

Women maritime education and training: An Egyptian perspective

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Abstract

Worldwide there has been a strong emphasis on gender education as a means of empowering women to take full advantage of the positive aspects of globalization and enabling them to effectively participate in a collective action to offset its negative social and economic consequences. Gender education in Egypt as a developing country, however, shows a high statistical percentage of female illiteracy. Extremely negative consequences inevitably result from such gender inequality and women illiteracy: namely; child labour and the negative perception of women's rights.

In the context of women in the maritime profession, significant research proves that women seafarers are indeed an underutilized source of maritime talent. Enhancing maritime education through academic achievement and training should be strengthened, especially when highlighted by IMO strategies for the integration of women into the maritime sector and the implementation of the IMO women in development programme. Furthermore, the newly set regional networks for women in the maritime and port sectors are considered a real credit to women in the maritime profession. Examples of these networks are: The Pacific Women in Maritime Association, The Network for Professional Women in the Maritime and Port Sectors of the West and Central Africa and The Arab International Women's Maritime Forum for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), which is one of the achievements of The Arab Academy For Science And Technology And Maritime Transport (AASTMT) seeking more women integration in the maritime sector. Other positive steps taken by the Academy include the admission of female students at the College of Maritime Studies and Technology; the establishment of the College of International Transport and Logistics for female and male students; holding the first Conference of The Arab International Maritime Women in MENA and Africa, July 2007, Alexandria, Egypt. Last but not least, MENA & Africa Arab International Women's Maritime Forum had been launched. The Forum means to promote more female inductions into the maritime industry in MENA and Africa and empower women decision-making change the world in full compliance with IMO objectives.

1 Gender education

Despite progress in many areas, women still face discrimination because of ingrained cultural attitudes, early marriages, pregnancies, lack of accessible schools, and inadequate gender-biased educational materials. They continue to be denied quality education in science and technology. Education at all levels is definitely the key to making any progress in moving the "platform for action" forward. The implementation of "the platform for action" and "the provision of education for all" will require political will and allocation of adequate financial and human resources.

Education will empower women to take full advantage of the positive aspects of globalization and will enable them to effectively participate in a collective action to offset its negative social and economic consequences. Access to information and communication technologies will allow women and girls to benefit from and contribute to its further development.

1.1 Women in developing countries

According to The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development report (OECD 2007):

- On average, women in developing countries get married 6 ½ years earlier than in OECD countries.
- There are still 800 million people in the world lacking basic literacy skills. Women account for two-thirds of the total.
- Young women in sub-Sahara Africa aged 15-24 are between two and six times as likely to be HIV-positive than men of a similar age.
- About one-half of aid to basic education and basic health targeted gender-specific concerns.

In large parts of the developing world, traditions and socio-cultural norms still trap countries in poverty as they bar women from economic activities: more discrimination – less economic growth – more poverty.

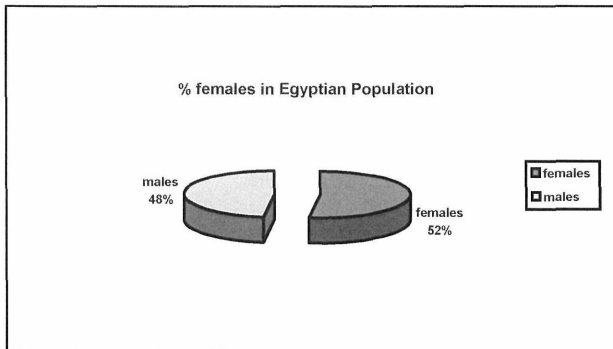
1.2 Gender education in Egypt

In Egypt women do not have the same opportunities for education as men. According to the Human Resource Development Report (2005), it has been found that education is the least area where progress has been made concerning gender equality in Egypt.

The following figures are quoted from: (Wafaai: 2008) work on gender equality in developing countries.

