

GENDER INTEGRATION PROMOTES SUSTAINABLE COASTAL FISHERIES RESOURCE USE: CASE STUDIES AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS FROM JAPAN

Hana Matsubara* and Mitsutaku Makino

Atmosphere and Ocean Research Institute, The University of Tokyo, 5-1-5, Kashiwanoha, Kashiwa-shi, Chiba 277-8564 Japan

*hmatsubara@g.ecc.u-tokyo.ac.jp

Promoting a Blue Economy that ensures sustainable use of marine resources requires including small-scale fishers and gender perspectives to ensure equity—known as Blue Justice—yet more studies are needed to understand how these efforts impact fisheries resource use in practice. This study explores how gender integration in small-scale coastal fisheries-related activities in Japan impact on sustainability of resource use, and offers policy recommendations based on the results of case studies.

Five case studies from Japan were examined: (1) husband-wife fishing operations in Chiba, (2) women’s engagement in purse-seine fishery in Nagasaki, (3) management of Akamoku (*Sargassum horneri*) in Fukuoka, (4) the “Mothers’ Restaurant” run by the Fisheries Cooperative Association (FCA) in Ibaraki, and (5) female leadership as an FCA president in Toyama. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to examine impacts caused on ecological and social aspects, including gender aspects. Findings show that gender integration strengthens communication among fishers, facilitates diverse contributions based on gendered knowledge, skills, and networks, and promotes sustainable coastal resource use (Fig. 1).

Japanese fisheries policy documents mention supports women’s participation but do not include terms of “gender” or “gender mainstreaming” yet. The Basic Fisheries Plan (2022) emphasizes diversity and inclusion, encouraging participation regardless of age, gender, or nationality. While the cases highlight diverse contributions to sustainability, they also expose challenges linked to traditional gender roles, such as unequal care work distribution in fishing households and the need for gender-neutral infrastructure in ports and vessels. This study argues that shifting Japan’s fisheries policies from a women-focused approach to gender mainstreaming is crucial to prevent reproducing gender-based inequalities. Such transformation will promote an equitable and Blue Economy incorporating small-scale fishers and gender perspective.

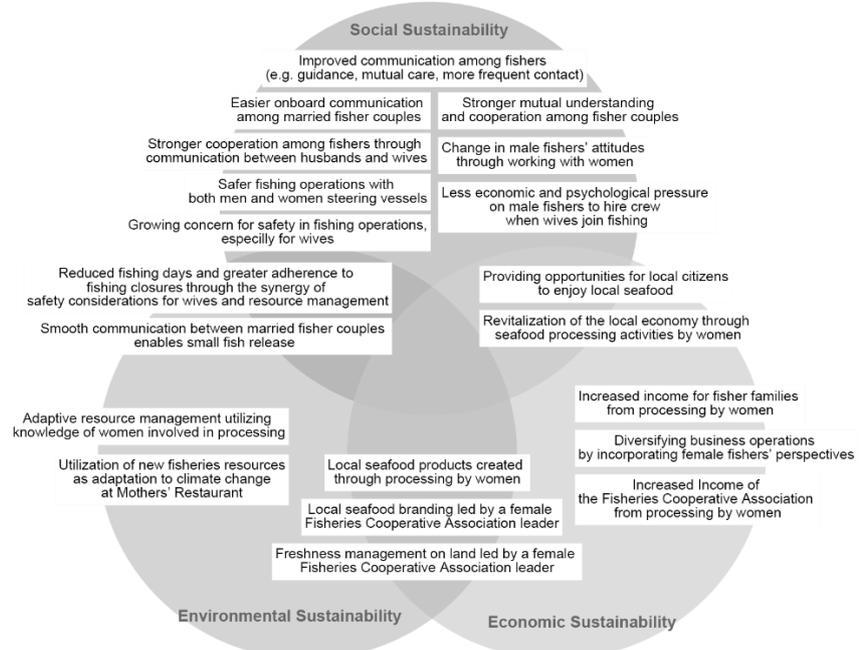


Fig. 1 The impact of gender integration in fisheries-related activities on sustainability of coastal fisheries resource use