



**SeafarerHelp**  
*The lifeline for seafarers*



## Annual Review 2015

*SeafarerHelp is part of the International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network.  
This review incorporates all the services provided by the SeafarerHelp team.*



# Contents

Chairman's foreword .....	3
The SeafarerHelp team and how we work .....	4
2015 overview .....	5
SeafarerHelp services .....	6
Number of cases .....	7
Issues raised by seafarers .....	8
Rank .....	10
Case study 1 .....	11
Seafarer nationalities .....	14
Countries seafarers contacted us from .....	16
Case study 2 .....	16
Flag states .....	17
Organisations we refer to .....	18
Case study 3 .....	18
Methods of contact .....	20
Feedback from seafarers about SeafarerHelp .....	22
Conclusion .....	23



## Chairman's foreword

by Per Gullestrup

*Chairman: International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN)*

The introduction of the Maritime Labour Conventions 2006 (MLC 2006) was a positive step for the maritime industry in that it was a strong statement of intent and it clearly explained the minimum standards that seafarers should expect from their employers. Whilst we know that a lot of ship owners do provide good conditions for seafarers we also know that in 2015, in spite of the MLC 2006, the SeafarerHelp team saw another increase in the number of seafarers contacting them with problems relating to their employment. We all know that working at sea is a difficult job but it underlines the fact that we need to work in partnership to identify where the terms of the MLC 2006 are not being met and to hold those responsible to account in order to improve the lives of seafarers.

As part of developing and improving services I am pleased to say that in 2015 ISWAN and the SeafarerHelp team played an important role in raising awareness about social isolation and the mental health issues experienced by seafarers by commissioning and publicising a research article into the problem. As a result these issues are now being discussed within the maritime industry and we are developing our services to meet such needs more effectively. I would add that in August 2015 ISWAN took over the Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response Programme (MPHRP) and the SeafarerHelp team are providing support to the survivors of piracy as part of their normal service. As the breadth of the work of the SeafarerHelp team is getting wider, to meet the changing needs of seafarers, our training programmes are also becoming broader and more comprehensive. The team took part in over 100 individual training sessions in 2015.

Our services are free to all seafarers and their families where ever they are in the world and these services are only available because of the continuing support of our funders, The TK Foundation, the ITF Seafarers Trust and Seafarers UK. I would therefore like to say a special thank you to our funders in recognition of their commitment to seafarers all around the world.

I would also like to acknowledge the backing that ISWAN and SeafarerHelp have received over many years from our members and partners, which includes National Welfare Boards, Faith Organisations, International Chamber of Shipping, Trade Associations, Trade Unions, as well as shipping and other companies. We firmly believe that only by working in partnership with all parts of the maritime industry can we effectively improve the welfare of seafarers around the world.

In closing I am very proud of the SeafarerHelp service and the fact that it has helped tens of thousands of seafarers over the years. I would therefore like to say a sincere thank you to the SeafarerHelp team who work 24 hours a day 365 days a year to provide a multi lingual service that is greatly valued by seafarers and their families. I look forward to further development of our services and more partnership working to improve the welfare of seafarers in 2016.

# The SeafarerHelp team and how we work

*“The SeafarerHelp service is confidential and free for seafarers and their families of any nationality or religion anywhere in the world.”*

The SeafarerHelp team comprises 10 workers each of whom speak English and one or more other languages fluently. The team provides a multilingual helpline service to seafarers and their families 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Between them the team members speak about 11 languages fluently, including most of those used by seafarers, such as Filipino, Hindi, Russian, Mandarin Chinese and Arabic. They can also communicate effectively in several other languages and dialects. The SeafarerHelp team work from the ISWAN offices which are in Croydon, south London in the United Kingdom.

The SeafarerHelp service is confidential and free for seafarers and their families of any nationality or religion and they can contact us from anywhere in the world. When a seafarer contacts us, we log the case details and we call that the initial contact. Any further contacts from that seafarer or other person about the same issue are logged individually and are called successive contacts. In this way we can easily follow the history of each case we deal with. In this annual review, all figures relate to initial contacts, unless specifically stated otherwise.

The SeafarerHelp helpline service is available through a range of media, including telephone, email, Facebook, Live Chat, Skype, Twitter and SMS text. The contacts the team receive vary considerably in complexity from simple enquiries for information, such as the address of a seafarers' centre in a particular port, to difficult and emotional cases where seafarers have been injured or even killed while at sea.

The work of the team is extremely varied and they never know if the next contact is going to be a simple enquiry or a complex call from a seafarer who is trying to cope with a family crisis. In order to equip the team to deal with such a wide range of issues we put a great deal of effort into their training which includes giving them a good appreciation of counselling and how best to provide emotional support to seafarers and their families. In recent years ISWAN has played an important role in raising awareness of the mental health issues that seafarers face such as social isolation,

depression, stress and anxiety. This is an area of our work that ISWAN and the SeafarerHelp team will continue to champion and develop services to meet the needs of seafarers.

It is a rule that we will only refer cases to a particular organisation with the seafarer's consent. We are aware that some seafarers are concerned that their employment prospects might be harmed if we refer them to a particular union, or they may be of a specific faith and will not want to be referred to a minister from a different faith group. For every situation we do our best to balance the individual's needs and requirements to achieve a positive outcome for them.

The SeafarerHelp team answer information and many other requests themselves. However, where there are issues about breach of contract or where there is a need for someone to actually visit the seafarer, we refer those cases to our colleagues in specialist agencies that are in the port or country where the seafarer is located. In this way, we help the seafarer receive the most appropriate support to meet their need.

The agencies that we work with are mostly specialists in the maritime sector and have shore-based personnel in ports around the world. This enables them to give valuable, direct personal support to seafarers that have a problem. It is therefore not surprising that most of our referrals are to the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), local unions and port welfare providers such as the Apostleship of the Sea, Mission to Seafarers, the Sailors Society, and the Deutsche Seemannsmission.

The team are proactive and flexible so where these maritime specialists do not have a presence in the country the seafarer is located in, we will contact other organisations such as embassies, consulates, port authorities and medical service providers in order to gain assistance for the seafarer.

We are very happy to work in partnership with a wide range of organisations and gratefully recognise the help that they provide to both seafarers and the SeafarerHelp team.

# 2015 overview

## In 2015 the SeafarerHelp team:

- ☎ Dealt with 2,240 new cases, involving 9,786 seafarers and their families. In addition, we received a further 2,774 successive contacts.
- ☎ Helped seafarers of 86 different nationalities.
- ☎ Provided assistance free of charge 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, to seafarers and their families in their own language as required.
- ☎ The most common reasons for seafarers contacting us were: requests for information, wages not being paid, seeking employment, problems over repatriation, contract problems and health issues.
- ☎ The contacts we received came from 129 countries, including 31 from Commonwealth countries.
- ☎ Seafarers from 19 European Union countries contacted the team during the year.

## Caseload review

- ☎ Compared to 2014 there was a 16.6% increase in the number of new cases and an increase of 26.9% in the number of seafarers assisted.
- ☎ On average 6.1 new cases and 7.6 successive contacts for existing cases came to the SeafarerHelp team every day.
- ☎ The average number of seafarers involved in each case was four.
- ☎ Female seafarers accounted for 3.95% of those who contacted SeafarerHelp, where gender was known.
- ☎ Of the 86 nationalities assisted, the largest numbers of seafarers were Filipinos, followed by Indians, Ukrainians and Russians.
- ☎ We were contacted by seafarers of 18 different Commonwealth nationalities – the largest number were Indian, followed by British, Pakistani, Nigerian, Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan.
- ☎ Although many cases involved more than one referral agency, we referred most contacts to the ITF Co-ordinators/ Inspectors, followed by the ITF Seafarers Support team, recruitment websites, the Apostleship of the Sea and the Mission to Seafarers.

## Presentation and trends

In the SeafarerHelp Review 2014 for the first time we provided and compared annual data going back to 2011. This proved to be very informative as it clearly showed the trends since 2011 on a year by year basis. Since it was so useful we have decided that we will standardise and always provide a detailed explanation of the data for the year just passed together with a five year comparison of trends.

