



STELLA MARIS



## **Life at Sea report 2021: Light in the darkness**

Targeting support to seafarers in crisis, together

The Centenary Emergency Fund was launched in 2020 to mark 100 years of Stella Maris. The aim: provide crisis support to men and women of the sea.

**In 2021, the Fund rescued seafarers and families around the world.**

Our industry was hit hard by the pandemic. There are challenges over the horizon. Together, we can provide a lifeline of crisis support to seafarers.

**We can be a light in the darkness.**



## ➤ Life at Sea: Light in the darkness

**You don't need me to tell you: 2021 was a difficult year for our industry. At Stella Maris, we know that as well as anyone.**

Under the shadow of the pandemic, we encountered seafarers in darkness. Standing on rain-drenched gangways, we heard heart-breaking stories of loneliness. We got to know desperate men and women stranded for months on vessels. We were there when crews grieved for lost friends and colleagues, and we stood with seafaring families in their worst moments.

What became strikingly apparent was that, when the usual systems of support break down, seafarers are often totally alone. Time and time again, Stella Maris was the only reliable lifeline when all else failed, the steadfast friend when it really counted.

Thanks to our Centenary Emergency Fund – kindly supported by partners in the industry – we provided intensive, bespoke care to men and women in urgent need. The Fund allows us to extend our reach beyond practical and pastoral care, to help seafarers in desperate circumstances. Following a death, in cases of abandonment, during medical emergencies, we acted fast and effectively to offer support.

That urgent need for crisis support will continue in 2022. Plus, there are further challenges ahead. A wave of mental health problems is emerging among seafarers. Job losses will impact seafaring families. Cases of abandonment are increasing and intensifying.

*If Stella Maris is not there to help, who else will step in?*

All of us in the shipping industry have a responsibility to care for seafarers and raise standards of support. No man or woman should be left alone in a crisis. I believe there are two things we must do:

- 1) We must **grow the Centenary Emergency Fund** to ensure no seafarer faces crisis alone. This special fund, launched in 2020 to mark our 100-year anniversary, supports bereaved or stranded seafarers or helps in medical emergencies. By building up the fund now, we can be ready to offer immediate help the moment a seafarer is in crisis.
- 2) We must **raise awareness of our global network among seafarers**. Stella Maris is the world's largest ship-visiting charity, with more than 1,000 chaplains and volunteers in 330 ports in 60 countries. This global coverage puts us in a unique position to provide sustained support to seafarers as they move from country to country.



The care of seafarers must be the number one priority for the shipping industry. With responsible partners like you – ship managers, owners, P&I clubs, legal firms and flag states – we can ensure no seafarer is stranded in a crisis.

Together, we can shine a light in the darkness. Thank you.

*Martin Foley*

**Martin Foley**, Chief Executive Officer, Stella Maris UK



In March 2021, 16 seafarers were abandoned in Mombasa, Kenya. Hungry and desperate, they had run out of food after the owners of their fishing vessel stopped providing supplies. The crew of Indians, Koreans and Vietnamese seafarers were owed a year's wages, and had families at home struggling to survive because of the lost income.

Like many abandoned seafarers, the men were reluctant to leave the vessel as that often means relinquishing any claim on unpaid wages. They would struggle to fund the airfare home.

Right now, the case is going through the Kenyan courts and the seafarers are still on board. But thanks to emergency support from Stella Maris, the crew are coping.

#### Stella Maris' help through the Centenary Emergency Fund

- **£2,500** to provide groceries, oil, meat and rice
- **£1,500** per month for three months, while the case goes through the Kenyan courts
- **Stella Maris Director and port chaplain in Mombasa Margaret Masibo** and her team on hand to offer pastoral care and support



“The seafarers on board were extremely thankful for the support we provided, but they remain distressed, frustrated and angry because their future is still uncertain. The court case is ongoing. The crew need accompaniment, counselling and assurance; we will keep looking out for their wellbeing.”

**Margaret Masibo**, Stella Maris port chaplain

## > Abandonment

Cases of abandonment are increasing at an alarming rate and the issue has worsened during the pandemic. Since 2019, there's been a staggering 138% rise in the number of abandoned vessels<sup>1</sup>. However, not all cases are reported, so the actual number may be much larger.

More than 30 states recorded incidents, showing just how widespread the problem is. General cargo vessels were most commonly involved in abandonment disputes, but cases are across all ship types.