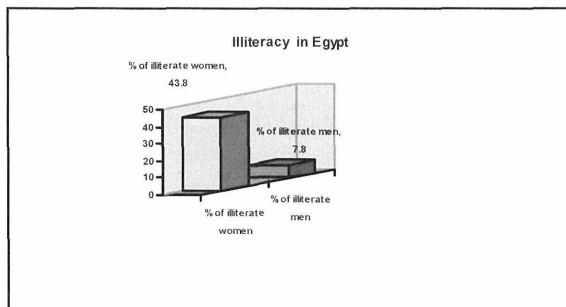
- Fig 1.3.1 the percentage of males is 48% while females is 52% in the Egyptian population.
- Fig. 13.2 the percentage of illiterate female is 44% while illiterate males is 8%
- Fig.1.3.3. the percentage of illiterate female is 44% while literate females is 56%
- Fig.1.3.4 the percentage of women not receiving secondary education is 76% and women receiving secondary education and above is 24%.
- Fig. 1.3.5 the percentage of women graduating from universities is 5% and women not having higher education are 95%
- Fig.13.6 the percentage of university graduates by gender is 31% female university graduates and 69% are male graduates.
- Fig. 1.3.7 measuring the Global Gender Gap, education is the least area where progress has been made concerning gender equality in Egypt

Percentage of Females in the Egyptian population Fig.1.3.1



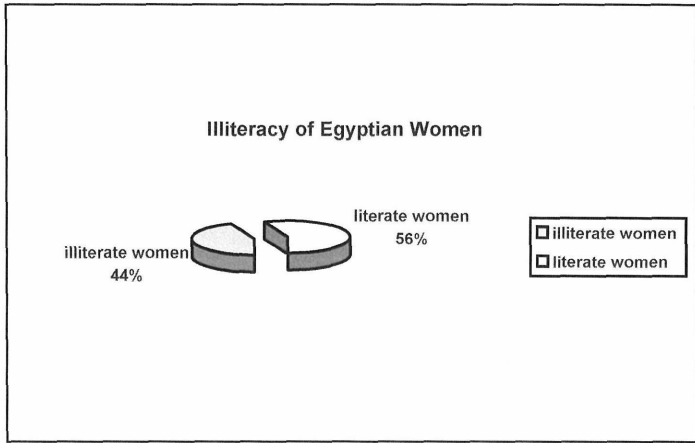
(Wafaai: 2008)

Illiteracy in Egypt Fig. 1.3.2



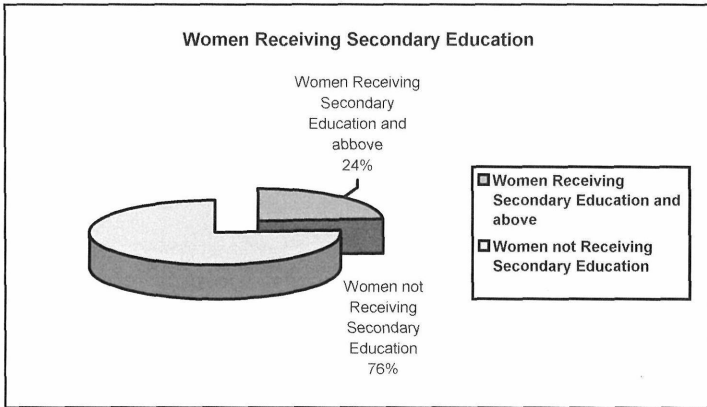
(Wafaai: 2008)

Illiteracy of Egyptian Women Fig.1.3.3



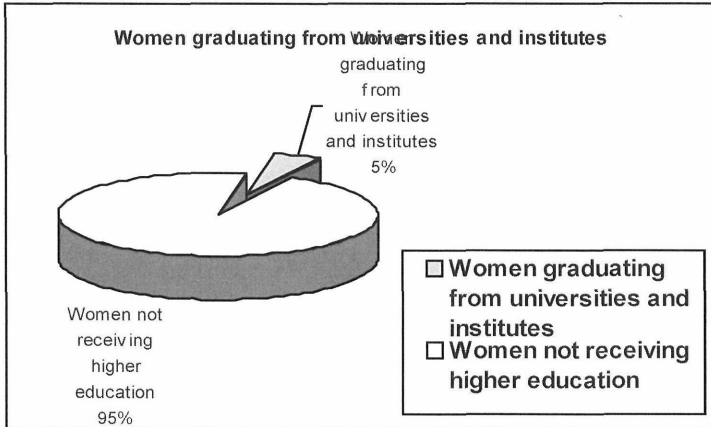
(Wafaai:2008)