# The SeafarerHelp services

**Promoting SeafarerHelp.** Throughout 2015 we continued to make good use of social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, to promote our services directly to seafarers. By the end of the year there were 319,000 likes on the SeafarerHelp Facebook page, mainly from the Philippines and India. We also continued to distribute our SeafarerHelp posters and cards together with other ISWAN publications. As a result there was another significant increase in the number of contacts coming to SeafarerHelp during the year.

**Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response Programme (MPHRP)** In August 2015 the service provided by the MPHRP was transferred to ISWAN and a new Programme Manager was appointed. Under ISWAN the MPHRP will continue to provide an important personal service to seafarers, and their families, who have been the victims of piracy. The SeafarerHelp team, through its 24 hour per day facility and multi lingual skills is playing an important role in the provision of the MPHRP service.

**Diversifying our funding arrangements.** In order to diversify our funding and to be less reliant on grants we are continuing to explore other opportunities to generate income for ISWAN and SeafarerHelp. As a charity we cannot directly provide contract services for other organisations but in 2012 we set up a subsidiary company, Seafarers' Welfare Assistance Network Ltd (SWAN Ltd) that can. SWAN Ltd currently provides 24 hour per day, 365 day per year helplines for the ITF and the Nautilus International trade union and both services are working well. We are at present in communication with other trade unions with a view to providing similar services to them.

**Training.** The provision of good training for the SeafarerHelp team is of paramount importance to ensure that the service they provide is of excellent quality. In 2015 there were over 100 individual training sessions covering a range of different subjects including the MLC 2006, seafarer's certification, counselling skills awareness, four different courses for call centre staff, training on the confidential reporting of hazardous incidents (CHIRP) and port visits amongst others. The significant investment that we have made in training is reflected in the professionalism and care with which the team handle cases.

**Remote working.** Following the upgrade of our IT and telephone systems to fibre optic in 2014 ISWAN now has the opportunity to work remotely in the event of a major incident that prevents us using our offices. Although this initiative was driven by our business recovery strategy it has also meant that our team can now work overnight and weekend shifts from their own homes, which understandably has proved very popular. The ability to work from any location and the flexibility it provides to cover shifts has proven to be a great advantage for the provision of the service.

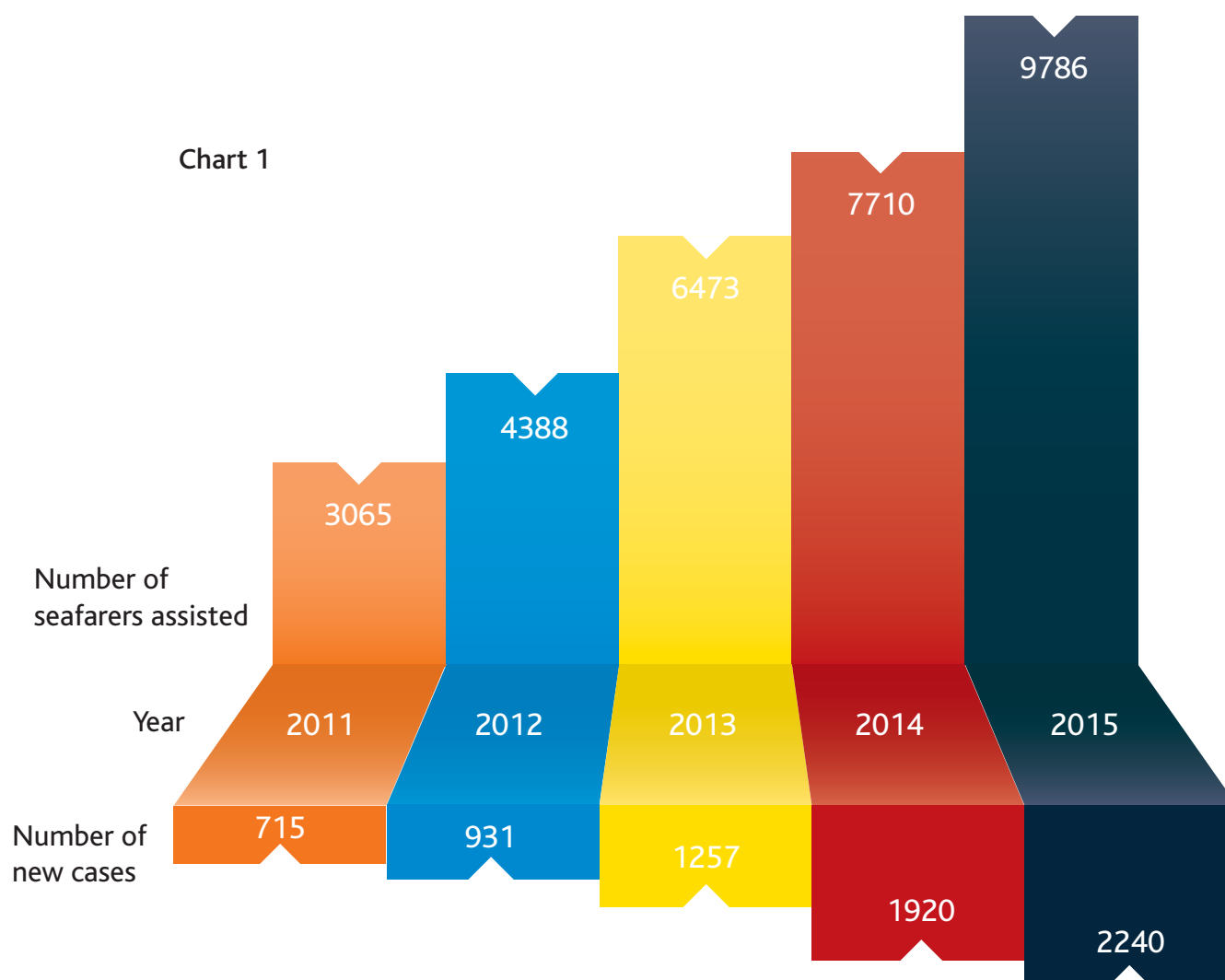
**Data.** ISWAN is probably uniquely placed when it comes to the gathering of up to date data in relation to seafarers and the issues that are important to them. Through the SeafarerHelp team's day to day contact with seafarers we are able to gather a range of important information e.g. about their needs and communication methods. Our historic data goes back along way and it has been used by ISWAN and others to inform their projects e.g. in how internet availability has changed the way seafarers communicate. It has also been used to investigate the mental health of seafarers and the services that they need. We will continue to develop and improve our data collection so that our services, and those of others, can be even more effectively attuned to seafarers changing needs.

## Number of cases

The number of new cases dealt with by the SeafarerHelp team in 2015 was 2,240 and they involved a total of 9,786 seafarers. Once again these figures show a steady growth in the number of new cases with a particularly large increase in the number of seafarers assisted. This latter figure is discussed in more detail in the trend section on page 8. Chart 1 below shows there has been a sustained high level of growth in both the number of cases and the number of seafarers we have assisted over the last five years. In addition to the number of new cases there were also 2,774 successive contacts in 2015. It was not possible to record successive contacts before 2014 and so no comparison can be made for previous years.

*“These figures show a steady growth in the number of new cases with a particularly large increase in the number of seafarers assisted.”*

Chart 1



# Issues raised

## Trends since 2011

From Chart 1 it is clear to see that there has been a large increase of 313.3% in the number of contacts coming to the SeafarerHelp team since 2011, with a corresponding increase of 319.2% in the number of seafarers assisted over the same period. There are a number of reasons for these significant increases:

1. We have for some time been promoting the SeafarerHelp service through a range of methods, but particularly through Facebook since 2013. Facebook enabled us to directly contact seafarers and the specific targeting of seafarers from the Philippines, India and the Ukraine did increase our number of new cases considerably. However we are now finding that the increase in the number of new cases is slowing down as the majority of seafarers using Facebook know about our service. We are therefore looking at additional channels of social media so that we can contact those who do not use Facebook. In addition to Facebook we have continued to promote the SeafarerHelp service through posters, SeafarerHelp cards and by working in partnership with other organisations.
2. From our analysis of the 2015 data, whilst parts of the maritime industry are doing reasonably well the majority of it is suffering as part of a global slowdown and as such owners and agents are trying to keep their costs down. Such actions have inevitably affected seafarers and we believe this is the main reason we have seen increases in contacts reporting a range of contract/management problems e.g. wages not being paid, repatriation problems, bullying etc.