**138%** increase in abandonment since 2019

**94** vessels abandoned in 2021

**1,399** seafarers impacted

**International Maritime Organisation definition of abandonment:** "When the shipowner fails to fulfil certain fundamental obligations to the seafarer relating to timely repatriation and payment of outstanding remuneration and to the provision of basic necessities of life, (among other things) adequate food, accommodation, and medical care. Abandonment will have occurred when the master of the ship has been left without any financial means in respect of ship operation."



### How Stella Maris helps

Stella Maris is often the first responder in cases of abandonment. Affected seafarers contact Stella Maris through the central helpline or contact local Stella Maris staff directly in the place of abandonment. We step in to support seafarers by providing them with essential items like water, food and medicine, and guide them through the legal complexities of the court systems.

<sup>1</sup>Numbers from Lloyds List



**Max Maguire, (below) a full-time commercial fisherman, was on a night out on the south coast of England when tragedy struck.**

Twenty-three-year-old Max had worked on Little Sister 2, a crabber fishing boat operating out of Lymington, Hampshire, for around two years. He was enjoying an evening with friends in October 2021 when he was involved in an incident, and was brutally stabbed. Two other stab victims survived – but Max died of chest wounds at the scene of the crime.

Max left behind a young daughter. His family and the local fishing community have been devastated. But Stella Maris was there for the family in their grief.

#### Stella Maris' help through the Centenary Emergency Fund

- **£1,500** contribution to Max Maguire's funeral costs
- **Chaplains on hand to support** and counsel the bereaved family



Fisherman Max Maguire, who was killed in Lymington, Hampshire. The Centenary Emergency Fund supported his family with funeral costs.

“Stella Maris have been a great source of support for our family. We are so grateful and appreciative for the support we have received.”

**Blaise**, Max's sister

## > Support following a death

### Deaths of seafarers

Death at sea is not uncommon. Seafarers die of natural causes, by tragic accident, by their own hands and very occasionally at the hands of others. All deaths leave a legacy of pain and heartbreak in their homelands and among the crew who must continue to live and work on board the ship.



**Seafaring** is one of the most dangerous professions in the world



Anecdotal reports say **suicide among seafarers** is increasing – but reliable data is unavailable



### How Stella Maris helps

Stella Maris chaplains are increasingly asked to provide support for bereaved families in their home nation, and on board vessels to care for crew members impacted by the death. We provide faith support, prayer and can arrange Masses and blessings.



**Stella Maris is the largest ship visiting network in the world.**

We improve the lives of seafarers and fishers through our network of local chaplains and seafarer centres, expert information, advocacy and spiritual support.

Wherever your seafarers are in the world, a Stella Maris chaplain or ship visitor will be nearby to extend a hand of friendship and welcome.

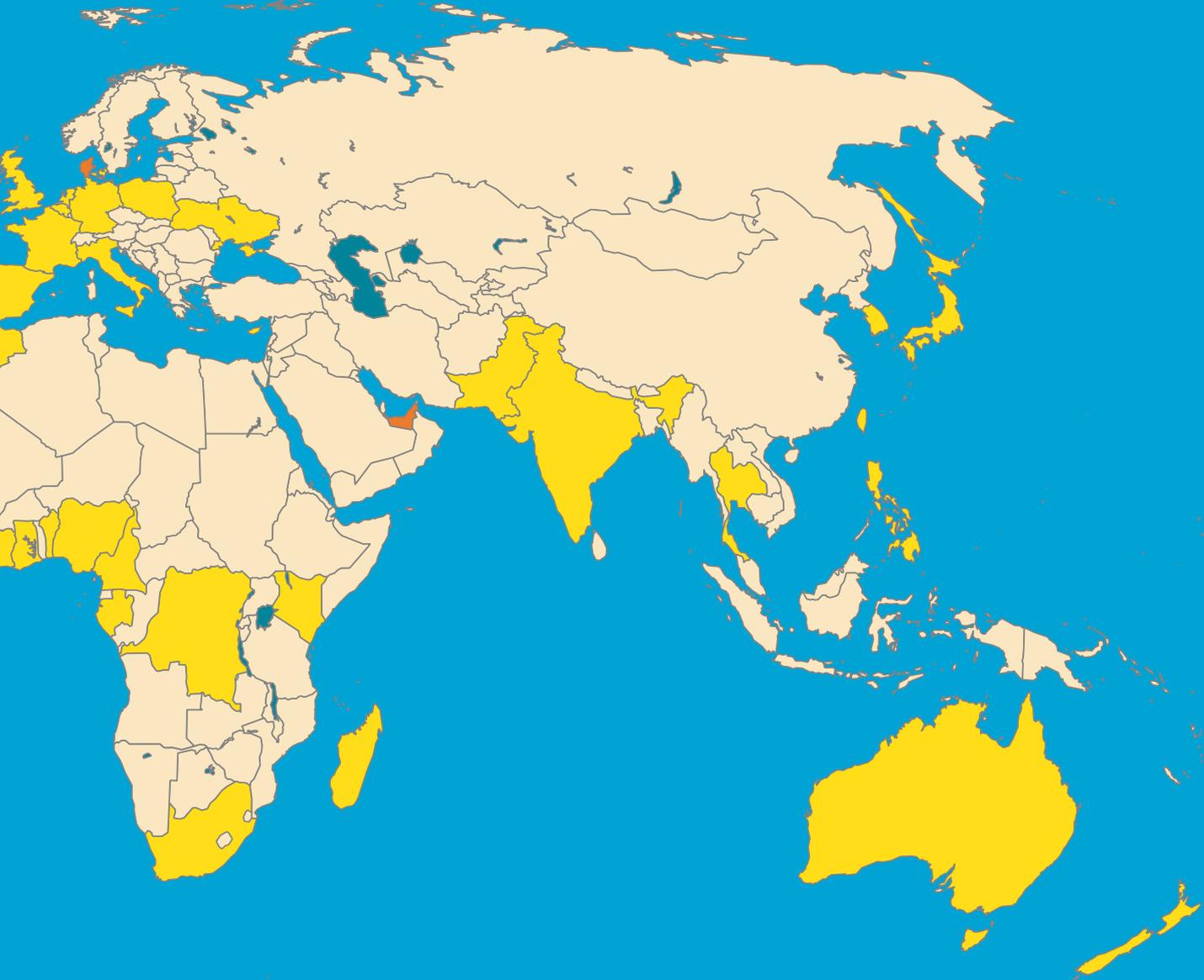
You can help by sharing information about Stella Maris with your workforce. Thank you.