Women Receiving Secondary Education Fig.1.3.4



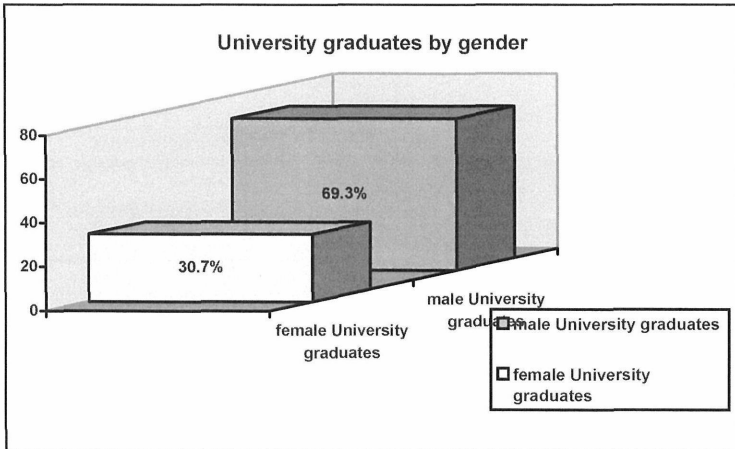
(Wafaai: 2008)

Women graduating from universities and institutes Fig. 1.3.5



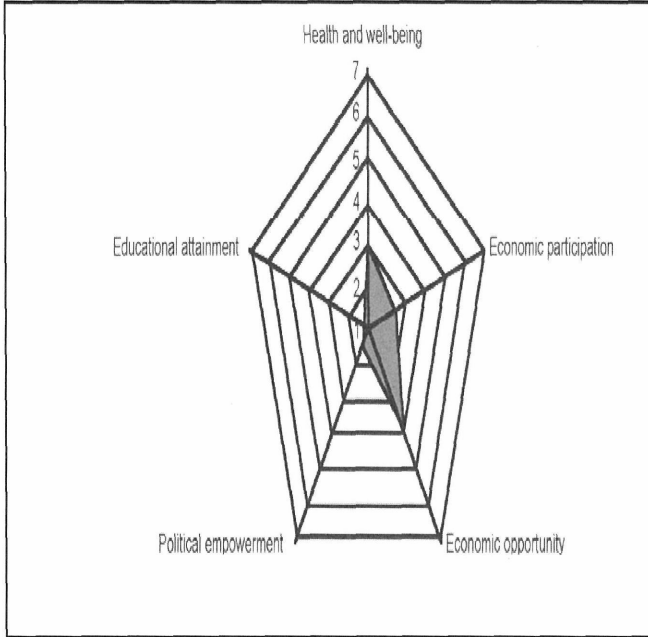
(Wafaai: 2008s)

University graduates by gender Fig.1.3.6



(Wafaai:2007)

Measuring the Global Gender Gap Fig. 1.3.7



(Wafaai: 2007)

1.3 Hazards of illiteracy

Many extremely negative consequences result from gender inequality and female illiteracy, the first being that it leads to bad upbringing of their children. Gender inequality affecting the enrolment of girls in schools in addition to economic poverty are two important issues influencing child labour. In its most extreme forms, child labour involves children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illnesses and/or left to fend for themselves on the streets of large cities – often at a very early age. One of the most predominantly worst forms of child labour in the Arab States is child trafficking. The second relevant outcome of women's illiteracy is the negative perception of women's rights, especially in the context of domestic violence.

Some women seem unaware of the legal protections offered to them by the Egyptian law. And even if some of them are aware they consider their complaints as “culturally unsuitable.”

Nevertheless, when asked how they define Human Rights, Egyptians of all walks of life—younger or older, Christian or Muslim, illiterate or college-educated—almost exclusively focus on the most basic essentials of life: food, housing, jobs, education, and health care. (Katulis: 2004).

1.4 Attempts made by Egypt for improving the status of women

The Egyptian constitution and its complementary laws provide for the principal of unconditioned equality between men and women. Many presidential decrees were issued, calling for the elimination of all types of discrimination against women and encouraging a wider participation for women in public life. The National Council for Woman (NCW) was established in 2000 as a governmental institution responsible for improving woman status and brings the differences of social gender. The National Council for Child and Motherhood and the National Council for Human Rights were established.