3. We also provide 24 hour, 365 day per year helpline services for the ITF and Nautilus International and both helplines have seen an increase in contacts. Together they account for 25.1% of all our contacts in 2015.

4. Although it cannot be empirically proven we believe that the MLC 2006 continues to have an impact on our case numbers. Seafarers are more aware of their rights and the standards they should expect. As a result they seem to be more empowered to raise issues with us than in the past.

The top three reasons for seafarers contacting SeafarerHelp in 2015 are the same as they were in 2014 and are requests for information, failure to pay wages and seeking employment.

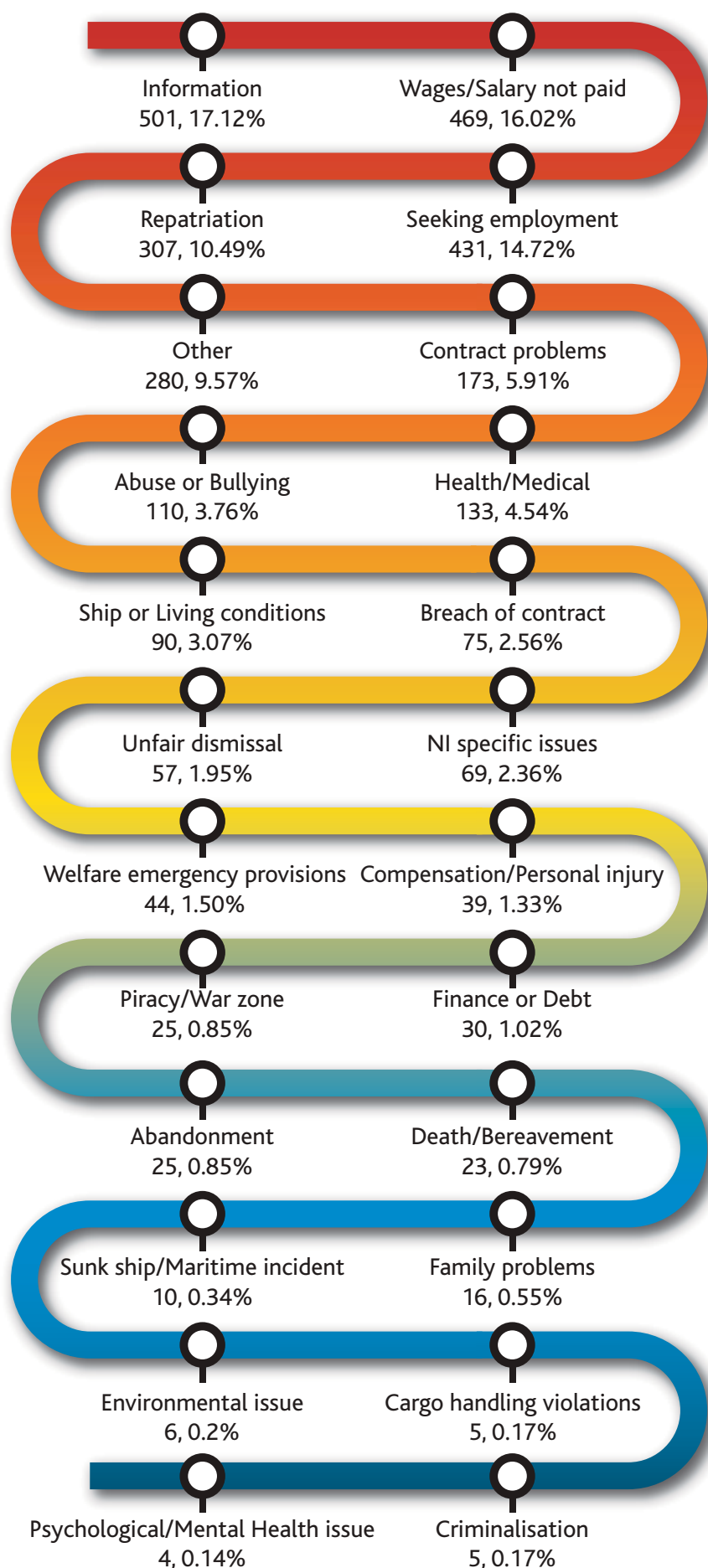
The most frequent contact was to request information – this accounted for 17.1% of all enquiries. Unfortunately the information category is very broad and we cannot provide any finer detail as to what was being requested. However in the future we will look at breaking it down into smaller more defined categories so that the data gathered is more useful. We are pleased that seafarers are happy to contact us for information because it confirms that they know we exist and they know we are here if they have a problem in the future.

Failure to pay wages was second and accounted for 16% of all cases and is an increase of 0.9% on 2014. As stated earlier this seems to be part of a general increase in contacts that relate to the difficult economic situation.

Problems over repatriation show a significant increase from 9.1% in 2014 to 10.5% in 2015 which again we put down to the general economic slowdown in the industry.

Seeking employment requests accounted for 14.7% of all enquiries in 2015 which is slightly up on 2014.

Chart 2  
Reasons for contacting us



### Other reasons

Problems of no specific category accounted for 9.6% of all cases, a significant reduction from the 11.9% recorded for 2014. However since these issues are not easily defined we cannot at present give any analysis for the reduction. However we will review this category to see if we can break it into identifiable elements in the future.

Cases of bullying/harassment increased from 2.8% to 3.8%.

Problems with living conditions on board increased from 2.5% to 3%.

Similarly abandonment of ships and crews increased from 0.6% to 0.9%.

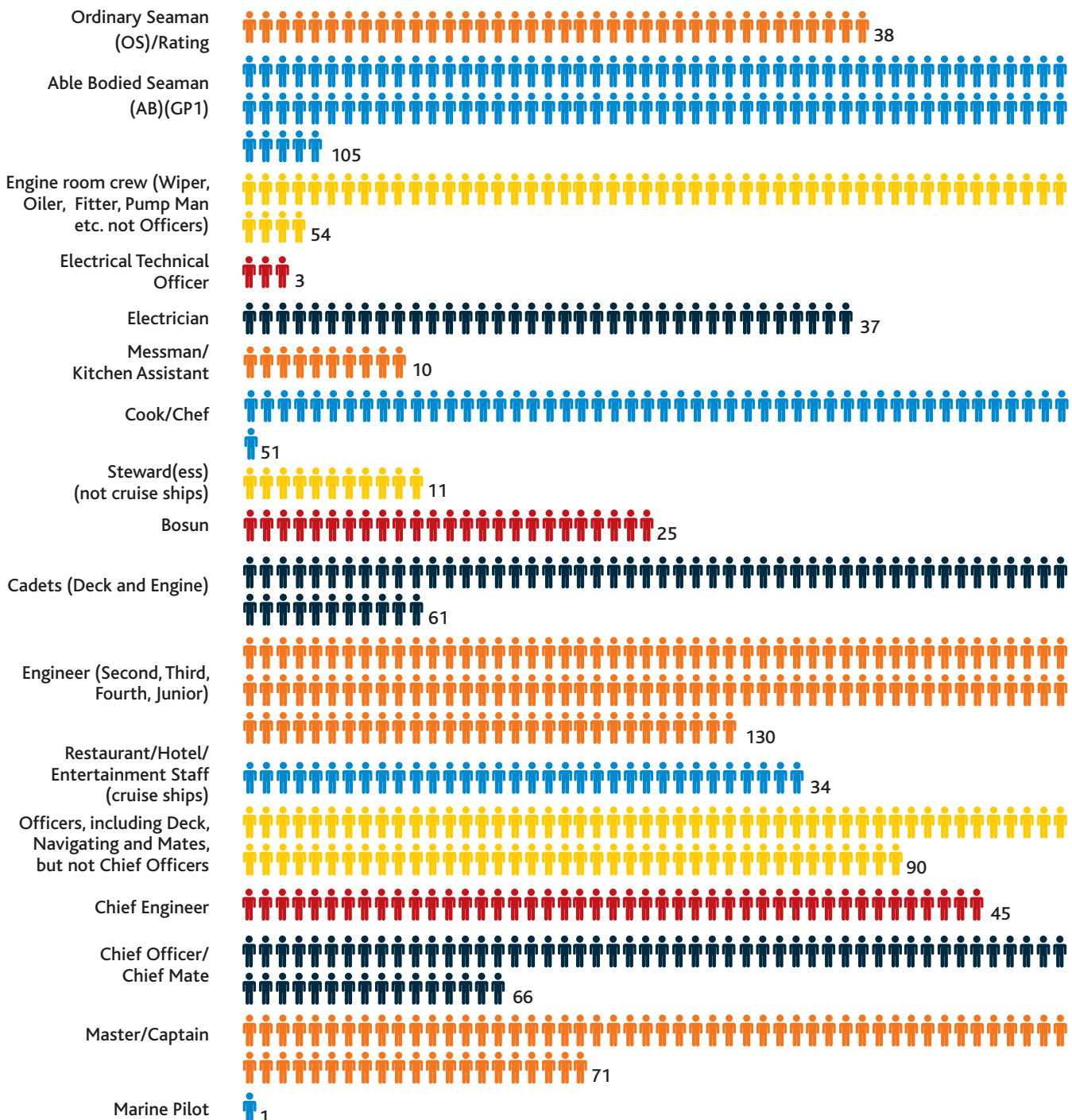
Although the last three bullet points may individually be small numbers when they are taken together with the failure to pay wages and repatriation problems, we believe that it shows that large parts of the shipping industry had a difficult time in 2015. It seems that some owners and agents tried to keep costs down by cutting corners and seafarers suffered as a result.

