

In depth: HelpDesk success in Egypt

The maritime industry can be fraught with challenges – not least of which are those posed by corruption and unethical demands, often testing the mettle of even the most seasoned seafarers. However, the MACN HelpDesk initiative in Egypt is creating a wave of positive changes.

MACN's venture into Egypt is far from a random stab in the dark. Egypt has in recent years been proactive in the establishment of anti-corruption frameworks in line with international standards, making the region a fertile ground for MACN's efforts. Moreover, the Suez Canal is a crucial global maritime passageway where our membership frequents on a daily basis, further emphasising the need to strengthen integrity and transparency in operations.

Our history in Egypt began in 2015, when MACN together with its members launched a 'Say No Campaign' in the Suez Canal on the International Anti-Corruption Day. It was collectively agreed to apply a zero tolerance policy, and to reject and report all illicit demands. This campaign was supported by front-line material and an onboard toolkit developed by MACN.

The campaign's subsequent expansion, attracting more member participation, stands testament to its success. After experiencing success with the HelpDesk concept in both Nigeria and Ukraine, MACN decided to establish a local HelpDesk in Egypt in October 2021.

The objective of the HelpDesk is to empower and support companies to reject corrupt demands during transit or port call by providing a real-time incident resolution and accountability mechanism. If an illicit demand or request is made, the Local HelpDesk team can intervene on the vessel's behalf by escalating the issue to the relevant government agency tasked with integrity oversight.

On the next page, you can see a high-level illustration of how MACNs HelpDesk process work in practice.

Such real-time cooperation between private and public sector actors has proven to be a highly efficient means of tackling corrupt demands face-on, and is an instrument we strive to improve, expand and develop further. →

522

Pre-Arrival
Notifications Received

11

Cases has been
escalated as incidents

100%

Of escalated incidents
have been successfully
resolved

HelpDesk process in Egypt explained



Inbound vessel sends a
Pre-Arrival Notification (PAN)
minimum 4 days prior to the
upcoming port call and/or canal transit



The HelpDesk team registers the PAN,
confirms receipt, and remains on standby. They
also return front-line material and local advice in
preparation for the upcoming call/transit.

Canal transit Port Call

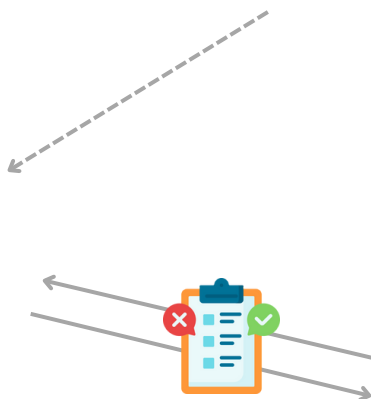
If faced with an integrity challenge
the Vessel can contact the
HelpDesk for assistance



The HelpDesk team assesses the incident and
provides advice on how to deal with the situation
and/or
escalates the situation to relevant authorities,
or a dedicated ombudsman who will deal
with the situation directly.



Bon voyage!



The HelpDesk sends a post-call/transit
questionnaire to the Vessel and collects
information of their port call/transit experience.


In order for this concept to be effective, the HelpDesk needs local anchoring – operated by professionals committed to the integrity agenda and equipped with comprehensive knowledge of the local operating environment. Having assessed many potential partners, MACN decided to partner with Eldib Pandi – a maritime consultancy and service provider, with legally trained team members – and subsequently established the Egypt HelpDesk in October 2021, functioning as an extension of the MACN secretariat on the ground.

Since opening the local HelpDesk in Egypt, more than 500 Pre-Arrival Notification (PANs) has been submitted by vessels calling Egyptian ports or transiting through the Suez Canal. The PAN prepares our dedicated team to remain on stand-by to assist seafarers who may face challenging situations. Additionally, when the vessel sends a PAN, the HelpDesk team will share country-specific preparation details, recent developments, and frontline material to best prepare the vessel for the upcoming call or canal transit.

Our local partner has also been instrumental in MACNs collaborative efforts with local government agencies. In November 2022, MACN and the Suez Canal Authority concluded and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) outlining a bilateral commitment to work for improved integrity. The MoU has since been followed up with a specific protocol for incident escalation, joint training programs, and capacity building to ensure that both the private industry and local authorities comply with Egyptian anti-bribery laws.

Questionnaire Implementation

In March 2023, a post-call/transit questionnaire was established as an integrated part of our HelpDesk in Egypt, in an effort to gain a fresh glimpse into the realities experienced on the ground and at sea, tapping into the wealth of information that lies with seafarers at the frontline. For the past six months, the questionnaire has been in operation, already proving its value in our quest to improve operational conditions for the industry.



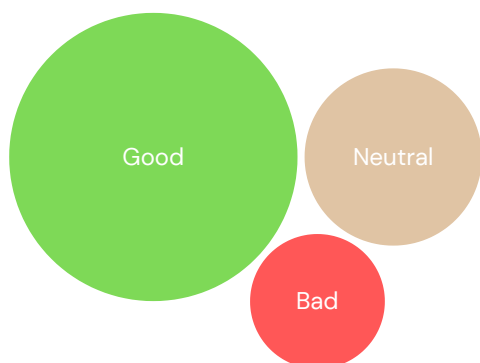
The transit was fine and all went well as per schedule. Suez Canal personnel behavior was correct and professional. I have noticed a real improvement compared to my previous transits in 2018.