Egypt’s First Lady, Suzanne Mubarak, is a champion for the rights of women and children. She is the technical advisor for the National Council for Motherhood and Childhood in Egypt. The Council’s goals are the reinforcement of women's role in society, the study and resolution of problems confronting women, the improvement of women's performance in society, the monitoring of education of children, and the establishment of a healthy environment for children. Within the frame work of the "Reading for All" national project under the chairmanship of the first lady, several libraries have been established and equipped with electronic machines for training on information technology. Female enrolment in education reached 35%in 1991 – 2003. The illiteracy rate among women declined to 41.2% in 2005.

The NCW established an information observatory unit to monitor the content of the woman – relevant information message in the media and improve the image of women and her position in society. Egypt had a problem of early marriage and the Government endeavored to resolve it through increasing awareness and by raising the age of marriage for girls. A new decree had prohibited the practice of female circumcision. In January 2003 a presidential decree was issued whereby a female judge was appointed to the High Constitutional Court for the first time in Egypt's history. Two other women were appointed as members to the panel of High Constitutional Court Commissioners. The Supreme Judicial Council appointed 31 female judges out of 124 female candidates in March 2007.

2 Gender and the maritime profession

“Women as Seafarers” a study commissioned by the ILO following a resolution calling for a more active role to integrate women in the industry and adopted by the 29th session of the Joint maritime Commission on 2001, in Geneva, concluded that women seafarers face not only the general challenges of weather, hard work and rough seas, but also inordinate amounts of discrimination, sexual harassment and parental disapproval as well as often being relegated to low-paying jobs with limited opportunities for promotion. (Fahmy: 2007).

2. 1. Facts and figures

- a. Nearly 1.2 million seafarers work in the world’s shipping industry, more than a third of them are Asian. It’s one of the world’s most globalized industries; cruise ships crews often represent 20 nationalities or more.
- b. The IMO reports that women represent 1-2% of the world 1.25 million seafarers serving on some 87000 ships. Even in the Philippines, the world’s largest supplier of seafarers to the global merchant fleet, for the Philippines archipelago supplies 20 per cent of the world’s seafarers, only 225 women appear on the international register of 230,000 seafarers.
- c. In the cruise line sector, women represent 17-18% of the work force.
- d. 94% of women are employed on passenger ships: with 68% on ferries and 26% on cruise ships and the remaining 6% are employed on cargo vessels, i.e. container ships, oil tankers, etc.
- e. Only 7% of women are officers and the rest 93% are ratings. By comparison 42% of male seafarers are officers and 58% are ratings.
- f. As today’s ships become more specialized and automated, the required skills mix has changed. Demand for skilled deck officers and engineers continue to rise, while slimmer crews are dropping.
- g. This is a solid proof that women are indeed an underutilized source of maritime talent which the industry needs to draw upon to make up this shortfall.
- h. Generally, women are working as hotel staff on passenger ships; of that category 51.2% come from OECD countries, 23.6% from Eastern Europe, 9.8% from Latin America & Africa, 13.7% from the Far East and 1.7% from South Asia and the ME.
- i. Women when on board often experience problems in being initially accepted and in having to “prove themselves”, but over time they are usually able to integrate themselves into crews.
- j. As for promotion on cargo vessels, this varies among companies; some are reluctant to promote women to senior positions in the hotel sector of passenger vessels, and promotion appears to be more related to ethnicity rather than gender.(Fahmy 2007)

3 Enhancing maritime education

It is firmly believed that the function of women in the maritime sector can be enhanced through academic achievement. Quality education and intensive training would ultimately result in better professional performances especially in terms of leadership and communication skills acquired. The integration of women into all levels of political, economic and social development has become a major objective for the United Nations system over the past 25 years. Goals such as the advancement of women and the promotion of gender equality - highlighted at the Fourth UN Conference for Women in Beijing in 1995- are considered as prerequisites for achieving political, social, economic, cultural and environmental security among all people.