Get help for your seafarers

Email [concerns@stellamarismail.org](mailto:concerns@stellamarismail.org)

Call +44 (0) 20 7901 1931

## > Beacons of light across the world



1,000+ chaplains  
and volunteers



70,000 ships visits  
conducted in a normal year



Based in 330 ports  
around the world



100 years of  
supporting seafarers



In 60 countries



67 seafarers supported  
by the Centenary  
Emergency Fund in 2021



“We arranged for Nathan to be admitted to a hospice, and set up video links so he could say goodbye to his wife and young son. Our team in the Philippines visited the family to provide pastoral support in person.”

#### Seafarers in crisis

Most seafarers support not only their direct family back home, but also their wider family unit. Their income funds accommodation, food, household bills, school fees and medical expenses. So if a seafarer loses their job, becomes sick or, tragically, dies, it can have a devastating impact.

#### How Stella Maris helps

Our Centenary Emergency Fund means we can make quick decisions when a seafarer applies for crisis support – and we can rapidly transfer money around the world. Our global network of chaplains means we can follow up with families locally, to assess needs and offer pastoral care.

## > Supporting families



**When Filipino seafarer Jose\* called us for help, the Stella Maris team immediately stepped in. Little did we know that tragedy lay ahead and our support would be needed far beyond Jose's injury.**

Jose, a fisherman on an extended contract, had been at sea for 14 months when he was involved in an accident off the south coast of the UK. He was admitted to hospital and a finger was partly amputated. Jose was discharged back to his vessel. But the accident had not been registered – and Jose was straight back to work.

A month later, Jose's finger became badly infected and he called our chaplain for help. However, when we arrived at the vessel, we found two men who needed hospital treatment – Jose and fellow Filipino, Nathan\*, who was doubled up in pain. We took them both to the local Emergency Department.

Jose was treated and discharged, and we arranged local accommodation so he didn't have to return to the fishing boat. When the captain claimed Jose had absconded and confiscated his passport, we notified the authorities. It turned out the fishermen had been working 21 to 23 hours a day – and the case was reported to the police.

Meanwhile, it was clear that Nathan was seriously unwell. After being seen by emergency doctors, the fisherman was admitted to hospital. Within 24 hours, he received the news no one ever wants to hear: his illness was terminal.

Our chaplain and volunteers reacted with care and compassion. We contacted Nathan's wife but due to Covid restrictions she was unable to visit. We arranged for Nathan to be admitted to a hospice, and set up video links so he could say goodbye to his wife and young son. Our team in the Philippines visited the family to provide pastoral support in person.

