

World Maritime University

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Beatric Lacost

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**African sailors are learning new skills at a maritime training institute in Sweden**

# MARITIME TRAINING: UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH



For the last two decades, the hazards of oil spills polluting the seas have been splashed across the headlines. First there was the *Torrey Canyon* that sank in the English Channel, spilling 120,000 tonnes of crude oil. Then in 1978, the supertanker *Amoco Cadiz* ran aground off the coast of Brittany in France, spilling 223,000 tonnes of light petroleum.

Just recently a new threat to the marine environment has again put the problem in the media spotlight. The *Mont Louis*, a French ship, capsized in the English Channel after colliding with a ferry and 450 tonnes of highly corrosive, radio-active uranium gas in 30 containers sank with it.

Nine out of every 10 accidents at sea are a result of human error and not, as one might think, due to material deficiencies or bad weather. Supertankers carrying 500,000 tonnes now criss-cross sea lanes bearing potentially dangerous cargoes. Equipment both on ships and in port and loading terminals is more sophisticated and complex.

This is why the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), a United Nations agency based in London, decided to set up a unique institution – the only academic centre devoted to the training of senior maritime personnel. It is located in the harbour city of Malmo, at the southernmost tip of Sweden, with easy access to other European shipping facilities. It is called the World Maritime University.

It could just as well have been called the University of the South, not only because of its geographical situation and relatively temperate climate, but because the overall majority of its students come from the southern hemisphere.

Abraham Masawi, a Tanzanian student at the university, is one of the

150 attending courses there. He is in his early 30s and typical of the students at the university. "Since the inauguration of the World Maritime University in July 1983, there have been two intakes. I joined in March 1984 and before that I was working in the Ministry of Transport and Communications in the shipping department as a shipping officer."

Abraham Masawi is on a two-year general maritime administration course, at the end of which he hopes to obtain the diploma of Master of Science in Maritime Administration. "We are all university graduates here," he explains. "I was trained as an economist and the two other Tanzanians studying at the same time as me were trained as a lawyer and as an engineer."

Masawi said that learning to cope with new technologies and improving maritime safety has become a crucial issue nowadays: "Tanzania has two shipping companies, one the coastal shipping company operating with nearby countries such as Kenya, Mozambique and the Seychelles and a joint venture company with China dealing with ocean-going vessels. And of course we have inland traffic with three big lakes – Lake Victoria, Lake Tanganyika and Lake Nyasa."

Students at the World Maritime University come from 59 different countries – from Vanuatu to Madagascar. Almost half, 60 in all, are Africans. Every coastal country except for Angola and Libya has students at the university – and some landlocked countries with an important lake system, such as Malawi, also send graduates to be trained in Malmo.

The university is an imposing four-storey building overlooking the sea and the roof has been arranged just like the bridge of a ship with radars,

simulators and automatic plotting aids.

The rector of the university, Dr Solve Arvedson, is a Swede with long experience in training who was himself a seafarer for many years. "We train students in general maritime administration, safety administration, maritime education and technical management of shipping companies. The maximum student body is about 150 students. We will be taking 75 new students each year," he said.

Crews on merchant navy ships are most often a mix of nationalities. In developing countries, harbour masters, ship surveyors, maritime accident investigators, teachers, technical managers of shipping companies and other key figures upon whom a nation's shipping industry depends are mostly expatriates. Countries that are in the process of developing their merchant fleets lack the trained personnel needed to fill posts at this level and they lack the means to train their own nationals.

The World Maritime University runs on an annual budget of \$4m – a fraction of what it costs to buy a moderately sized cargo ship. Sweden provides \$1m and the UN Development Programme, Norway and the Commonwealth Secretariat provide \$1m between them. The rest comes from IMO states who have made contributions both in terms of money and equipment, as well as private companies and individuals.

The university is at a very early stage and still has teething problems. Also students going back home to train seafarers and administrators and implement IMO regulations may well encounter some obstacles. "There maybe a lack of funds and a lack of awareness, but I'll do my very best," says Abraham Masawi ●

Beatric Lacost