3.1. IMO program objectives

IMO produced its strategy for the integration of women into the maritime sector in 1988 and began implementation of the IMO *women in development programme in 1989*, concentrating on:

- a. Integrating women into mainstream maritime activities
- b. Improving women's access to maritime training and technology
- c. Increasing the percentage of women at the senior management level within the maritime sector
- d. Promoting women's economic self-reliance, including access to employment
- e. In the developing regions, the IMO Strategic principle is based on capacity-building through the transfer of technology and skills via training, fellowships, seminars, and workshops; the promotion of regional collaboration; and through capacity-building fellowship programme for women with a view to encourage equal training and employment opportunities. (Tansey 2007)
- f. To encourage equity in the appointment and promotion of women to senior managerial posts
- g. To make women more “visible” as resources for the maritime sector

3.2. Regional networks for women in the maritime and port sectors:

The Pacific Women in Maritime Association (PacWIMA) was the first network to be launched with support from IMO's global programme, in Fiji in February 2004, and it has generated regional cooperation and operational linkages for the women employed in the maritime sector throughout the Pacific Island region. The Network for Professional Women in the Maritime and Port Sectors of the West and Central Africa region was subsequently established in Benin, in February 2007, followed by the Arab International Women's Maritime

Forum for the Middle East and North Africa and Africa as a whole, established in Alexandria, Egypt, in July 2007-(the author of this paper is honoured to be the chair and founder of this Forum). A similar initiative has been undertaken in Mombasa, Kenya, to launch a formal association for professional women in the maritime and port sectors in the Eastern and Southern Africa region (Metropolis: 2008).

3.3. A brighter future!

A Horizon ship has an all-female deck crew. According to Kristen (Consillio, “Horizon Lines Inc. made Hawaii maritime history this week when an 800-foot container ship arrived in port with women occupying its top three bridge posts. The Horizon Navigator, carrying about 900 containers and a total of 25 crew members, arrived at Honolulu Harbor Wednesday from Los Angeles with Capt. Robin Espinosa, Chief Mate S.L. Sam Pirtle and Second Mate Julie Duchi at the helm” (The Honolulu Star Bulletin).

- More women are moving up the ranks in all areas of ship operations, signaling a new era for female merchant mariners who have gained respect in the rigorous field (WMA Spring2008 Newsletter).
- First Annual Women on the Water (WOW) conference was a big success. The WOW conference that was held last October in Traverse City, Michigan was by all accounts a great success. . It was so inspiring to see the smart and confident members of the next generation who are going to be the next leaders in our industry.
- Scholarships are available for women in the maritime industry. WMA has recently become aware of a scholarship available for women. The funds are available for women who are pursuing training at any level, including unlicensed.(Fall 2006 newsletter)
- The International Maritime Law Institute, in Malta reserves 50% of its places on its post-graduate courses for women. There is furthermore, the significant contribution which the World Maritime University has made to increase the opportunities for professional women by raising the intake of qualified women graduates to 30% from 6% in the last decade.

4 AASTMT milestones for more women integration into the maritime sector

The percentage of female students joining AASTMT colleges

a. Fig. 4.1

The percentage of females in Alexandria is 13% while males is 39%

The percentage of females in Sheraton is 9% while males is 16%

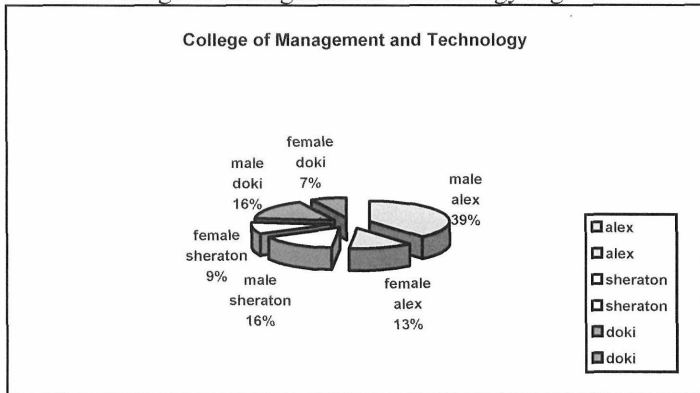
The percentage of females in Doki is 7% while males is 16%

- b. Fig. 4.2
The percentage of females in Alexandria is 6% while males is 60%
The percentage of females in Sheraton is 4% while males is 30%
- c. Fig. 4.3
The percentage of females in Alexandria is 8% while males is 24%
The percentage of females in Sheraton is 14% while males is 54%
- d. Fig. 4.4
The percentage of females in Alexandria is 0% while males is 100%
- e. Fig. 4.5
The percentage of females in Alexandria is 6% while males is 50%
The percentage of females in Sheraton is 9% while males is 34%
The percentage of females in Doki is 0% while males is 1%

The following charts illustrate the number of female/ male students in each college. (AASTMT Information