Tragically, 10 days after leaving the fishing boat, Nathan died. We followed Nathan's wishes for his funeral. A group of Filipino musicians played, and the service was live-streamed to family back home. Stella Maris arranged for Nathan's remains to be returned.

Jose escorted the coffin on the flight back to the Philippines, and our team in Manila have been providing vital pastoral support to both families since.

\*name changed to protect identity

### Stella Maris' help through the Centenary Emergency Fund

- **£1,700** contribution to pay off critical debts
- **Senior Area Chaplain Deacon Nick O'Neill** on hand to offer pastoral care

### Seafarers in hospital

Sometimes, hospitalisation cases are identified during the course of a normal ship visit. More often we are asked for assistance from either the vessel itself or the ship management company. Usually the ship is unable to wait in port but has to leave for its next port of call, leaving the seafarer behind and essentially alone.

### How Stella Maris helps

When foreign seafarers are hospitalised in the UK, Stella Maris provides practical support and care through regular visiting. We often arrange for translators when the seafarer's command of English isn't strong. We provide seafarers with toiletries, fresh clothing and supplementary food, and help them to connect and keep in touch with their families at home. One chaplain even washed and ironed a seafarer's clothes during his stay in hospital. Most of all, chaplains are a friend and a confidant in a time of concern and need.

**I** am so grateful to Stella Maris. The support and help provided through a very difficult time has made such a positive difference to my family. We are so thankful for everything Stella Maris has done to help us”

**Ann, a commercial fisher**



## > Support in a medical crisis



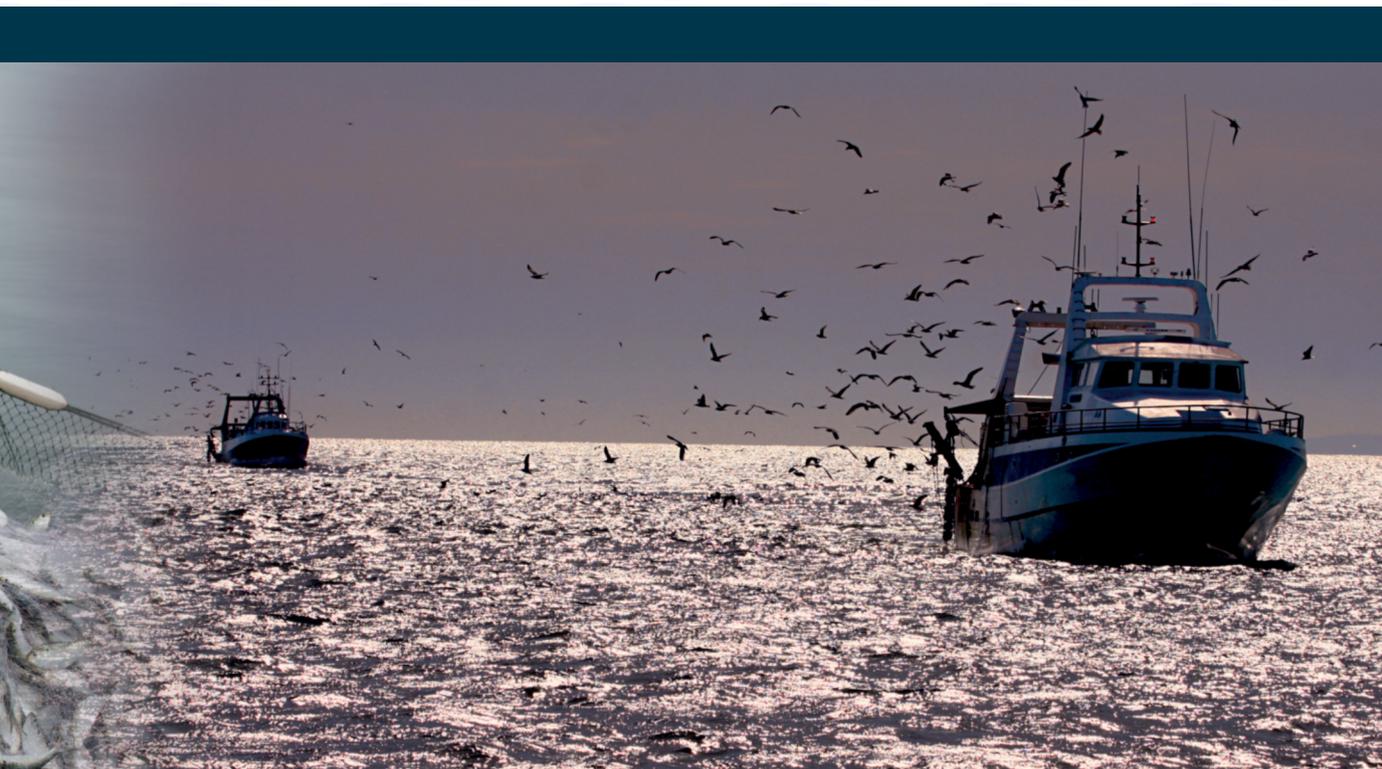
**John and Ann\*, a hardworking husband and wife team of commercial fishers on the south coast of England, had a thriving company – until Covid, Brexit and illness brought it crashing down.**

