



Institute for Human Rights and Business



# Modern Slavery & Shipping: Exploitation at Sea

Mekong Club Webinar

24th November 2022

Photos from ISWAN photo competition and  
ITF Seafarers' Trust competitions



# Some Facts

- 55,000 cargo ships
- 5,000 container ships, 16-24 crew
- 1.5-1.8 million seafarers
- 2% women
- 9/10 top container ports in East Asia
- 60% of supply nations in South and East Asia



Over 50% of seafarers from six countries

# Regulatory Landscape

- ILO Maritime Labour Convention (MLC)
- National Legislation
- Modern Slavery Acts
- Port State Controls
- Flag State Controls
- UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)



# Modern Slavery Risks

- Restricted labour rights
- Recruitment fees & debt bondage (*ILO Forced labour Indicator 9*)
- Enforced work beyond contract expiry (*ILO Forced Labour Indicator 1*)
- Low manning levels resulting in overwork, lack of shore leave (*ILO Forced Labour Indicator 11*)
- Abandonment
- Threat of piracy



# Big ticket seafarer issues



## WORKLOAD

- Too few people
- Too much to do
- Paperwork



## SHORE LEAVE

- Port queues
- Shorter stops
- Rising costs
- Port restrictions (COVID)



## CONNECTIVITY

- MLC update
- Strong link to wellbeing



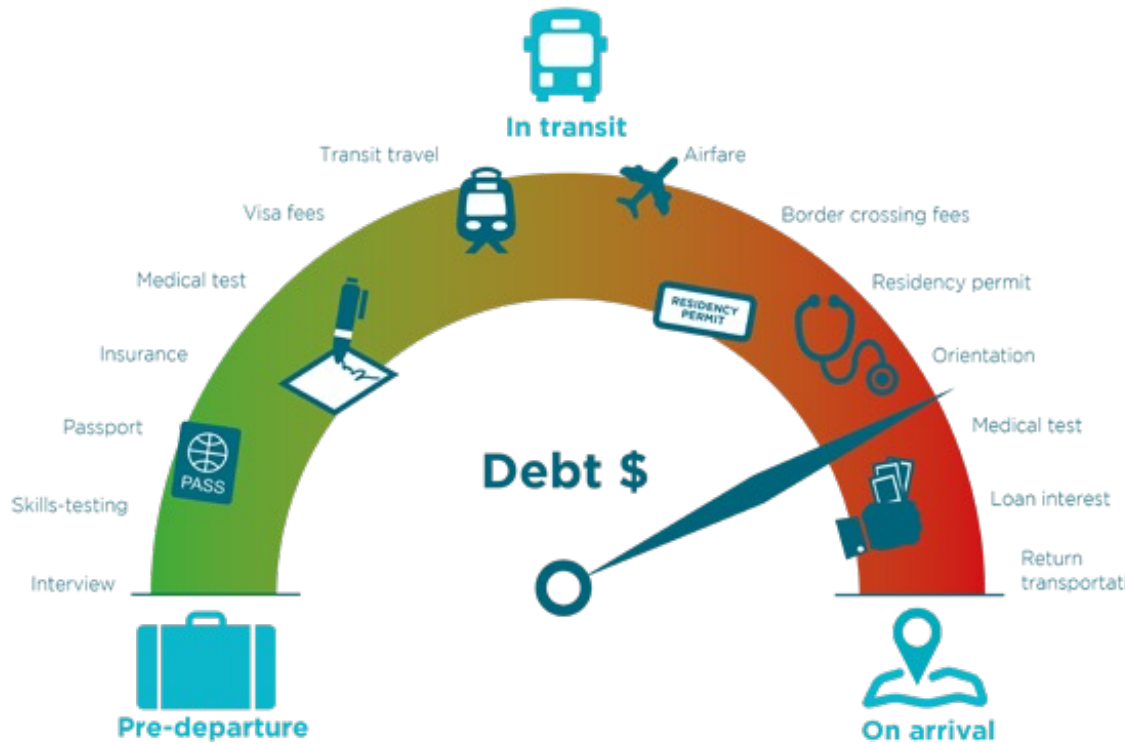
Modern slavery

## RECRUITMENT FEES

- High among Filipino, Indian, Russian, Ukrainian, Indonesian seafarers
- Up to 1 in 4 pay fees
- Corrupt crewing agencies