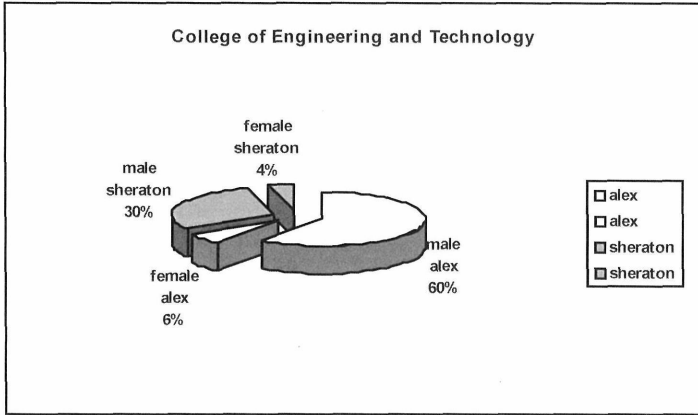
Centre 2007)

College of Management & Technology Fig. 4.1



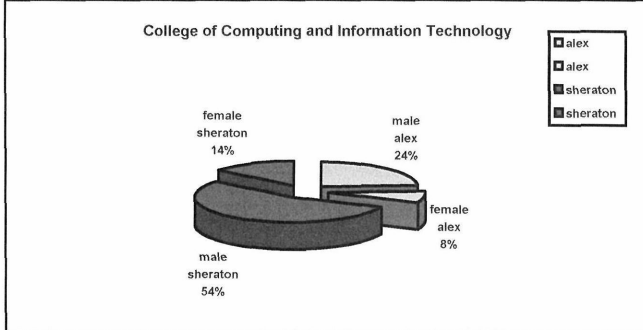
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College of Engineering & Technology Fig. 4.2



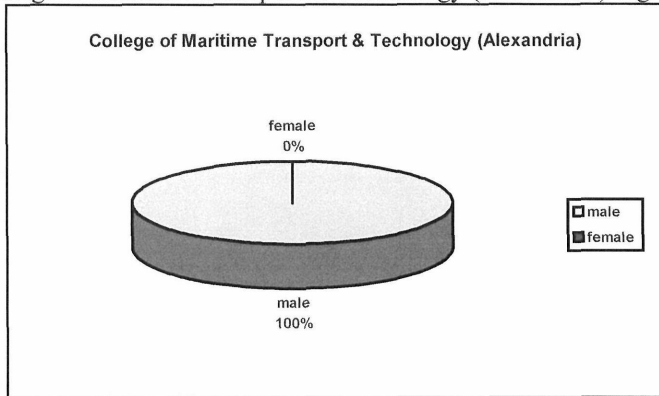
(AASTMT Information Centre 2007)

College of Computing & Information Technology Fig. 4.3



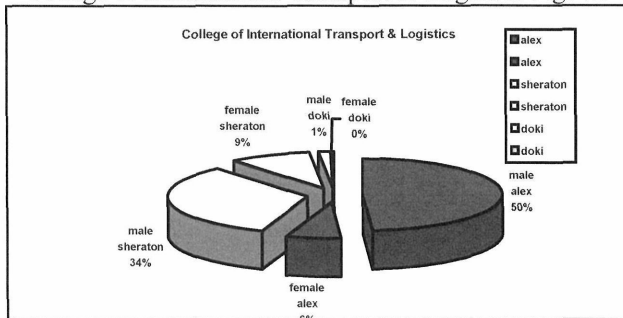
(AASTMT Information Centre 2007)

College of Maritime Transport & Technology (Alexandria) Fig. 4.4



(AASTMT Information Centre 2007)

College of International Transport & Logistics Fig. 4.5



(AASTMT Information Centre 2007)

4.1 Implications

The figures given above represent a low percentage of female students in AASTMT which might be attributed to a number of factors: first, the high tuition fees that only the middle class families can afford to pay for best education for their children; second, the open doors of national universities that competitively require minimal fees, third, and as mentioned earlier, there is a high female illiteracy rate in Egypt. Finally, and most important of all, there are many challenges confronting Egyptian working women such as a long history of male dominance, family responsibilities, short-term maternity leaves, the cultural and social stereo-types of women. Additionally, when working in the maritime sector, there is lack of sufficient relations and communication in the field due to male dominance, lack of previous experience in the maritime field, lack of necessary skills and training and lack of leadership skills and high management skills especially when reaching top management positions.