# Rank

It is interesting to note that the SeafarerHelp helpline is not just contacted by seafarers who are Ordinary or Able Bodied Seamen but by seafarers of all ranks. In many cases those contacting will not provide their rank for fear of being identified and blacklisted, however as shown in Chart 3 the helpline team provides services to seafarers of all ranks from cadet to ships' master.

*"The SeafarerHelp helpline is not just contacted by seafarers who are Ordinary or Able Bodied Seamen but by seafarers of all ranks."*

**Chart 3**  
Rank of seafarers contacting us



### Case study 1

A Filipino seafarer was taken ill in Turkey. He had to return home for further treatment where it was found that he needed a kidney transplant. A member of the seafarer's family decided that they would donate one of their kidneys to help the seafarer. The seafarer had received some funds from the company's insurance, but could not meet the full cost of the transplant, medicine and dialysis. The seafarer was in a poor way feeling very low and desperate. He contacted the SeafarerHelp line and explained his problem. The SeafarerHelp team gave him the contact details of his local seafarer centre and advised that he ask them to apply on his behalf to ISWAN for a Seafarer Emergency Fund grant. The Apostleship of the Sea (AoS) made the grant application which was successful and the SEF made a contribution towards the kidney transplant. The operation was successful and the seafarer made a good recovery.



*"The theme that runs through the problems raised is that many of them seem to relate to cost cutting by companies."*

## Trends since 2011

The trends in problems raised since 2011 are shown in detail in Chart 4.

When looking at this chart note that in 2011 the categories were fewer and broader and as a result the data is not all directly comparable with subsequent years. Furthermore in 2012 and 2013 additional categories were added and also in 2013 there was a change in the software which improved how the statistics were gathered. However the data does still provide useful information about general trends in problems raised with the SeafarerHelp team.

For 2015 the trends in the problems raised with SeafarerHelp were generally small increases in the number of issues reported, but the theme that runs through them is that many seem to relate to cost cutting by employers. For example there have been increases in wages not being paid, problems with repatriation, abuse and bullying, ship/living conditions, abandonment, in those seeking employment and in the number of ships sinking or being at risk of sinking. These may relate to cost cutting and are a general reflection that the economic environment is difficult. There are also reductions in seafarers reporting health problems, making claims about compensation and in reporting unfair dismissal. This could mean that seafarers are wary of raising such issues with their employers because they are worried about their job security.

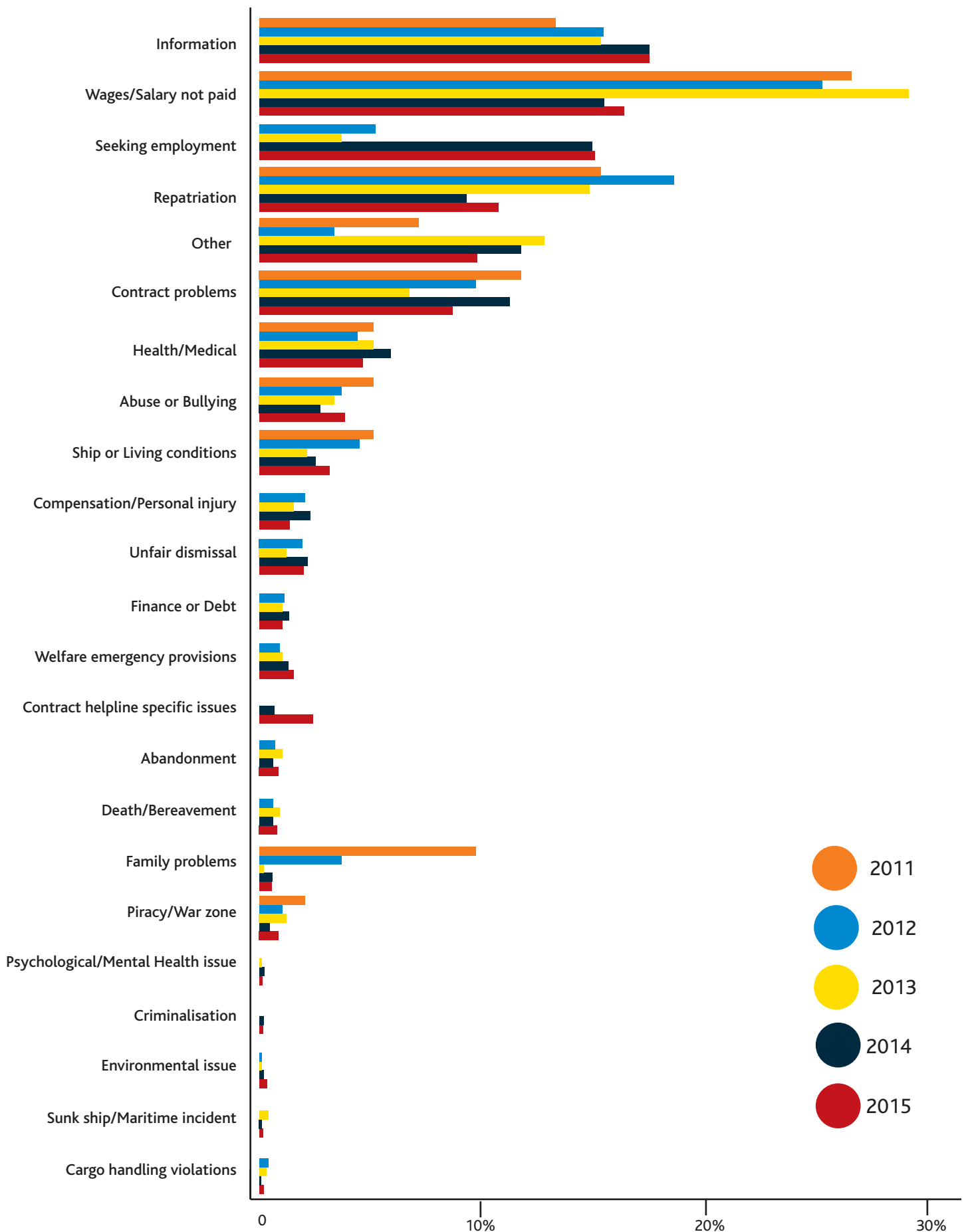
Having said that there are two figures, "other" and "contract problems" that contradict these general trends. The explanation for this is that both are broad catch all categories that could be used for a range of issues, however the team is now being more precise about the categorisation of cases and only using these broad groups where there is nothing more appropriate. The category of "Other" has dropped from 11.49% to 9.57% whilst the category of contract problems has dropped from 10.99% to 8.47%.

