



**GULF OF GUINEA MARITIME INSTITUTE-  
INTERNATIONAL MARITIME SECURITY WORKING  
GROUP ONLINE SERIES**

**TOPIC: DEVELOPING BLUE CAREERS TO FOSTER  
STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF GULF OF GUINEA  
MARITIME ECONOMIES**

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## Introduction

The African continent is poised to sustainably develop and manage a vibrant blue economy to stimulate growth of its diverse economies. Seventy percent of the continent's countries have territorial coastlines with vast areas of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), offering an immense wealth of untapped resources. The blue economy, with its varied components including fisheries, tourism and maritime transport – and emerging sectors such as offshore renewable energy, aquaculture, seabed industries and marine biotechnology—present opportunities for the African continent to reap maximum benefits of utilizing its available resources for sustainable economic development.

As captured in different national and regional development strategies (such as the African Integrated Maritime Strategy, Africa's Blue Economy Policy handbook and Ghana's National Integrated Maritime Strategy) the blue economy if developed properly, promises to catalyse the continent's socioeconomic growth. The AU 2063 agenda designed to achieve Africa's socioeconomic targets for the future, identifies the blue economy as a significant strategic accelerator for the continent's transformation and sustainable development.

In spite of the policy directions and promising opportunities, developing Africa's blue economy is limited by a number of challenges including maritime insecurity and human capital and financial resources deficit. Regarding human capital, it is critical to invest in people as part of the preliminary actions to harness the employment and development benefits of investing in the various blue economy sectors. A thriving blue economy will involve developing and implementing concrete actions to plug in training and skill gaps, tackle unemployment challenges and raise the awareness of maritime jobs and career opportunities to address the issues of restlessness among young people inland which fuels high incidents of maritime crimes at sea.

Developing Blue Careers to Foster Strategic Development of Gulf of Guinea Maritime Economies event was organised to provide a platform for regional and national stakeholders to identify and discuss comprehensive strategies and concrete actions that promote the development of new skills and blue careers for Africa's maritime industry. The panellists for the event included: Dr. Douglas Wallace, President, Development of Ocean Technical Capacity for African

Nations (DOTCAN), Canada, Mrs. Yolanda Morales, Instituto Para el Crecimiento Sostenible de la Empresa (ICSEM), Spain, B. Olunfumilayo Olotu Mrs, Port Manager, Lagos Port Complex, Nigeria, and Mr. Felix Addo-Yobo, Policy Development Director, National Development Planning Commission, Ghana.

## **Blue Careers for Economic Development – Regional Perspective**

The Gulf of Guinea Region spans about 6000 km of coastline and generates an estimated Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 950 billion dollars. The Region is undoubtedly important and contributes significantly to the economic development of Gulf of Guinea economies. The region also makes up for about 70% of Africa's oil production. Recently, the Region has been witnessing series of deliberations and agreements largely focusing on the development and sustenance of ocean governance. Although there are a number of existing hard and soft infrastructure to support economic activities, not much can be said for the human capital development agenda which is an important derivation of utility for the Region.

Over the past decade, the Gulf of Guinea region and coastlines of West Africa have been impacted massively by global processes; both of climate changes, fishing pressures and quite recently offshore oil and gas development with issues relating largely to maritime security and the environment. At the same time, the Region houses enormous marine resources and presents varied opportunities for sustainable economic development and support for livelihoods for coastal communities. The current situation requires industry: including state and non-state actors to explore external linkages and cooperation with regional and international partners and exchange ideas for economic development and prosperity. The concept of blue careers for strategic development of Gulf of Guinea maritime economies introduces some premises:

- a. Global pressures require technological solutions for adaptation and mitigation.
- b. Sustainable blue economies will require technology and knowledge to seize opportunity and avoid harm.

- c. Africa's blue economy has potential value and significance partly because of demographics and technology leapfrogging as seen largely in the areas of finance and healthcare.
- d. There can be no blue economy without maritime security.
- e. The blue economy will be largely driven by the private sector with various governments creating an enabling environment and conditions. This idea will require a joined-up approach and new approaches to training and multisectoral cooperation.

Innovation and business development, which is essential to blue economy, increases when global pipelines of knowledge exchanges exist through international partnerships and cooperation.

### **Development of Ocean Technical Capacity with African Nations (DOTCAN)**

DOTCAN is envisaged as a Canada-West Africa Cooperation which grew out of the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference held in 2018, Nairobi, Kenya. This conference was co-sponsored by Canada with commitments made in the implementation of technical assistance, capacity building to Small Islands Developing States, support for private sector to build knowledge based ocean sharing economy and partnerships to address key challenges and pursue opportunities. The commitments made by Canada falls largely with other international agreements and recommendations including special reports from The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Inter-governmental Ocean Commission (IOC) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Some of the commitments also falls within the context of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030). Canada and West Africa share a number of commonalities in the areas of:

- a. Cultural ties with a long history of interactions between Africa-Nova Scotian community and West Africa, members of the La Francophonie, Commonwealth and a growing and vibrant African diaspora in Canada.
- b. Shared multilateral partnerships within West Africa, ECOWAS, AU, AfCFTA, and internationally German, Spain, France and the EU.

- c. Existing cooperation through pre-existing structures and institutions; regional, private, public and non-profit partners.