The pair had fished out of small harbours in Hampshire and West Sussex since 2005, and had a successful business selling produce at local markets. Then Ann discovered she needed major brain surgery.

Ann's recovery meant both she and John were off work for a while. Then, just as they were due to return in April 2020, the pandemic hit. The pressures of Brexit compounded the challenges of lockdown. The couple did what they could, fishing when possible and surviving on a basic income. But soon the debts began to mount up.

Within six months, John and Ann were really struggling. The worry was overwhelming, their health was impacted and the debt was snowballing. That's when Stella Maris stepped in to provide emergency help. We provided finances to clear critical debt, and offered pastoral support to get this hardworking family back on its feet.

\*names changed to protect identity



**Vital support**



**Below are just some of the quotes from very grateful seafarers...**

*"I would like to thank you for your financial support to a fisher. He extends his heartfelt thanks – he can pay his debt for his boarding house and is happy!"*

*"May the Lord continue to show you the grace you need, as you serve and help the people of the sea. God bless you and your ministry."*

*"Thank you so much for your generosity and kindness. We are very blessed by this grant. It will be a big help to our daily needs along with the medicine and baby needs."*

*"I, with immense joy and gratitude, want to thank you for all your generous support and kindness during the pandemic, to our people who were affected in different ways in Mylapore, India. I very personally thank you and Stella Maris for this great opportunity to show solidarity."*

**With grateful thanks to our industry partners,  
who support our Centenary Emergency Fund.**



**ARKLOW SHIPPING**

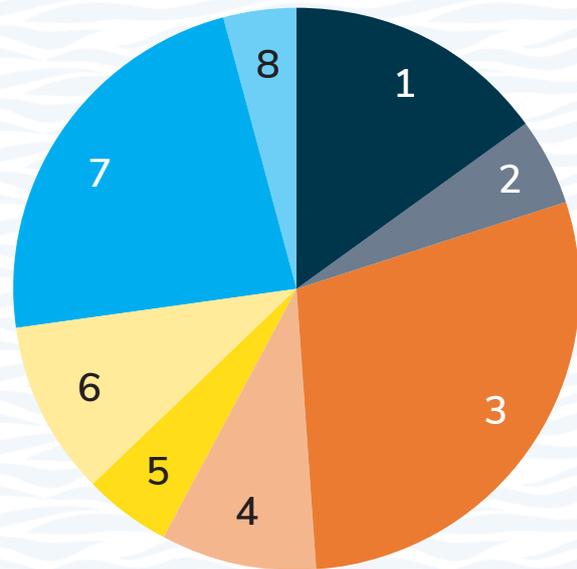


## > Small kindness, big impact

### Impact of the Centenary Emergency Fund in 2021

Generous shipping industry partners helped to grow the Fund in 2021, and we were able to support 67 seafarers with a total of £50,000. Here's how the money helped...

1. Abandonment	15%
2. Bereavement	5%
3. Covid-19 support	29%
4. Family support	9%
5. Medical	5%
6. Repatriation	10%
7. Support to victims of abuse	23%
8. Unemployment	4%



### Support the Centenary Emergency Fund in 2022

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly increased demand on resources, with our chaplains and volunteers around the world supporting ever more seafarers and their families. The war in Ukraine is adding substantially to the number requiring assistance. With your company's support, the Centenary Emergency Fund will mean Stella Maris is ready to help more seafarers, in future, when crisis hits.

To support the Centenary Emergency Fund contact Ian Stokes,  
Head of Corporate Engagement

**07732 682090**

**[ian.stokes@stellamarismail.org](mailto:ian.stokes@stellamarismail.org)**

Get help for your seafarers

Email [concerns@stellamarismail.org](mailto:concerns@stellamarismail.org)

Call +44 (0) 20 7901 1931

By partnering with Stella Maris,  
you support seafarers around  
the world. Thank you so much.

To find out more about Stella  
Maris, visit

[www.stellamaris.org.uk](http://www.stellamaris.org.uk)

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