Other figures that are of interest are that the number of cases relating to piracy has increased from 0.45% in 2014 to 0.85% in 2015, this increase is due to piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and more enquiries from seafarers about their rights to avoid this area. Another issue of interest is that despite the fact that the maritime industry now recognises that social isolation, stress, depression and mental health are important issues that need addressing, seafarers themselves are reluctant to mention them when seeking help. This is probably because seafarers believe that if they did it might harm their future employment prospects. There is therefore an educational process that is required to explain to shipping companies, agents and seafarers that it is positive to recognise and address such issues. If such issues are being hidden they could result in worse situations for both the seafarer and the company, such as a long term mental health issue, suicide, or poor decision making that puts the ship or other seafarers at risk.



Photo: Loid Anthony C Cadungog

Chart 4  
Trends in issues raised

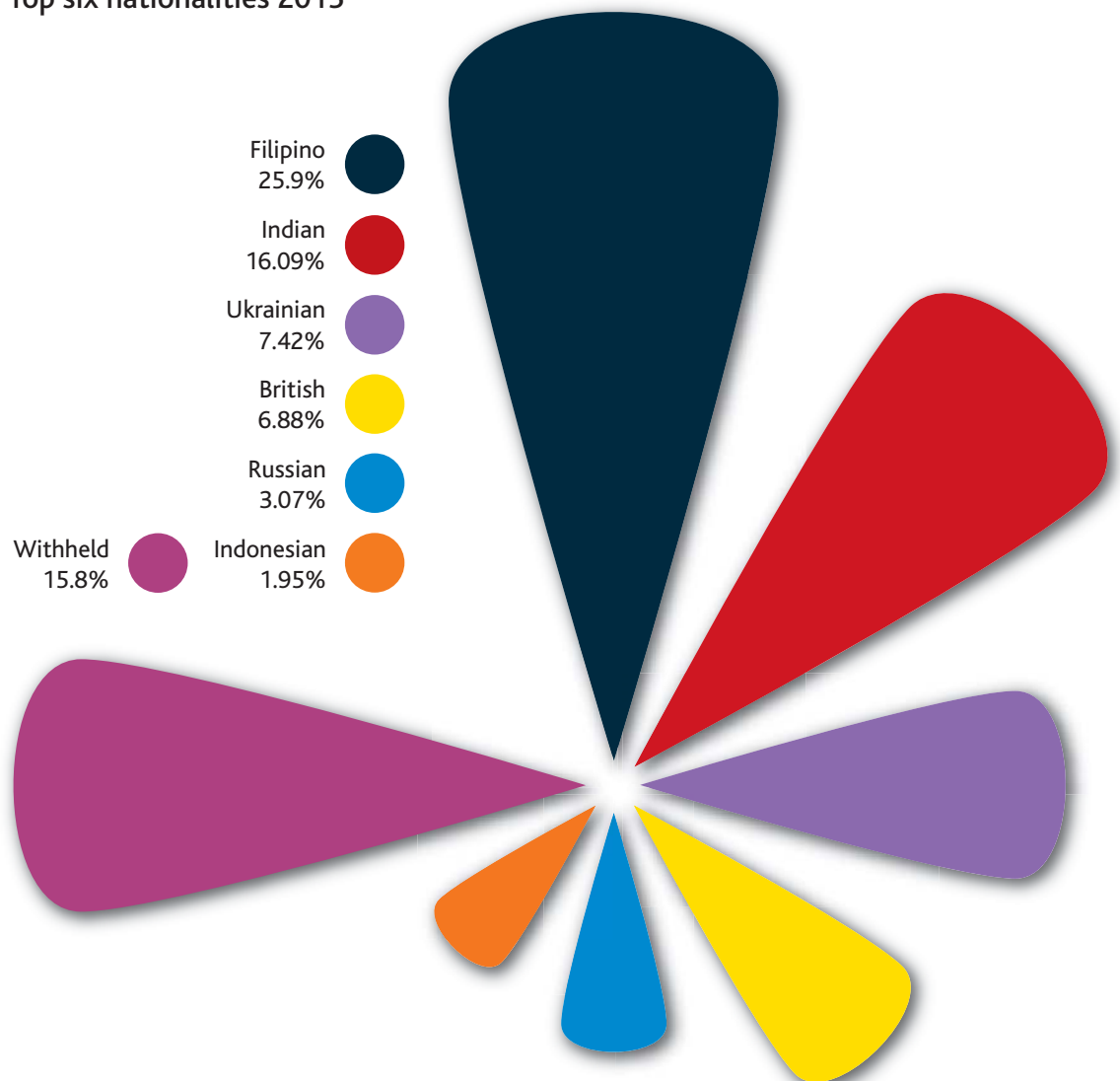


## Seafarer nationalities

The number of different nationalities that we assisted in 2015 increased from 84 in 2014 to 86 which confirms that our reach across the world is increasing. In 2015 the team assisted seafarers from 18 Commonwealth countries and 19 European Union countries. Chart 5 records the main nationalities assisted in 2015. It also shows that 15.8% of seafarers withheld their nationality which we presume is because they are concerned about being identified.

*"15.8% of seafarers withheld their nationality which we presume is because they are concerned about being identified."*

Chart 5  
Top six nationalities 2015



### Trends since 2011

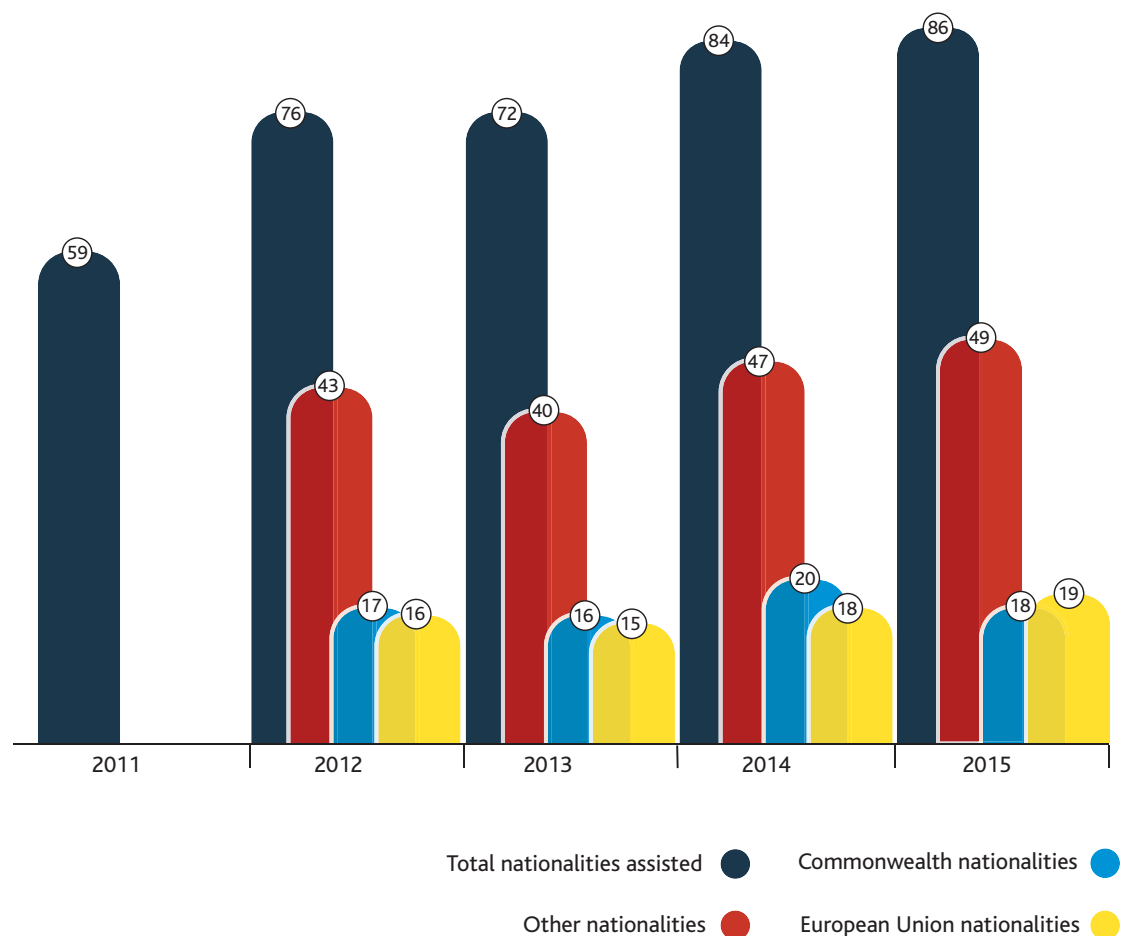
From 2011 to 2013, the nationality of the highest number of seafarers who contacted the team was Filipino, followed by Ukrainian, Indian and Russian but in 2014 this changed with Indian seafarers taking second place from Ukrainians.

