OUTCOMES

Participants

A group of 20 young seafarers, some sent through their companies who are members of INTERTANKO, others through the ITF affiliated trade unions of which they are members, met in London to discuss current issues relating to a maritime career. The group consisted of a mix of deck and engine officers, ratings and one cadet. Of the twenty, there were three women seafarers represented. Due to the INTERTANKO involvement, the majority are engaged in work on board tankers, however the experience of the group includes work on cruise ships, tug boats, car carriers and cargo ships. Companies that supported participation are: Teekay Marine Services, Broström Tankers France SAS, Maersk, and OSG Shipmanagement.

Observations and recommendations arising from discussions within the group and with senior industry figures from INTERTANKO, INTERCARGO, InterManager, IMO and ITF/Nautilus UK

Note: these are the views of the young seafarers who took part in the focus group, and not those of the ITF and INTERTANKO

Background discussion

Reasons for going to sea

- Salary & tax break
- Family tradition
- Opportunity to see the world
- Lifestyle - hard work but long breaks - balance - shorter contracts, paid vacation
- Job opportunities - absence of other options
- Challenge - interesting work - deck & engine
- Attracts more practical people - need to experience life on board before committing to years of academic education

Would you recommend to friends/family?

Those that said ‘yes’ gave the following reasons:

- Develop good life skills
- Wide range of training
- India: Now industry positively perceived, used to be more negative

Those that said ‘no’:

- In Asia salary differential not so great
- Conflict with family life - varies regionally
• Media: negative publicity - people ashore have very dated view of the maritime industry

Career for life?

• Difficult for women at sea to combine with starting families
• Lack of job security (contractual workers)
• Family tradition
• Hard work - not suited to older age

Summary of the main issues of concern (in no particular order)

• Job security
• ISPS
• Shore leave
• Criminalisation
• Manning vs workload
• Piracy
• Living conditions & communication with home
• Amount of paperwork on board
• Training issues
• Image of the industry

Job security & employment conditions

• Length of contract - 9 months too long
• ratio to time ashore important - 8 weeks on, 8 weeks off - good
• currency fluctuation can cause difficulties for seafarers
• better to be paid every month to enable mortgage loans etc
• good when companies provide personal loans for employees
• companies should pay for repatriation to home port for ratings as well as officers

Recommendations:

• **Companies should offer secure, direct employment agreements instead of contract work**
• **Reduce length of contract without too much adverse effect on salary / vacation**
• **Companies should offer possibility of fixed exchange rates**
• **Companies should be aware of the importance of creating company spirit**

ISPS

• Seafarers treated like terrorists or criminal suspects
• All pain, no positives - burden all on seafarer
• Conflict between safety and security
• Not enough people to cover watches
• Shore leave denied many times - is it a right or privilege?
• Port State requirements not practical or reasonable
• No standard practice - sometimes need passport, sometimes not
• Same standards not applied in terminals as on ships
• Excessive cost of transit in ports/escorts
• Exacerbated issues of discrimination against some nationalities

**Recommendations:**

- **Industry should raise all the above concerns with IMO**
- **Flag States and Port States should consider practical implications of security regime**
- **IMO should promote more collaboration between ships and ports to address the balance over ISPS responsibilities**
- **Port States need to improve training on ISPS Code to ensure awareness of seafarers rights**

**Shore leave**

There was a discussion of which countries are the worst for their treatment of seafarers wishing to take shore leave resulting in the following blacklist:

- Brazil (some terminals)
- China
- Egypt (discrimination according to nationality)
- Greece (discrimination according to nationality)
- Italy
- Japan
- Pakistan
- Saudi Arabia
- Singapore (some terminals)
- UAE
- USA

It was also noted that seafarers of certain nationalities experience denial of shore leave more often than others.

**Recommendations:**

- **Seafarers have a right to shore leave. Everyone with an interest in the maritime industry should redouble efforts to defend that right.**
- **An international reporting scheme should be established to enable seafarers to report violations of their right to shore leave - to enable IMO to act on the information**

**Criminalisation**

- fear of being blamed for environmental accidents
- security regimes make seafarers feel like criminals

**Recommendations:**

- **IMO/ILO Guidelines on the Fair Treatment of Seafarers should be made mandatory**
- **Industry (inc. seafarers representatives) should publicise the Guidelines mentioned above**

**Manning vs workload**
• Constant influx of new requirements (international and company specific) alongside existing requirements
• Virtually impossible to relax and go ashore
• Problem of fatigue
• Additional work should be proportionate to number of crew

**Recommendations:**
- **Piracy**
  • more reassurance to seafarers that companies will support them and ensure their release if taken hostage
  • compensation
  • danger money
  • official military support (as opposed to private security firms) on board welcomed
  • rerouting to avoid pirate infested areas supported

**Recommendations:**
- IMO should continue to exert pressure through the UN to eliminate the problem of piracy

**Living conditions & communication with home**
• quality of life on board is adversely affected by poor standards of accommodation and recreational facilities
• important to have single cabins
• lack of adequate contact with family
• seafarers should have personal email addresses to ensure privacy
• computers with internet access should be placed in such a way as to allow privacy
• could be much better with access to internet
• internet access is also important for distance learning
• some companies give inadequate allowances for food

**Recommendations:**
- Companies should provide internet facilities & personal email accounts on board, with free access for crew - for work & private use.
- Companies should ensure that design is fit for purpose (in terms of living accommodation) when ships are ordered.

**Amount of paperwork on board**
- The ISM Code - too open to interpretation - there is no consistency between companies, some create very paper-heavy procedures
- Duplication of information
- too much dealt with on board
- not enough time/manpower
- need a secretary on board
- seafarers responsible for themselves and their own work as well as paperwork & onboard training of others
- sense that companies covering their backs - blame culture

**Recommendations:**

**Companies should review their procedures, and consider the following options:**
- database system
- administrator on board
- better systems between shore & ship
- more efficient procedures, avoid over complication

**Training issues**

- Computer-based training on-board - mandatory for promotion but not enough time to fit in with duties - would be better to do ashore - company issue
- Additional courses required by charter party - individuals have to pay (company won’t)
- Licences - costs passed on to seafarer - depending on company
- Training on seafarers rights

**Recommendations:**

- Companies should review their CBT policies
- Training and licences - costs should be born by company not seafarers - particularly difficult for ratings

**Image of the industry**

- There is either a lack of knowledge amongst the public about the industry or an old-fashioned, outdated idea of seafaring
- Airline pilots are portrayed as heroes, seafarers like criminals

**Recommendations:**

- Invest in the promotion of a positive image of the industry