Captain of Crude Oil Tanker
Experience Note – June 2023

Not only does the questionnaire initiative provides seafarers with a much-needed platform to voice their concerns and experiences, reflected in a 90 percent response rate since its implementation. It also lends MACN invaluable insights and firsthand accounts from the frontline. This feedback greatly assists MACN and the HelpDesk’s continuous efforts to evolve in response to the real-world challenges that seafarers encounter.

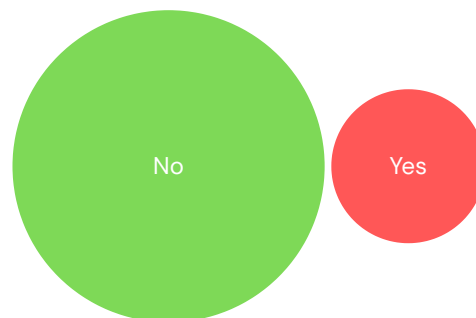
As we move on to the next page, we will delve into the initial insight gleaned from the questionnaires. We’ve also found that the questionnaire has uncovered many instances where vessels have faced challenges, yet successfully navigated the situation without needing to escalate the case to the HelpDesk. This demonstrates a promising shift in the way these situations are being managed, one we look forward to examining more closely.→

How was your port call / transit experience?



SAMPLE Good (119) Neutral (45) Bad (26)

Did you face challenges with any boarding authorities?



SAMPLE No (152) Yes (37)

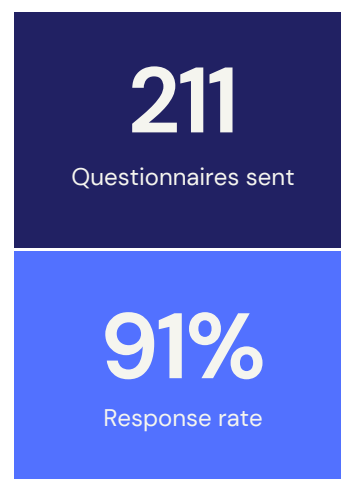
In the open-ended feedback, several seafarers provided a mixed but insightful perspective on their encounters with local officials, providing both MACN and the HelpDesk team with 'eyes on the ground' and first-hand accounts captured in real-time.

A clear majority stated that they did not face any demands or serious challenges during their port call or canal transit. While some faced demands for facilitation payments and gifts, a number of respondents mentioned the vital importance of clear communication of anti-bribery policies, adequate preparation of the vessel, and active use of MACN's front-line material in mitigating these issues.

Several respondents highlighted the growing change in attitude among public personnel, whom display both professionalism and cooperation despite requests not being met. Some respondents noted that upon refusing demands, there were no resistance or further requests, signifying an increased acceptance and understanding of MACN's zero-tolerance policy.

In several instances, seafarers praised the well-coordinated and organised transit process, as well as the manoeuvring and ship-handling expertise of the pilots. These positive experiences underline the pivotal role played by the local authorities.

Despite the overall progress, which undoubtedly points towards an improved operational environment, responses also suggest that some old practices persist, with seafarers continuing to face demands – mostly for cigarettes and presents – from a range of public authorities. This indicates the need for sustained collective efforts, from both the private industry and local authorities, to ensure full compliance with anti-corruption policies and Egyptian anti-bribery laws. →



The HelpDesk initiative has evidently boosted the confidence of the seafarers, whom now have a firm partner of support when things get out of hand. In addition, the questionnaire offers a channel to share their experiences and issues, while also providing MACN with crucial data to further refine its strategies.

This reflects a tangible shift in the right direction, a testament to MACN's positive impact on the ground. However, while the narratives underscore that progress has been made, the journey to a corruption-free maritime industry in Egypt is still underway.

As we analyse and act on these insights, MACN is committed to continue working with all stakeholders, entrenching our collaboration with local authorities to ensure that the sea becomes an even safer place for those who brave its waves.

Interested in learning more about MACN's initiatives in Egypt?

We welcome you to reach out to the secretariat directly, or visit our [country page](#) for insights on our local partners, project developments and continuous updates.

There was an attempt from some individuals to put forward a demand for cigarettes. I politely replied that our company is a member of MACN and it's illegal for me to offer such gifts and they did not insist.

Captain of LPG Tanker
Experience Note - March 2023

There is a noticeable improvement in personnel attitudes. With the increasing number of ships crossing the canal, it's become busier. The boarding personnel now understand both our company's and the Egyptian authorities' commitment to the Anti-Bribery Scheme, leading to an increasingly better situation as time progresses.

Captain of Crude Oil Tanker
Experience Note - July 2023



AUGUST 2022
Meeting between MACN CEO, Cecilia Müller Torbrand and Chairman and Managing Director of the Suez Canal Authority, Admiral Osama Mounier Mohamed Rabie.



APRIL 2023
MACN local partner, Nada Eldib from Eldib Pandi, presenting progress and next steps in Egypt at MACN's member meeting in Copenhagen.

Written by
Martin Stene
mstene@macn.dk