The situation in 2015 is that whilst there has been a drop in the number of Filipino seafarers contacting the helpline, 32% to 25.9% there has been an increase in the number of Indian contacts from 12% to 16.1%

and an increase in the number of British seafarers from 4% to 6.9%. The increase in Indian contacts is put down to our Facebook promotion whilst the increase in British seafarers is a likely result of our connection with Nautilus International.

The number of Indonesians, Nigerians, and Burmese contacting the helplines continue to increase. Chart 6 shows the increase since 2011 in the number of nationalities we have assisted from 59 to 86. This confirms that ISWAN and SeafarerHelp do have a global reach.

**Chart 6**  
Nationalities assisted 2011-2015



## Countries seafarers contacted us from

In 2015 the team received contacts from 129 different countries, of which 31 were Commonwealth and 21 were European Union countries. In 2014 we were contacted from 113 different countries and once again this increase in the number of countries we were contacted from is evidence that our promotion of SeafarerHelp has been successful.

*"In 2015 the team received contacts from 129 different countries."*

### Case study 2

The wife of a Ukrainian seafarer contacted SeafarerHelp regarding the arrest of a ship that was in Yemen. The ship had been held for four months due to debts incurred by the ship's owners in another country. The seafarer's wife explained that her husband and the other crew had not been paid for months, their medical needs were not being addressed, there was a lack of water, the fuel oil for the generators and air conditioning was running out and that the ship was effectively in a war zone with explosions and gunfire all around it. The crew consisted of Ukrainians, Gambians and Greeks and armed guards had been placed on the ship to stop them from leaving.

The SeafarerHelp team contacted the ITF inspector in Ukraine and the ITF Inspector in Spain also became involved in trying to get the ship's owners to pay the crew and to repatriate them. Government agencies from the Ukraine, Greece, Saudi Arabia and Yemen were also involved in trying to resolve the case.

The situation was very complicated but all the crew were eventually repatriated however they have not yet been paid all their wages. Throughout the whole period the seafarer's wife was in regular contact with the SeafarerHelp team who were able to support both her and her husband until they were back home together.

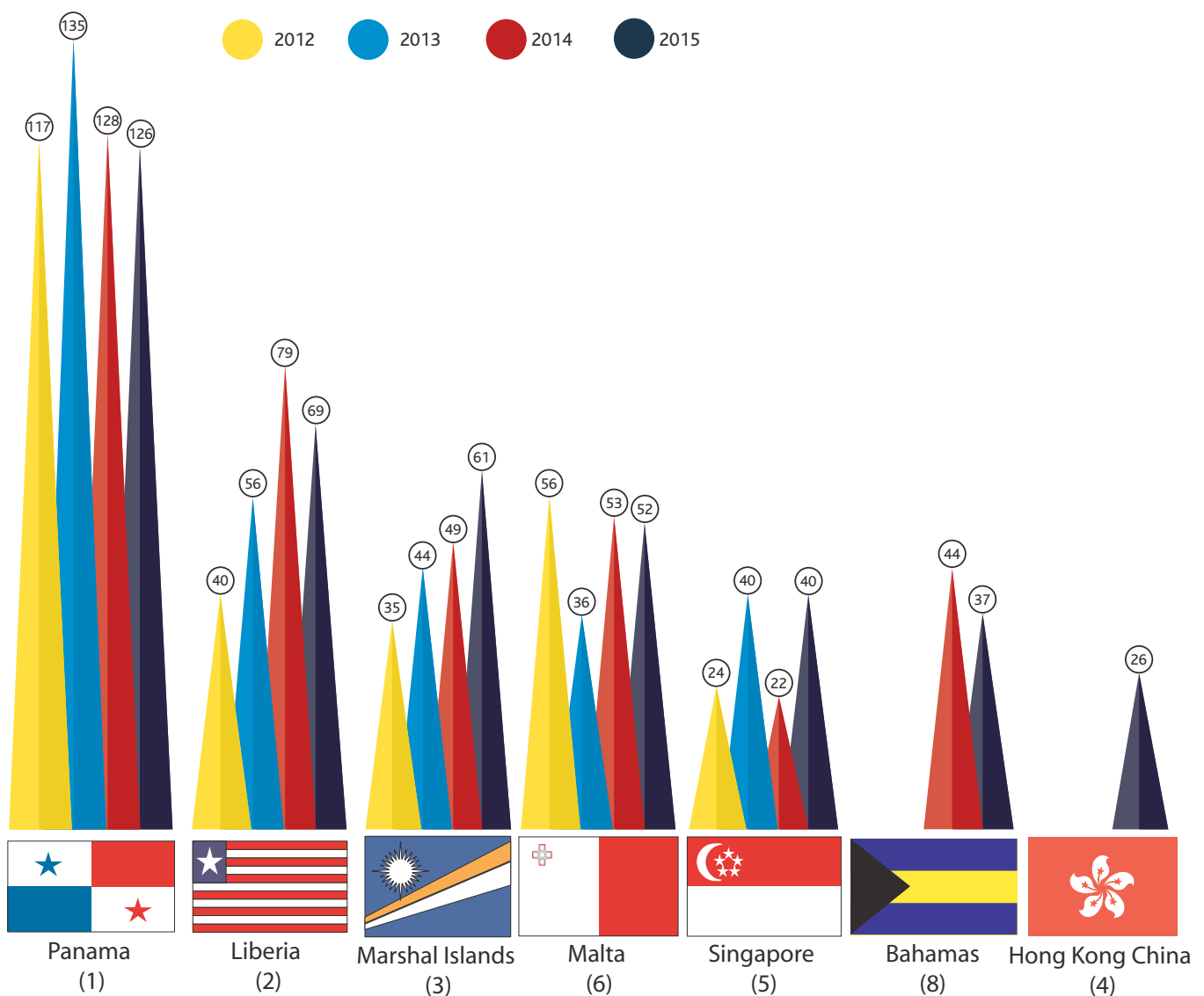
# Flag states

In 2015 the SeafarerHelp team dealt with ships that were registered in 71 different countries, of which 17 were Commonwealth countries. The seven most frequently encountered registries are shown in Chart 7, together with the number of cases that relate to them and their relative position in terms of their size in the world fleet table, according to the UNCTAD Review of Marine Transport 2015.

## Trends since 2011

Chart 7 shows that the trend for flag states since 2012 is mostly as would be expected with the largest registries occupying most of the top seven slots. On the negative side, it is concerning to see that Malta still features in more of our cases than one would expect given the size of their registry, as does the Bahamas. Hong Kong China appears in our list for the first time at seventh which is understandable given that it has the fourth largest registry. It is good to note that Antigua and Barbuda, which has appeared in the list each year from 2012, has dropped out of the top seven. It is now tenth which is still higher than would be expected given that it is twentieth in terms of registry size, however it is moving in the right direction.

