence on Used and Slightly damaged vehicles, the concerns raised by industry players must be addressed to safeguard the sustainability of the industry and avoid adverse effects on employment and government revenue. Collaborative efforts, policy adjustments, and stakeholder engagement are essential for ensuring a balanced and supportive environment for all players in the automotive sector.

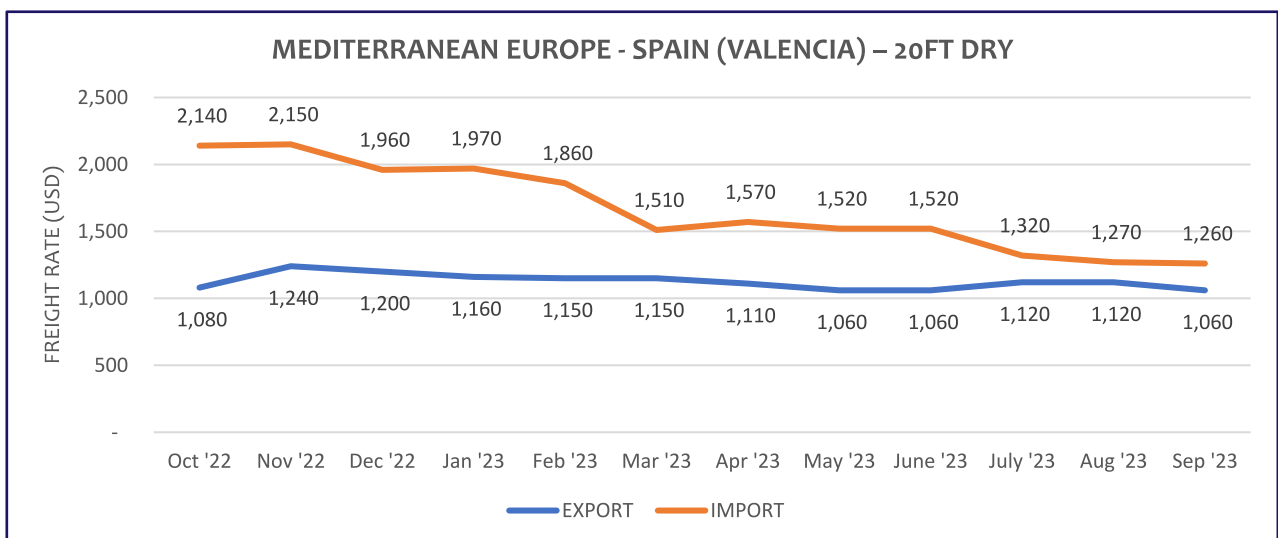
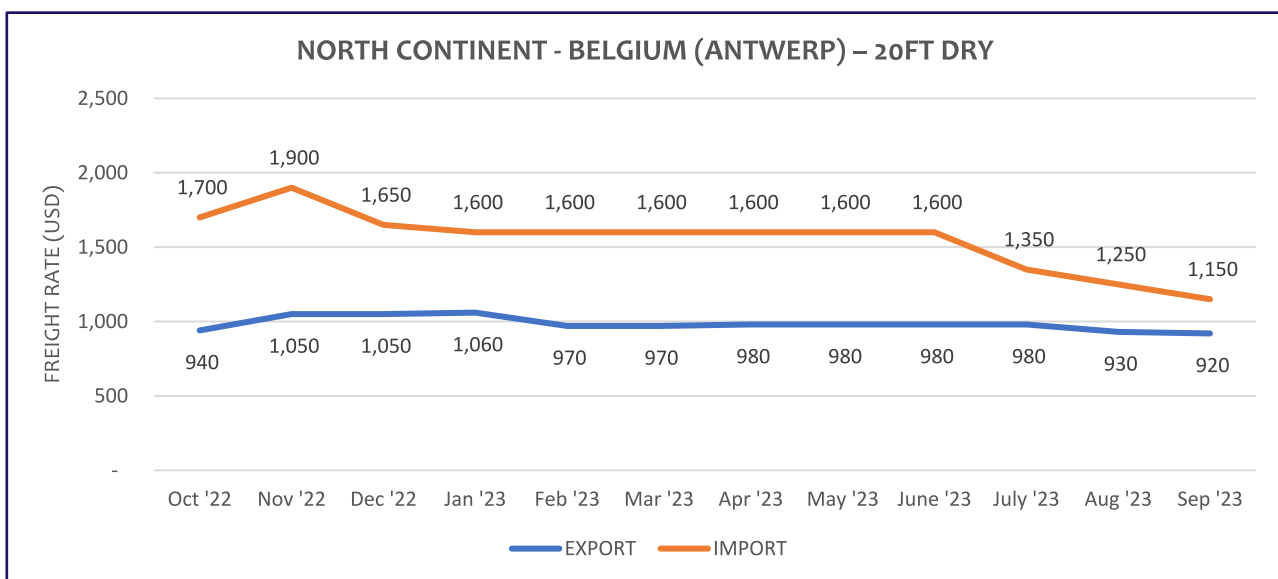
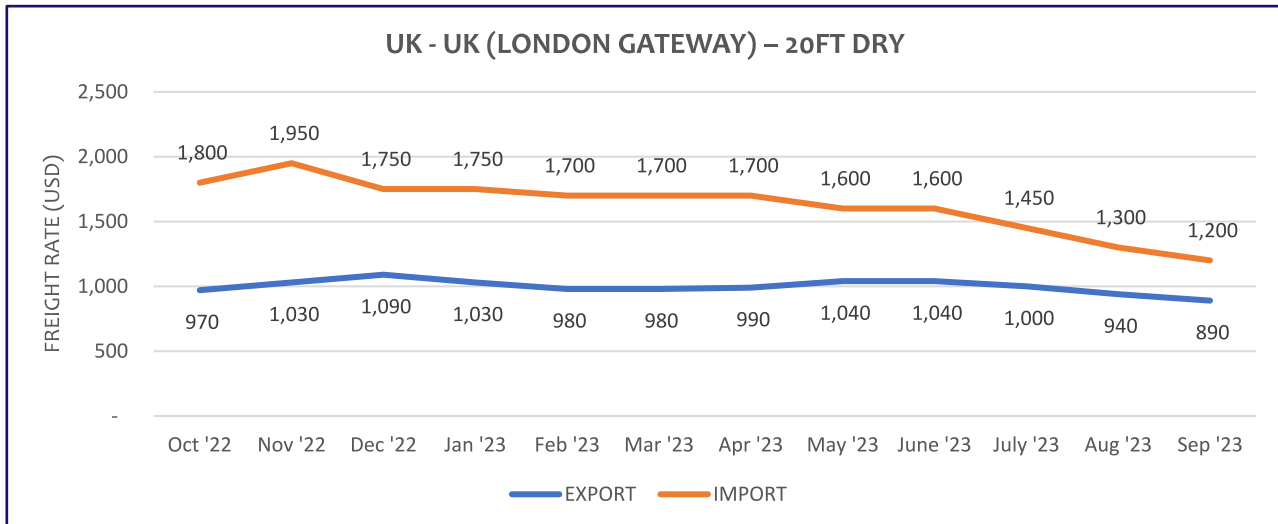


Over 100,000 used and slightly damaged vehicles are imported into Ghana every year.



