

CASE STUDY 7

# Assist a Seafarer Subjected to Bullying and Harassment on Board

## My Mind Matters

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A Filipino third engineer contacted the helpline team with a bullying and harassment problem on board a container vessel. He told the team that the Chief Engineer frequently made negative comments about him, shouted at the lower ranks, physically and verbally abused members of the crew and asked them to perform unsafe and life-threatening duties.

On one occasion, the Chief Engineer insisted on ordering the exhaust gas boiler to be cleaned despite the temperature being extremely high inside. Concerned for the safety of his fellow crew who were being ordered to do the work, the third engineer suggested that they reschedule the job or the crew would be in danger of suffocation. The Chief Engineer became aggressive and violent, pushing and shouting at the third engineer and threatening him with dismissal.

The helpline team created a safe space where the seafarer could feel secure to express his concerns. They also provided emotional support and guidance until the problem was resolved. Those subjected to bullying and harassment often don't see themselves as victims; they tend to feel guilty and blame themselves. The team reassured the seafarer that he was doing the right thing trying to protect himself and the rest of the crew against their abuser.

The team discussed various options with the seafarer as to how the problem could be addressed. He discussed them with the other crew involved and they decided to proceed with the internal complaint procedure on board. They prepared an official letter addressed to the company and talked to the Captain about the problem. The Captain responded positively and contacted the shipowner and company about the Chief Engineer, as well as meeting the crew to discuss the problem. As a result of the crew's actions, the Chief Engineer changed his behaviour and stopped all forms of verbal and physical abuse. Regular meetings were also scheduled with the Captain to follow up on the problem.

Source: International Seafarer's Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN)