**Chart 7**  
Top seven reported flag states 2015



## Organisations we refer cases to

At SeafarerHelp if we cannot assist a seafarer ourselves we refer them to other organisations that are better positioned to help. Since most of our contacts come from seafarers who are in countries other than the United Kingdom that usually means we refer them to organisations that are based in the country the seafarer is in. That way the seafarer can be given direct personal help and assistance. In 2015 the SeafarerHelp team referred cases to over 85 different organisations around the world.

The trends in Chart 8 show that while referrals to the ITF Co-ordinators/inspectors and Seafarer support team have remained fairly constant, those dealt with in house have reduced from 31.6% to 21.1% in 2015. We believe this is due to the fact that the team has been more proactive in seeking out new organisations that we can work in partnership with. This has created a corresponding increase in the numbers recorded in the

“Other” category from 7.5 to 13.7. There was also a fairly large increase in cases passed onto recruitment websites which went from 10.1% to 14.5% and is a reflection of the difficult conditions the maritime industry was experiencing. Apart from the statistics mentioned all other categories did not change very much.

In Chart 8 there are references to a category called “No first referral”. In the past we were often unable to refer a case as a result of the very first contact because we had not been able to gather enough information. Our software was unable to record which organisations those cases were eventually referred to and they were held in the category “No first referral”. Following the upgrade of our software in 2013 we can now record exactly where cases have been referred and that category is no longer used, however it still continues to appear in Chart 8 for 2011 to 2013.

### Case study 3

A seafarer contacted the SeafarerHelp team and reported that he had been suffering from bullying which had escalated to physical violence. We were able to talk to him in his own language which he found reassuring. The seafarer was able to send the team a video which showed him being verbally and physically abused. This was apparently a frequent occurrence for the seafarer. He spoke to his manning company about the bullying but they dismissed his complaint. The seafarer’s life on board was becoming increasingly unpleasant and he felt he could not go on. He was desperate to be repatriated as was sinking into despair.

The SeafarerHelp team suggested that they refer his bullying complaint and request for repatriation to the ITF and that he should see the chaplain of his local seafarer centre for personal support. The seafarer was concerned about being blacklisted if he talked to the ITF but the SeafarerHelp team explained that the ITF could take action and offer advice without revealing his identity. The seafarer was relieved that he would not be identified and agreed that we could contact the ITF on his behalf.

Through the efforts of the ITF and SeafarerHelp the seafarer got through this difficult period and he is now on a different ship and is happy in his work.

**Chart 8**  
Main organisations referred to

	2011 %	2012 %	2013 %	2014 %	2015 %
SeafarerHelp in house	11	13.7	23.0	31.6	21.1
ITF Coordinator/Inspector	23	20.3	15.1	21.3	22.1
ITF Seafarers Support Team	10	11.3	16.7	10.8	10.4
Employment organisations	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.1	14.5
Apostleship of the Sea	5	1.3	3.9	8.0	7.9
Other	6.7	3.8	5.1	7.5	13.7
Mission to Seafarers	5	2.8	4.9	4.4	4.1
Other maritime agencies	2.5	2.4	4.3	2.3	3.4
Unions	1.75	1.3	0.3	1.4	0.8
Embassies/Consulates	1	0.0	0.6	0.7	0.8
Seafares Emergency Fund	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.6	0.3
Sailors Society	0	0	0	0.5	0.3
MPHRP	0	0	0.1	0.3	0.1
SAIL	0	0	0	0.3	0.3
No first referral	32	43	25.6	0.0	0.0

Note i) Where it states 0.00 that category did not exist that year.

Note ii) There are small rounding up variances for 2011 and 2012.



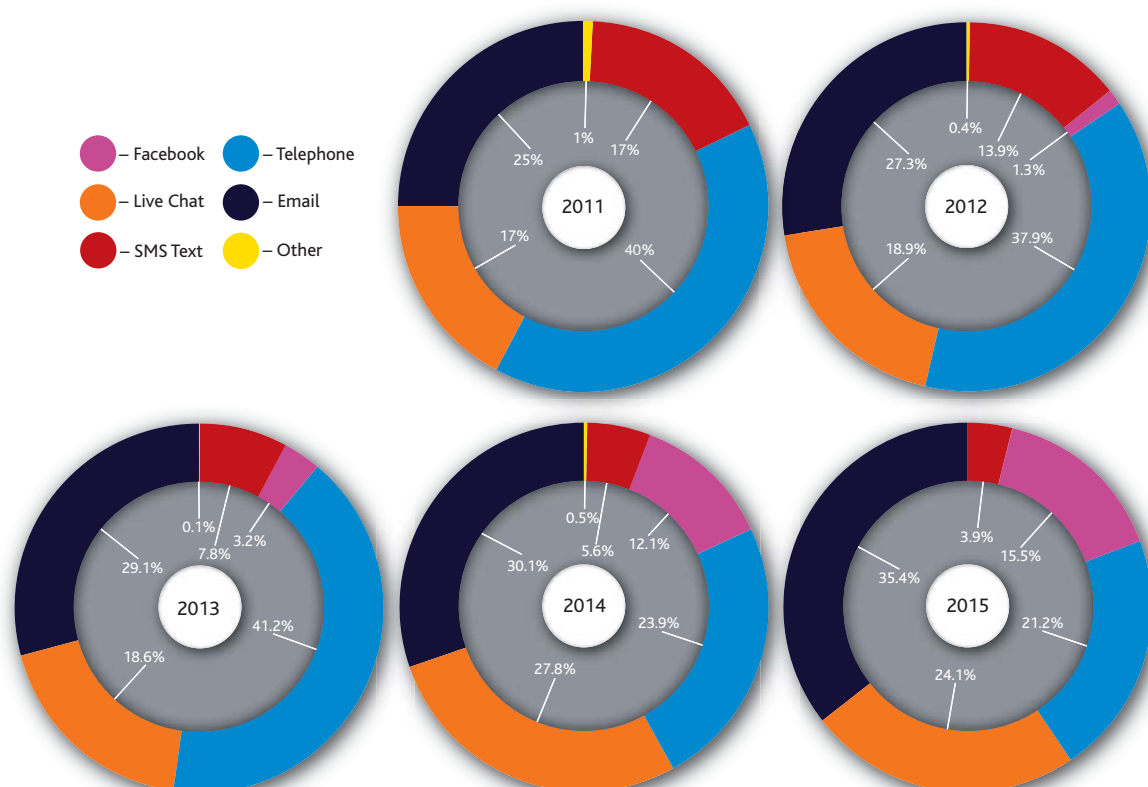
## Methods of contact

As always at SeafarerHelp we try to make it as easy as possible for seafarers to contact us so we have a variety of different channels that they can use. These include by telephone on international toll-free lines, email, SMS text, Live Chat, Skype, Facebook, Twitter, fax and by post.

For ease of understanding we split the information regarding contact methods into two groups. Chart 9 shows the methods that were used to make the initial contact since 2011, while Chart 10 shows the ways that successive contacts were made from 2014. The reason we split this information is because the initial method of contact is the way that the seafarer chooses to contact us.

This information is useful to us as it helps us plan how we direct our resources. Once we have established the initial contact with a seafarer we then prefer them to use email or the telephone, for successive contacts, as they are easier mediums through which to gather information. Therefore successive contact methods are heavily influenced by us, however, where a seafarer does not want to use email or the telephone we will use any method of contact that they wish.

**Chart 9**  
Initial contact methods



*“Seafarers are tending to use methods to contact us that are free or cost least.”*

### Trends since 2011

Since 2011 the initial methods of contact have changed dramatically. Up until 2013 the most frequent initial method of contact was always by the telephone but in 2014 that changed dramatically and the telephone was pushed into third place after email and Live Chat.

