

# Nigerian National Strategy

## Occupational Health & Safety at Sea

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A Comprehensive Policy Framework for  
Protecting Nigeria's Maritime Workforce



# Nigeria's Maritime Sector

*The backbone of trade — and a workforce at risk*

**80%+**

of Nigeria's international  
trade moves by sea

**1,200+**

lives lost on waterways  
between 2018–2023

**17/mo**

average fatalities from  
boat mishaps nationwide

Nigeria's seaports — Lagos, Onne, Warri, and Calabar — are critical trade gateways for West Africa. Yet the maritime workforce faces mounting occupational risks: **prolonged voyages with limited healthcare, hazardous working conditions, inadequate welfare systems, and enforcement gaps in safety regulation.**

# Current Maritime Safety Challenges

1

## **Prolonged Voyages & Isolation**

Extended time at sea with limited healthcare access, social isolation, and mental health deterioration

2

## **Hazardous Working Conditions**

Heavy machinery, toxic cargoes, extreme weather, confined spaces, and noise exposure aboard vessels

3

## **Inadequate Seafarer Welfare**

Poor salaries, unfair recruitment by manning agents, and limited sea-time berths for MAN Oron cadets despite growing enrolment

4

## **Weak Enforcement & Inspection**

Insufficient port state control, incomplete domestication of international conventions, and regulatory gaps

# Legal & Regulatory Framework

## Nigerian Legislation

### **NIMASA Act 2007**

Establishes NIMASA as apex maritime regulatory body for safety, labour, and shipping administration

### **Marine and Blue Economy Policy 2025**

FEC-approved 10-year roadmap (2025–2034) for sustainable maritime growth, port development, and blue economy governance

### **Merchant Shipping Act 2007**

Legislative framework for maritime safety standards, seafarer certification, and vessel registration

### **Cabotage Act 2003**

Governs coastal and inland shipping to promote indigenous shipping capacity and local content

## International Conventions

### **Maritime Labour Convention 2006**

The ‘Seafarers’ Bill of Rights’ — Nigeria ratified in 2013; endorsed amendments to 8 MLC codes in 2025

### **SOLAS Convention**

International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea — minimum safety construction and equipment standards

### **STCW Convention 1978**

Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers — competency framework

*In April 2025, Nigeria endorsed amendments to 8 MLC 2006 codes — covering anti-discrimination, seafarer key worker status, and anti-harassment protections.*

# NIMASA's Role & Mandate

Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency — apex regulatory body since 2006



## Maritime Safety & Security

Enforce safety standards, conduct vessel inspections, ensure compliance with SOLAS and international safety codes



## Labour Standards & Rights

Administer MLC 2006, certify seafarers, protect workers' rights, and review dock labour standards



## International Engagement

Represent Nigeria at IMO Council and ILO, domesticate conventions, align with global best practices



## Capacity & Training

Oversee MAN Oron and other training institutions, fund seafarer competency development through NSDP

# Maritime Labour Convention 2006

Five Titles Governing Seafarer Rights — Nigeria's Compliance Roadmap



## 2025 Update

Nigeria endorsed amendments to 8 MLC codes at the 5th ILO Special Tripartite Committee meeting in Geneva. Key amendments address seafarer anti-discrimination protections, key worker designation during crises, enhanced shore-based welfare access, and new standards against shipboard violence, harassment, and bullying.

# Key Occupational Hazards at Sea



## Physical

Heavy machinery, slippery decks, extreme temperatures, noise, confined space entry



## Biological

Communicable diseases, limited isolation facilities, inadequate onboard medical care



## Chemical

Toxic cargo exposure, fuel fumes, asbestos in older vessels, cleaning agents



## Psychosocial

Prolonged isolation, fatigue, harassment, bullying, and mental health decline



## Environmental

Severe weather, piracy in Gulf of Guinea, oil spill exposure during operations



## Ergonomic

Repetitive tasks, engine vibration, poor workstation design, manual handling

# Strategic Pillars for Maritime OHS

**01**

## Regulatory Strengthening

Domesticate remaining international conventions, enhance port state control, and close enforcement gaps through institutional reform

**02**

## Preventive Health Framework

Mandatory pre-employment medicals, routine health assessments, onboard mental health support, and telemedicine for vessels at sea

**03**

## Safety Culture & Awareness

Industry-wide safety campaigns, updated dockworker minimum standards, and comprehensive incident reporting and analysis systems

**04**

## Labour Rights & Welfare

Fair wages, anti-harassment policies, shore-based welfare at all major ports, repatriation guarantees, and recruitment oversight

**05**

## Technology & Innovation

Digital vessel monitoring systems, automated safety alerts, data-driven risk assessment, and AI-powered maritime surveillance tools

# Training & Capacity Building



## Maritime Academy of Nigeria, Oron

STCW-approved courses: survival techniques, firefighting, ship security, medical first aid, and 20+ specialised programmes



## NIMASA–WMU Partnership

Renewed 4-year MoU with World Maritime University in Malmö for advanced training and institutional capacity building



## Seafarers Development Programme

NSDP sponsors cadets through maritime education — though graduates report challenges securing critical sea-time placements



## STCW-F Ratification

FG approved ratification of STCW-F 1995 for fishing vessel personnel, expanding training scope beyond commercial shipping

# Implementation Framework

## Key Stakeholders and Their Roles

### **NIMASA**

Lead regulatory body — enforcement, certification, vessel inspection, and convention domestication

### **Fed. Min. of Marine & Blue Economy**

Policy oversight, international representation at IMO/ILO, and inter-agency coordination

### **IMO / ILO**

Technical guidance, capacity building support, and international convention framework development

### **Maritime Workers Union (MWUN)**

Seafarer and dockworker advocacy, collective bargaining, and welfare monitoring across ports

### **Port Operators (STOAN)**

Workplace safety implementation, dockworker training programmes, and operational compliance

### **MAN Oron & Training Partners**

STCW-compliant seafarer training, simulator-based safety courses, and international partnership development

# Recent Achievements & Milestones

2025



## Return to IMO Council

Nigeria secured re-election to the International Maritime Organization Council — a landmark diplomatic achievement

2025



## MLC Code Amendments Endorsed

Endorsed 8 MLC 2006 amendments covering anti-discrimination, key worker status, welfare, and anti-harassment

2025



## Dockworker Safety Standards

Launched reviewed Minimum Standards for Dock Labour — declaring workplace safety a fundamental right

2026



## WMU Partnership Renewed

Signed 4-year MoU with World Maritime University for advanced capacity development in Malmö, Sweden

2026



## MAN Oron ISO Certification

Maritime Academy of Nigeria, Oron awarded dual ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 21001:2025 certification by SON

# Recommendations & Way Forward

- 1 Accelerate domestication of all ratified international maritime conventions into Nigerian law
- 2 Establish a National Maritime OHS Database for real-time incident tracking and risk analytics
- 3 Expand shore-based welfare facilities at all major Nigerian ports with mental health services
- 4 Expand MAN Oron's training capacity with dedicated training vessels and increased sea-time berths
- 5 Mandate comprehensive anti-harassment and anti-bullying policies aboard all Nigerian-flagged vessels
- 6 Create a dedicated Maritime Health Unit within NIMASA for preventive health programme oversight

***"The safety of workers at sea is a right, not a privilege."***

*— Dr. Dayo Mobereola, Director General, NIMASA*