

**An official who directs work for a firm that loads and unloads ships at the Port of Douala, Cameroon, recently developed a system for manual labour based on better preparation, anticipation, and deployment of employees. This system sped up operations by 30 to 40 per cent. Another employee ended the port's dependence on fax and phone communications with incoming ships and foreign liner offices – a major expense because of the cost of overseas phone calls from Africa. A new method using information and communications technology – including e-mail and other Internet links – is saving over \$200,000 per year.**

**These officials are among more than 160 middle managers at Douala who have completed a course in modern port management developed by UNCTAD in consultation with experts from the Port of Marseille, France, and the Ghent Port Company, Belgium. UNCTAD has found that middle managers make many of the vital, day-to-day decisions at such facilities. Training them can result in significant increases in efficiency, more rapid transfer of cargo, and lower costs.**



*Port of Douala.*

## Training that helps ports be more efficient, less costly

Ports in Africa and other less developed regions receive fewer shipping services and are visited by smaller ships. Unloading operations and the subsequent release of cargo are generally slower. The lack of economies of scale (that is, the equipment required is not heavily used relative to its cost) and the lower speeds add to shipping expenses. It is estimated that every day that a shipment is delayed is equivalent to 0.8 per cent of the value of the goods.

Developing countries can ill afford these shortcomings. Many developing countries are highly dependent on ports; for example, 90 per cent of the total value of Senegal's foreign trade passes through its port of Dakar. Currently, some 80 per cent of global merchandise exports travel at some point by ship, making cheap and rapid access to the world's sea lanes critical for participation in international trade. It is hard for developing countries to achieve healthy economic growth without such trade, and businesses have trouble competing when faced with slow and expensive port operations.

By contrast, research has shown that doubling port efficiency at both ends of a shipment of goods can have the same effect on maritime transport costs as moving the two ports 50 per cent closer together. Expensive, high-volume cranes and other equipment may be beyond the means of many developing-country ports, but efficient, well-organized use of what they do have – together with judicious applications of new technology and carefully chosen equipment that can be afforded – are not. Improvements here can make a difference, and effective training of middle managers has a direct, positive effect on such operations.

## UNCTAD's TrainForTrade port training programme

Instruction in port management is part of a major category of UNCTAD's work known as TrainForTrade, which provides training that helps developing countries to participate effectively in international trade. The method involves the "training of trainers." If local officials are taught practical, useful knowledge, and are taught how to pass it on to their colleagues, then there is a multiplier effect, and many more people learn. This method can be especially effective because domestically based instructors are familiar with local conditions and know how best to apply the training.

Begun in 1998 for French-speaking port communities in Africa, the port training programme consists of instruction over a period of one to two years, most of it delivered locally and with the content adapted to local conditions, with knowledge passed from senior to middle managers. Similar courses for Portuguese-, Spanish- and English-speaking ports in Africa, Latin America and Asia were added later. Instruction is principally given by high-level managers of the beneficiary ports who have attended intensive training courses at the Ghent Port Company and the Port of Marseille (for French-speakers), the Dublin Port Company (for English-speakers), the ports of Gijón and Valencia (for Spanish-speakers) and the ports of Leixões, Portugal, or of ENAPOR in Cape Verde (for Portuguese-speakers). International experts also visit developing-country ports to help design and deliver the instruction. Since 1998, over 60 courses have been carried out in 16 countries, and more than 900 port operators have been trained.

<sup>1</sup> *Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Djibouti, Gabon, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Peru, Senegal, Togo and the United Republic of Tanzania. (Cape Verde, which began as a beneficiary country, now helps to deliver the course. Namibia will participate in the next round of English-language training.)*

The course consists of eight modules:

- (a) International trade and transport
- (b) Organization of a port system
- (c) Functioning of a port system
- (d) Future challenges for ports
- (e) Methods and tools of modern port management
- (f) Economic and commercial management
- (g) Administrative and legal management
- (h) Technical management and human resources development

In addition, each student writes a thesis on some aspect of port operations – often proposing a solution to a problem faced by his own company – and defends the thesis before an international panel of experts. Graduates who received the UNCTAD Certificate in Modern Port Management have often been promoted to high managerial positions, and in some cases have founded their own firms. Two years after completing his training in Douala, Cameroon, one graduate established an unloading and storage business. He now requires all of his middle managers to take the course.

In its first three years, the programme received financial support from the Governments of France and Belgium and from the beneficiary ports. Over the last 10 years, the French network has been self-funded by the ports, and by their developed-country partners, who contribute the instruction. The Government of Spain and member ports finance the Spanish-speaking network. Irish Aid and member ports provide funding for the English-language programme. At the launch of the Portuguese-speaking network, funding was provided by the Port of Leixões and the Government of Portugal.