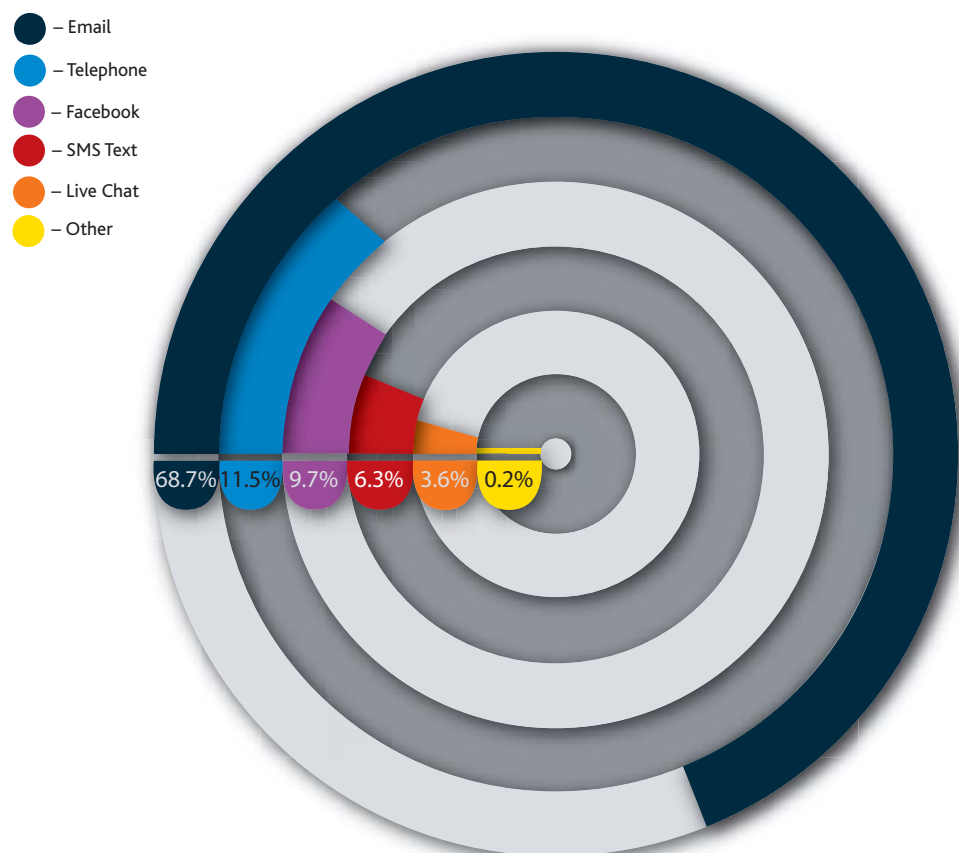
In 2015 for initial contacts email use increased by 5% and Facebook by 3.4% on 2014, this is likely to be due to better access to the internet on board and in port. However Live Chat surprisingly dropped by 3.7% which could be an indication that it is a slow method of communication. The use of the telephone dropped by 2.7% which is possibly down to cost or sometimes the lack of privacy when making the call. The use of SMS text also continued to drop and now only accounts for

less than 4% of all initial contacts. We believe this is because of the cost to the caller and simply that other methods are easier to use.

These notable changes reflect three things:

- 📧 Access to the internet for seafarers both on ships at sea and in ports continues to improve.
- 📱 Seafarers prefer to contact us by mobile devices over the internet.
- 📧 Seafarers are tending to use methods to contact us that are free or cost least.

**Chart 10**  
Successive contact methods 2015



## Feedback from seafarers about SeafarerHelp

So that we can get direct feedback from seafarers about our SeafarerHelp service and use that information to continuously improve it we introduced a short customer survey. The survey is sent, after the case is closed, to those seafarers that we have had some significant involvement with. The questions concentrate on what they thought of the service, what we did well, what we need to improve on and what effect the service had on them.

Of those surveyed 77% said that the SeafarerHelp service was either excellent or good and 84% said that they would recommend the service to other seafarers if they had a problem

The following are some direct quotes from seafarers:

*"Everything is OK...don't stop helping seafarers that needs assistance."*

*"It made a lot of difference as it gave huge relief to me and my family."*

*"I think your help is prompt and always important to know you are there, nothing could be better."*

*"It is important that all seafarers have charity like SeafarerHelp that gives advice and help to all seafarers anytime they are always there to support."*

There were many other comments that appreciated our prompt response, that we are there 24 hours per day and that we will try to help and support them with any problem. What comes out very strongly in the feedback is that the SeafarerHelp team has always provided a great deal of emotional support to seafarers and that just having someone to talk to, often in their own language, is very much appreciated by them. From the seafarers comments in the survey it is clear that they place a very high value on the service they receive from the SeafarerHelp team.

## Conclusion

*“In recent times ISWAN and the SeafarerHelp team have played an important role in highlighting the social isolation and mental health issues of seafarers.”*

2015 was a difficult year for much of the shipping industry and so it was a difficult year for many seafarers as well. We believe that the economic situation along with our social media campaigns and seafarers greater awareness of the MLC 2006's minimum standards have all been factors in the increase in the number of contacts to the SeafarerHelp helpline.

The methods of communication with seafarers have continued to develop with internet based systems such as email, Live Chat and Facebook, accounting for approximately 75% of all initial contacts. Since 2011 telephone contacts have reduced from 40% to 21% and we can only presume that the trend to use internet systems will increase as connectivity to ships at sea and in port improves. For our part the upgrade in our IT and telephone systems in 2014 was timely and we have taken on new resources and ways of working to ensure that we are communicating with seafarers as effectively as possible. In this respect we are looking at new methods to communicate more effectively with Indian, Russian and Chinese seafarers. We will continue to develop and improve our marketing for all other seafarer nationalities as well.

In recent times ISWAN and the SeafarerHelp team have played an important role in highlighting the social isolation and mental health issues of seafarers. The SeafarerHelp team has always provided emotional support to seafarers and the provision of such support is now being recognised for its true value. The provision of such support is an area that we are developing including providing more training and guidance for the team. As always, we will continue to adapt and improve our service to meet the changing needs of seafarers.

Through our subsidiary SWAN Ltd we operate contracts which help us to diversify our funding and we are optimistic that we will enter into new contracts in 2016.

Working in partnership with other organisations is a core principle of ISWAN and the SeafarerHelp team and it is good to note that this year the team has referred cases to more organisations around the world than ever before. We recognise that no one organisation can meet all the needs of seafarers and are happy to work with in partnership with others to meet their changing needs. Partnership working is the key to the future and we are happy to work with all parts of the maritime industry to help improve seafarers' lives.

For ISWAN and SeafarerHelp 2015 was a year of consolidation and thinking about the future. We had moved to new offices in late 2014 so much of 2015 was about settling down in the new environment and developing the team with more training. We also used our IT more effectively introducing remote working and developing our presence on Facebook and Twitter. The team is highly motivated and has a flexible approach to meeting the needs of seafarers. The SeafarerHelp team has been looking to the future and thinking about ISWAN's next three year plan and what its services will look like. We are improving and developing our support to seafarers with mental health issues, refining our targeting to reach more seafarers from the main seafaring nations and are taking on the work from the MPPHRP in supporting survivors of piracy.

Unfortunately the economic outlook for 2016 does not look good for the maritime industry and so we expect that it will be a difficult year for seafarers as well. However SeafarerHelp will be there to support seafarers where ever they are and whenever they need it. The team is happy to take on any challenges that 2016 may bring.



# SeafarerHelp

*The lifeline for seafarers*

## Contact us

If you would like more information about ISWAN, the SeafarerHelp service or the Seafarers Emergency Fund (SEF) please contact us directly or check our websites. Details are given below.

Similarly, if you would like to know more about the range of services we provide, please feel free to talk to us using the contact details below.

SeafarerHelp telephone: **+44 (0) 207 323 2737**

SeafarerHelp email: **[help@seafarerhelp.org](mailto:help@seafarerhelp.org)**

ISWAN office telephone: **+44 (0) 300 012 4279**

ISWAN email: **[iswan@iswan.org.uk](mailto:iswan@iswan.org.uk)**

ISWAN and SEF: **[www.seafarerswelfare.org](http://www.seafarerswelfare.org)**

SeafarerHelp: **[www.seafarerhelp.org](http://www.seafarerhelp.org)**



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## Our sponsors

The SeafarerHelp service and ISWAN receives financial support from the ITF Seafarers' Trust, The TK Foundation and Seafarers UK whose generosity allows this vital service for seafarers and their families to continue. We are very grateful to them for their continued support.