Nevertheless, AASTMT was able to set a positive example, striving forward for women's welfare in the maritime field; abiding as it were with the UN Millennium Developmental Goals (MDG) and with IMO global strategy.

September 2007 witnessed the first admission of a female student from Eritria (Djibouti) in the Navigation department .Now; we have two other students in the same Department, coming from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

AASTMT in its sincere commitment to provide the shipping industry with highly qualified personnel by integrating for the first time female students into that industry, has established the department then the College of International Transport and Logistics (ITL).

In 1996, the department of International Transport and Logistics was first established as one of three departments of the College of Maritime Transport at AASTMT (Wafaai 2008).

In 1996 there was only one female faculty member. Now female faculties constitute 60% of the members at ITL College and females reached around 20% of the graduates of the ITL College.

In 1996, The Institute of International Transport and Logistics launched a joint project between AASTMT, Norwegian Shipping Academy and NORAD (sponsor), offering a Graduate Diploma in International Transport and Logistics.

Around 25 % of total Diploma Students are Women (Arab, African and Asian women)

In 2001, The Institute has offered a Masters degree in Legal transactions and Logistics: 12% of total master graduates are women, now 31% of total master students are women.

Regional Conference on The Arab International Maritime Women in the Middle East and North Africa Annex II in the Memorandum OF Understanding (MoU) between the IMO and the Ministry of Transport of Egypt and AASTMT which endorses a 'description', an 'objective', and an 'output' for a two-day conference in Egypt for the launch of the Association of Women in the Maritime Sector (IMO MoU secretariat at AASTMT). The Regional Conference on The Arab International Maritime Women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) was held on 16th -17th July 2007, Alexandria – Egypt by AASTMT, in collaboration with IMO.

- a) The conference aim was to discuss opportunities and challenges awaiting Arab maritime women in MENA and Africa, and to promote solutions to overcome those challenges by quoting experiences from the wider maritime sector worldwide.
- b) The conference needed to explored cultural, socio-economic, legal, technological issues that might have a direct impact on the maritime profession for women in the Arab world.
- c) The Conference meant to generate awareness for gender equality in some maritime professions and would pledge governments, NGO's,

trade unions, shipping companies to enhance more female induction into the maritime industry.

- d) The conference was divided into 4 sessions which presented fifteen papers by speakers coming from 10 different Arab / Foreign countries, namely: Jordan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Palestine, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, United Kingdom, Sweden, Austria, USA

On the second day of the conference, MENA & Africa Arab International Women's Maritime Forum had been launched.

Mission

We mean to promote more female induction into the marine industry in MENA & Africa and empower women decision-making change the world in full collaboration with IMO.

- The Forum is meant to function as a lobbying and advocacy body on women's concerns at the national, regional and international levels.
- The Forum is meant to build on and deepen the IMO gender mainstreaming approach, especially when addressing such challenges as the achievement of women's full participation in leadership and decision-making in the maritime sector in most of the Arab countries.

4.3 Forum Objectives

- Laying out a strategy for maritime women empowerment.
- Establishing the necessary mechanisms that are necessary for the implementation of the given strategy.
- Conducting seminars in order to upgrade the professional skills of maritime women. Capacity building is crucial and the IMO prospective training programs aim to target all levels: decision-makers, middle management and graduate students.
- Holding an annual meeting, reporting past events and suggesting future agenda.
- Advocating the immediate participation of all Arab countries during the Arab Committee Meeting – under the auspices of the Arab League of States, 9-10 September 2007.
- Networking with other similar women empowerment forums and organizations.
- Our first seminar on the training program agenda for 2008/2009 will be held on 23rd June 08.
- Our annual meeting will be held in December 2008.

Forum Committee:

- HE Dr. Gamal ElDin Ahmed Mokhtar, President
- HE Dr. Mohamed Farghaly, Director General

- Prof. Layla El Saeed, Chair
- Mrs. Pamela Tansey, IMO Observant

5 Conclusion

In conclusion it might be true that women, especially in the developing countries, still have a long way to go, but the spark has been ignited and AASTMT has taken a few modest initiatives for women's integration in the maritime sector. However, it must be proudly admitted that without IMO support and IAMU networking these attempts would not have seen the light.

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