GHANA SHIPPERS' AUTHORITY

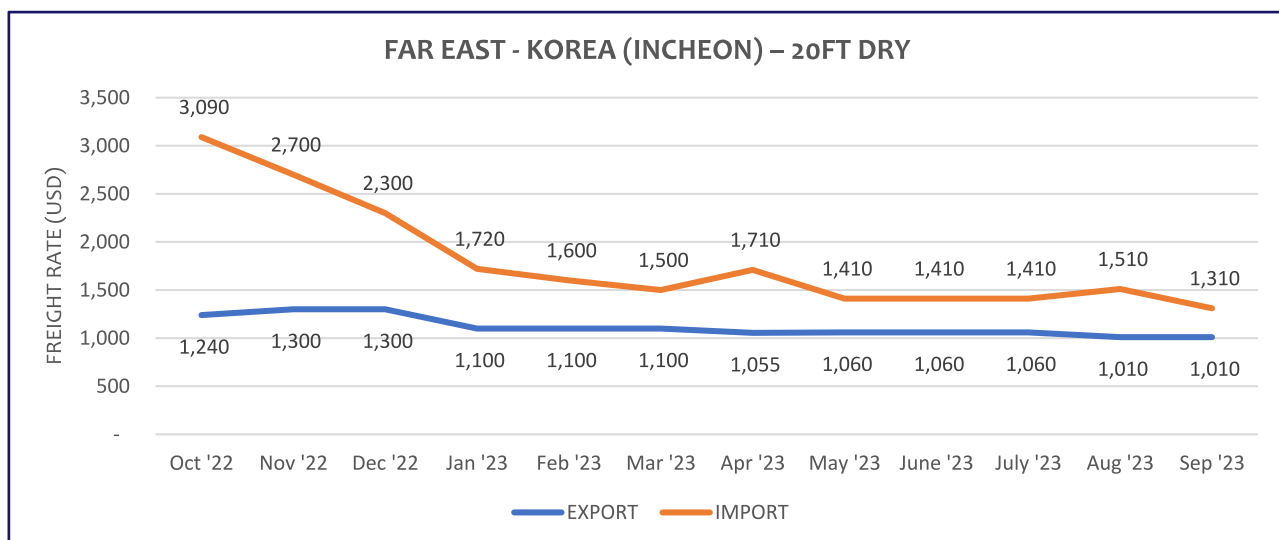
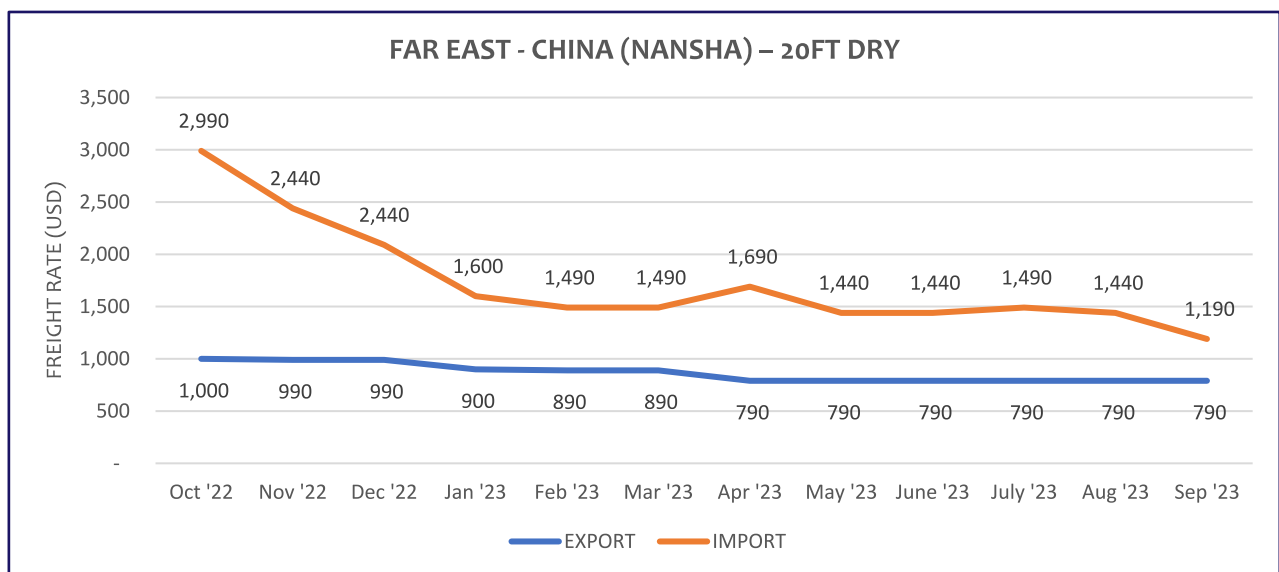
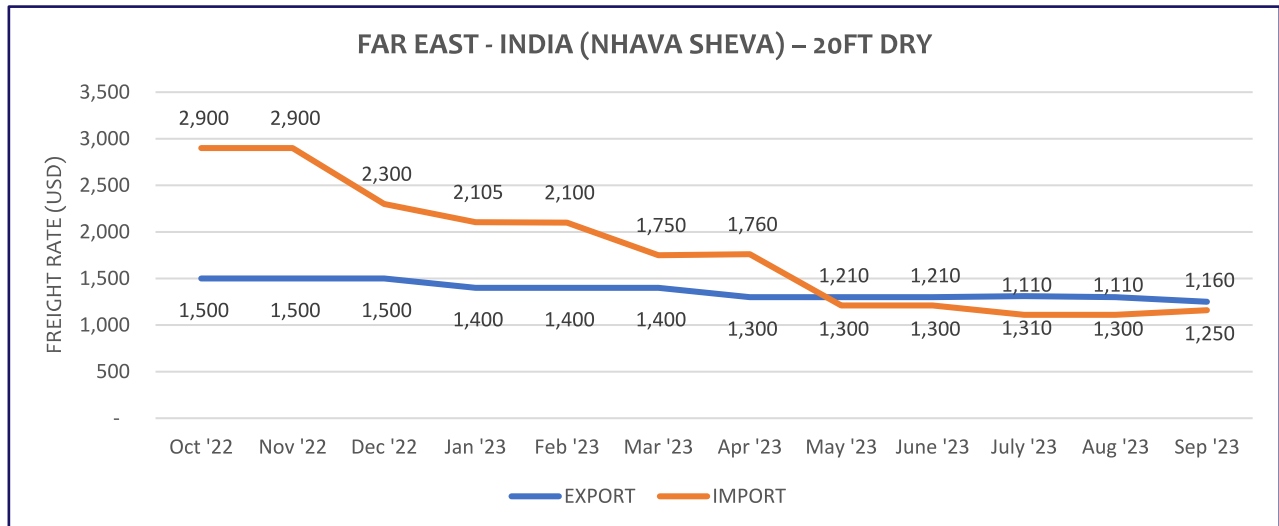
INDICATIVE FREIGHT RATES (in USD) FOR SHIPMENTS TO/FROM GHANA (PORT