Huge impact on morale, health & safety

# Recruitment Fee Debt



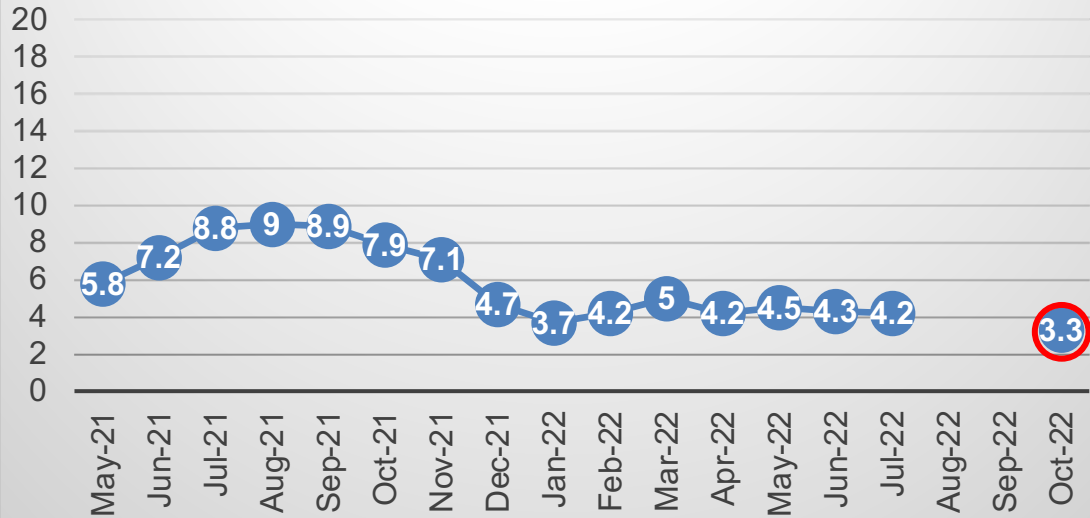
# Crew Change beyond COVID

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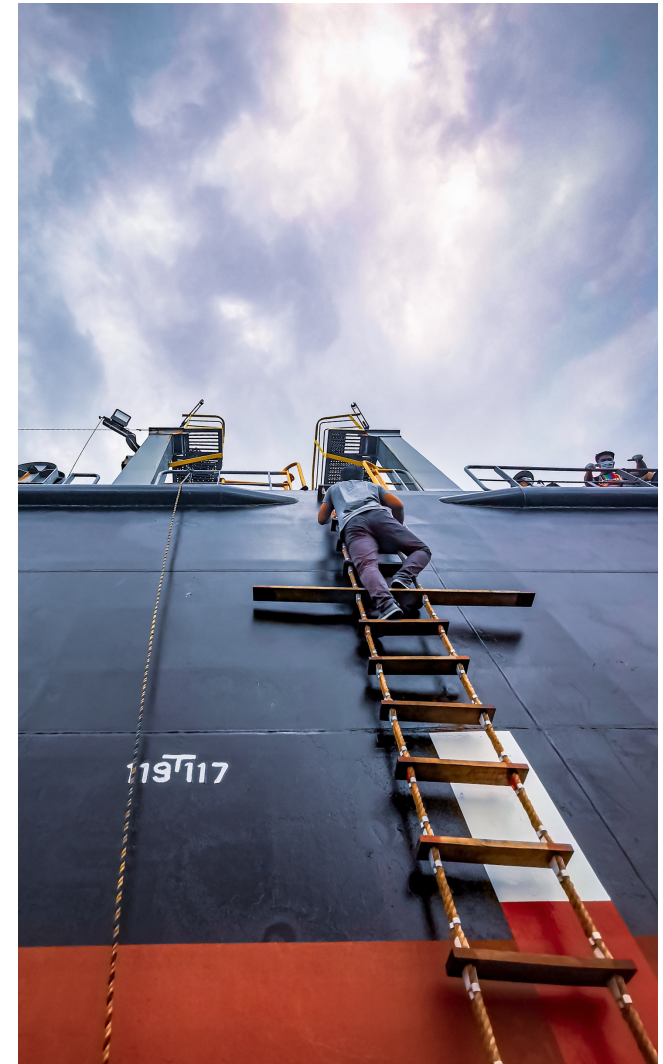


**The Neptune Declaration**  
Crew Change Indicator

## % of seafarers at sea beyond end of contract



- Data from top companies only
- 50,000 seafarers beyond contract
- 0.3% beyond legal max of 11 months





# Systemic Challenges

- Complex industry processes and ownership structure
- Many organisations' involvement
- Arcane employment systems
- Multiple jurisdictions (territorial, flag and port)
- 'Flags of Convenience' system
- Poor regulatory enforcement
- Lack of visibility owing to distance from land
- All of the above compounded by COVID



# What can you do?

Find out:

- Which carriers do you use?

Ask them:

- Modern Slavery Statement?
- Ships covered by MLC? CBA?
- Seafarers' Code of Conduct? (MLC++)
- Self-assessment data?
- Contract clauses?



More than half of all Japanese-owned ships are registered in Panama



Almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the world fleet is flagged in a country not of beneficial ownership (UNCTAD)

FoC associated with weak labour, environmental regulations

# Where can you find out more?

## IHRB's Responsible Shipping Dialogue:

- [francesca.fairbairn@ihrb.org](mailto:francesca.fairbairn@ihrb.org)

## Mission to Seafarers:

- [stephen.miller@mtsmail.org](mailto:stephen.miller@mtsmail.org)

## ITF's supply chain '[health checks](#)':

- [seafarershrdd@itf.org.uk](mailto:seafarershrdd@itf.org.uk)

## Indirect Spend Alliance

- [ohurrey@getgalvanised.com](mailto:ohurrey@getgalvanised.com)

## Delivering on Seafarers' Rights [Code of Conduct](#):

- [francesca.fairbairn@ihrb.org](mailto:francesca.fairbairn@ihrb.org)

## UN Global Compact's [Crew Change Guidance](#)