DOTCAN envisions possibilities in three strategic focal areas: Technical and Vocational Education in Ocean Technology and Business, West African Sustainable Ocean Business Hub, and West African Maritime Security and Maritime Domain Awareness Training Program. DOTCAN is continuously building a network of partnerships across the Atlantic Ocean. Specifically on Technical and Vocational Education in Ocean Technology and Business, it is working closely with Initiatives for Africa on development of business skills and entrepreneurship and also exploring partnership with the West African Science Service Centre on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use to develop a training program on ocean technology and business with partners in West Africa and Canada. There has been tremendous emphasis on ocean careers in Canada, and especially on how research is linked with ocean business development. The Canadian government is also looking to connect partners with West Africa on ocean technology and business development.

### **The MarENet Project – A blue career development project in the Atlantic**

MarENet is composed of an interdisciplinary consortium of 8 partners that has been strategically designed according to their expertise and knowledge in the field of the blue economy. The consortium is composed of training centres, representatives of the port economic sectors and public authorities that collect a representative sample of the maritime port ecosystem of the Atlantic frontage. The project seeks to promote and strengthen cooperation between maritime business and academia to enhance the visibility of training and professional opportunities in the blue economy sector in Europe. The network has developed digital tools to connect those wishing to develop or further enhance their professional opportunities in the blue economy sector. The tools are:

- a. Careers
- b. Courses
- c. Jobs

These tools also help outline existing blue career pathways for key roles, search existing training opportunities from academic and industry providers, and showcase vacant roles and internships which exists in France, Ireland and Spain.

## **Blue Careers - The Case of Nigerian's Maritime Industry**

Inspiring the future of Africa's maritime is critical for creating more awareness amongst young people and providing the opportunities for inspirational career paths to be shared and raise the aspirations of the next generation. In this regard, three key issues are identified as follows:

- a. Effective production will largely depend on the quality of available manpower.
- b. Actions to foster careers growth and strengthen our human capital are important.
- c. Securing the collective heritage with the Gulf of Guinea Region will require an improved level of awareness of the blue economy and career opportunities.

In Nigeria, several programs are ongoing to raise awareness on careers and business opportunities in the ocean. The Ocean Ambassadors Foundation, which is led by a woman, focuses at creating awareness of available ocean career opportunities for young females. The aim of the initiative is to get young girls to appreciate and develop interest in ocean careers choices and business. The group organises quizzes, competitions and excursions for students. Their work is pivotal to the careers choices teenagers eventually make and it has been impactful so far. More of such initiatives should be promoted to encourage the evolving labour force in the Gulf of Guinea countries to consider and explore alternative ocean career choices. Academic institutions also have an important role to play in producing qualified labour for the emerging blue economy sectors. Collaborations with industry and international partners will be essential for idea exchanges and shared expertise.

Nigeria's Maritime Academy is designed to improve the quality of education such that seafarers from the academy are of international standards. The academy houses a simulation centre with three simulators- multifunctional, Full Bridge Ship, Manoeuvring and Full Bridge Engine Room Simulators. Platforms for collaboration between academia and industry have also been established including the creation of several maritime studies departments across many Nigerian universities. The Petroleum Training Institute, and the Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research (NIOMR) also offers programs for the marine sector. The private sector is also increasing its participation in maritime activities in a bid to develop blue careers and take advantage of the opportunities in the industry.

The Nigerian Port Authority also have a partnership with Lloyds Maritime Academy (LMA) to provide professional development, education and training in technical, logistics, finance, security, insurance, legal and trade issues affecting maritime activities. The National Seafarers Development Program is another blue jobs agenda for Nigeria's youth where these students are sent to foreign institutions to train as seafarers.

The recent IMO call for female inclusivity in the maritime industry has been embraced in Nigeria with more women taking up roles in different sectors.

### **National Development Planning Commission, Ghana**

The National Planning Development Commission of Ghana acknowledges the marine sector as an important contributor to the country's socio-economic development. Unfortunately, majority of Ghanaians have limited knowledge and appreciation of the sector's significance to the national economy. The current situation has consequently made it difficult for people to recognise the wealth of the ocean and business opportunities. Ghana's marine sector promises a myriad of opportunities across various ocean industries, especially offshore commercial activities, fisheries and maritime tourism.

Ghana also recognises the Sustainable Development Goal 14 as an important linkage to the development of the marine sector and has plans to develop and strengthen governance institutions for the development of its marine industry, starting with effective management of marine resources.

## **Technical Approach to Blue Economy Development**

The blue economy largely focuses on a holistic approach to coordinating economic activities in the ocean and takes into consideration social perspectives to generate growth in all market activities that depend intrinsically on the sea. Inherently, it is important to promote innovation in different blue economy sectors to support sustainable growth. To realise this, professional market labour skills must respond to the needs and challenges of emerging blue economy sectors. Innovation is also essential for an all-inclusive growth of the blue economy. Reinforcing the concept of blue skills will require states to adapt training, skills and knowledge of managers and technicians to develop their occupation in the maritime- fishing field with respect to social, environmental, technological and industrial factors. Adopting innovation also means that public and private sector, as well academia and research centres must be committed to the professional development of works for competency and competitiveness to promote economic growth in all sectors.

A blue career strategy will require cooperation on capacity building, skills transfer and implementation of new technological solutions for socio-economic development of the region, local communities and largely the blue economy sectors.

## **Recommendations for Developing Blue Careers in Africa**

- a. Ghana and other African countries should look at developing a database of career opportunities by conducting a survey on the available careers options and opportunities in the maritime and blue economy sector. Nigeria has initiated active plans to undertake such initiatives.
- b. African and Ghanaian students receiving any maritime training should be encouraged to undertake internships during studies to understand what career opportunities are available in the sector.
- c. More investments and public-private partnerships should be directed to the fisheries sector to make it more attractive for investors and young people.



- d. Maritime and blue economy advocacy programs should be promoted further to get the attention of the political class and policy makers.