OF TEMA) (OCTOBER 2022 - SEPTEMBER 2023)





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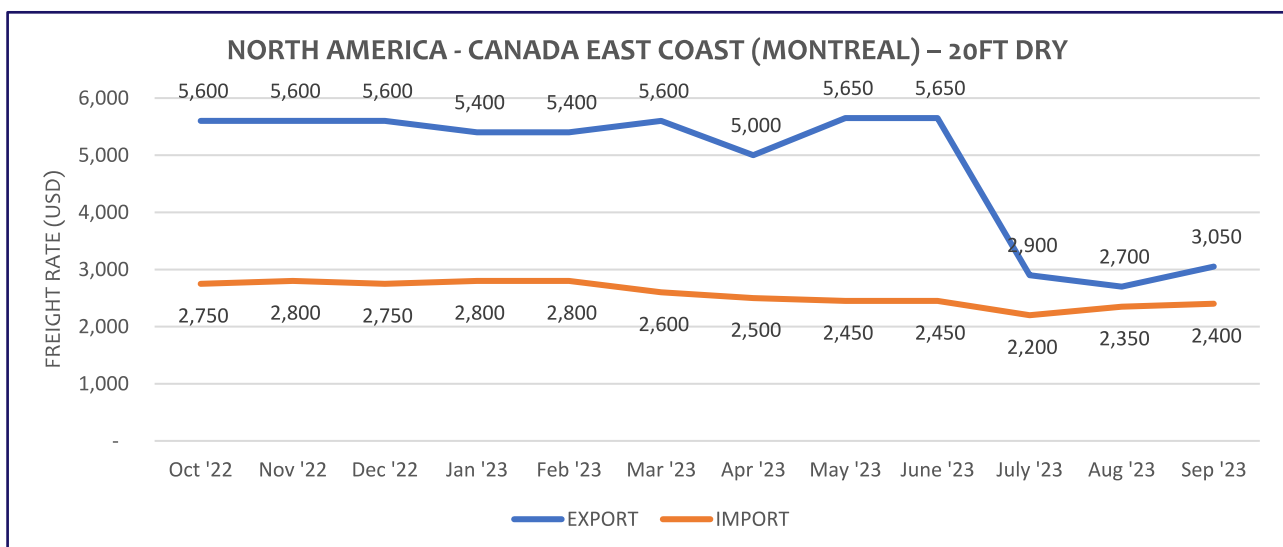
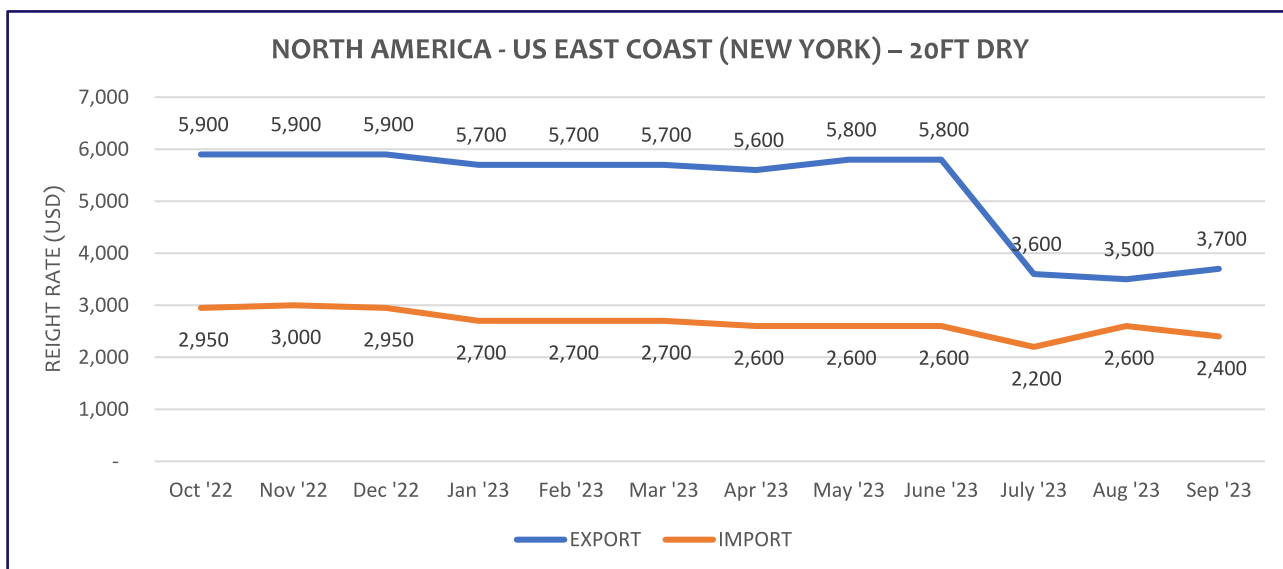
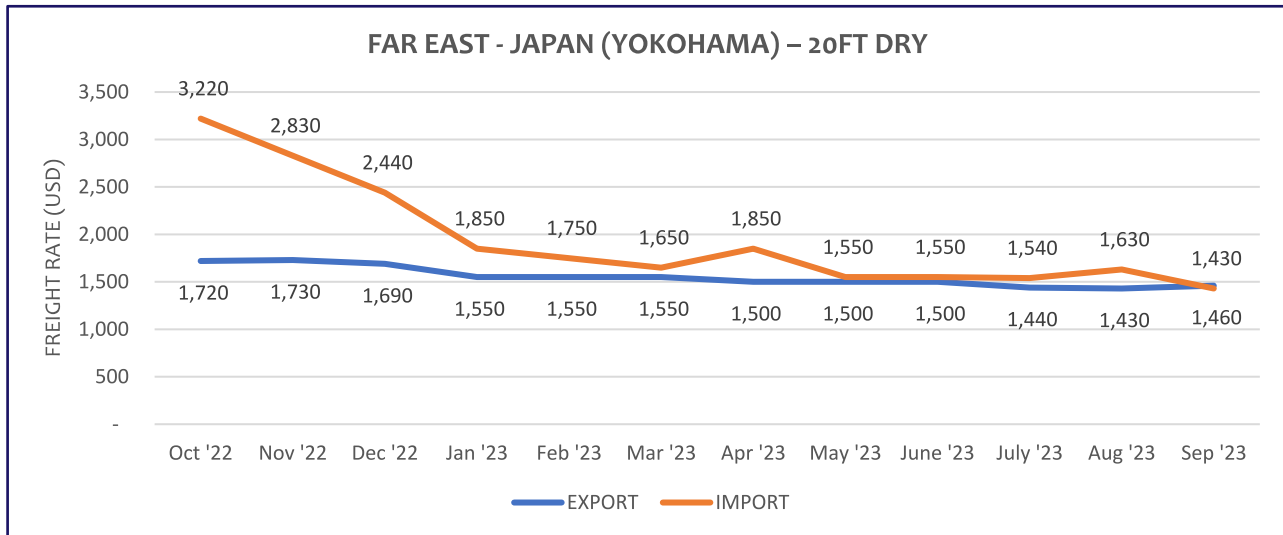
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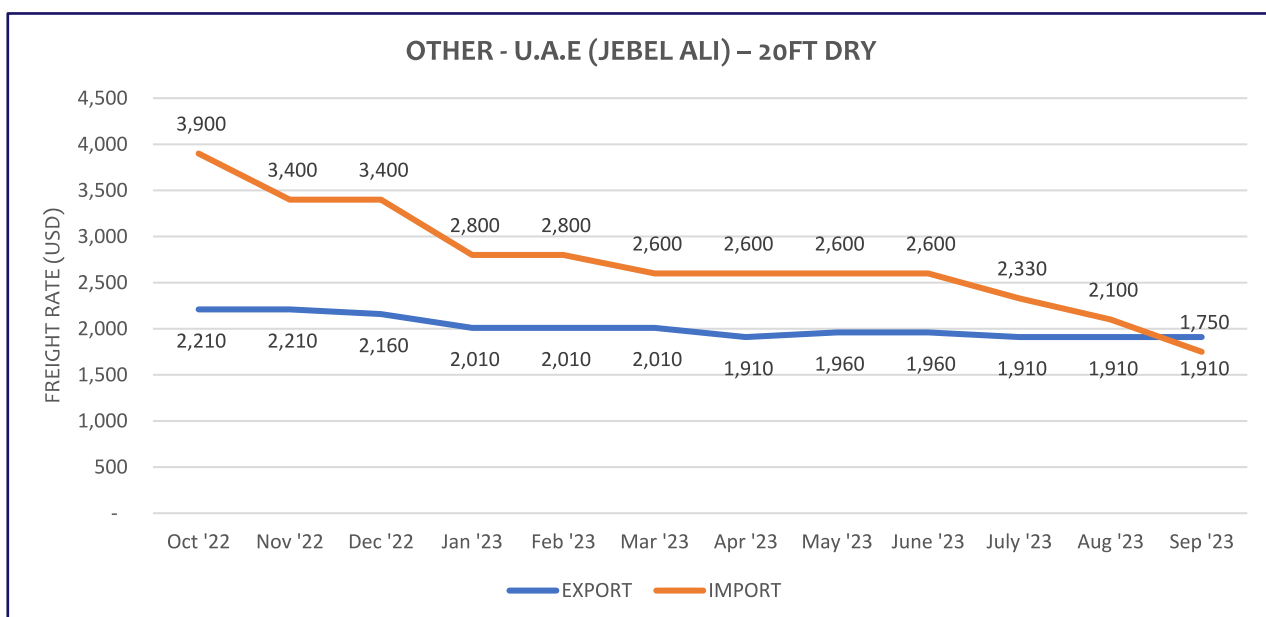
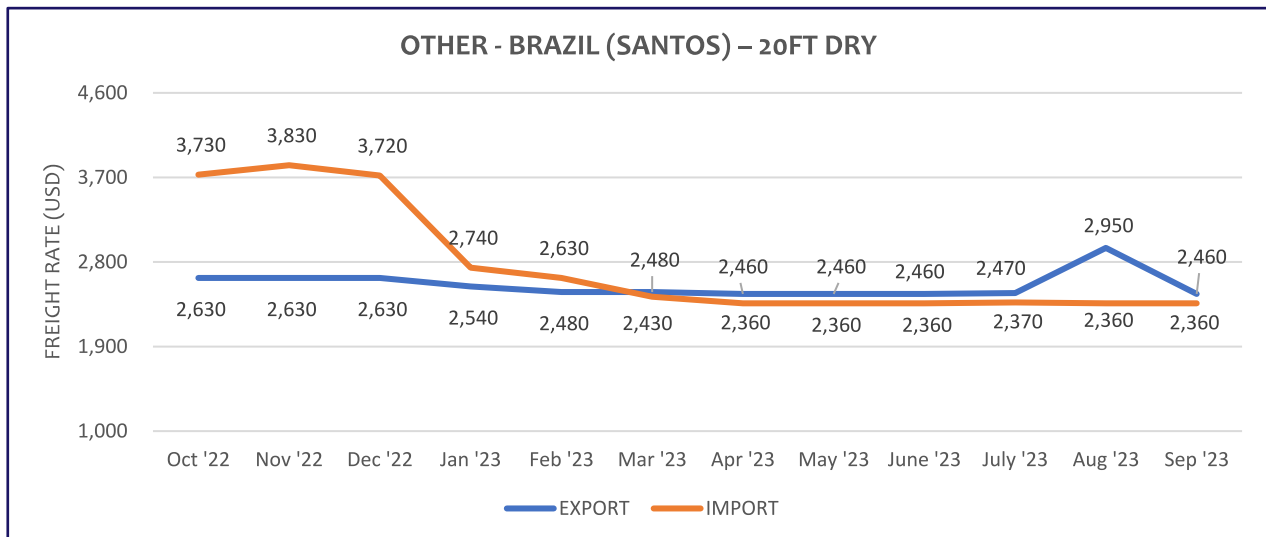
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