

Gender Policies of Fisheries and Fishing Communities in Japan

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women's issues are attracting greater attention in Japan

- A new bill to promote women's participation was enacted in August 2015, and the fourth Basic Plan for Gender Equality was drawn up in December 2015.
- This bill and the Basic Plan represent an attempt to promote the hiring and appointment of women and to increase human resources to grow into leadership positions in order to expand women's participation in every arena.

The ratio of women who are regular members or board members of FCA

- The FCA principally decides on policymaking about local fisheries and fishing communities.
- Only regular members or board members can participate in the decision-making process of the FCA.



One meeting in FCA.
All of them are men.

The ratio of women who are regular members or board members of FCA

- However, the ratio of female regular members of the FCA is 5.4%, while the ratio of female board members is 0.5%.
- These are extremely low values.

Qualification to become a regular member of FCA

- “a fisher who has a residence within the district of the cooperative in question, engages in a fishery business, or engages in fisheries in excess of the number of days established by the articles of the association (90 to 120 days during a single year).”

Fisheries Cooperative Association Law

Qualification to become a regular member of FCA

- If the person meets the prescribed number of days of fishing and has an address within the district of the particular FCA, they meet the basic qualifications to be a regular member.
- Women are able to become regular members.
- However, even though requirement for membership is limited by number of days spent fishing, there are, in fact, very few women who are regular members of a FCA.

Low evaluation of work on land

- Although many women are also contributing to the fishing industry through their work on land, they have not been taken very seriously until now.
- Therefore, in many cases people argue that women don't meet the basic qualifications.



Low evaluation of work on land

- Even if the work that many women involved in fisheries do on land was recognized as “ days of work” in fisheries, it would still be difficult for them to become regular members of the FCA, even if they fulfilled this required number of days, because they are not recognized as “ members of the fishing industry.”

Case study

women's group in Yamaguchi pref.



Main item at their restaurant



restaurant



delicatessen

- They employ 9 fishery women and 18 local women.
- Their yearly sales are 40 million yen (US\$376,000).
- Most women's fishery entrepreneurship groups yearly sales are around 3 million yen(US\$30,000), so their yearly sales can be described as large.
- The president of this group is also the head of the local FCA women's group, and was chosen by election to head the women's group of the National Federation of FCA.
- But she cannot become a regular member of the FCA.
- Her work is not recognizes as fishery work.

Are women who catch fish at the sea recognized as “members of the fishing industry”?

Case study

women diver in Yamaguchi pref.

- There is an area in Yamaguchi prefecture, where women divers are important in fishing.
- Here, out of 105 fishers, 73 are women divers.
- These women are proud to be women divers and they feel confident of themselves as money-earners.
- Although it is said their income is declining nowadays, each woman diver catches about 10 million yen (US\$94,000) worth of fish over a 30-day period.
- Fishing by women divers contributes to the local economy of this area.

Case study

women diver in Yamaguchi pref.

- Women divers cannot become regular members of FCAs. Their husbands become regular members.
- “ Because our FCA embraces the firmly rooted rule of one member per household.”

The firmly rooted rule of one-household/one-member system

- The one-household/one-member system was originally created to further cooperative use and management of common resources by having the FCAs (which are the organizations that administer fishing rights) limit membership in order to prevent overfishing of resources through uncontrolled fishing.

- But the intent and the actuality diverge greatly.
- For example, some people continue to hold membership even though they have finished less than the required member of days because of old age or working outside fisheries.
- (women diver's case) why not? The people engaged in the actual fishing work are women.

Case study

women diver in Yamaguchi pref.

- In addition, they have one organization as a professional group for women divers.
- This group has responsibility and the power of decision-making for all matters concerning women divers' activities.
- But this group is organized by 40 men who are husbands and owners of the boats for women divers, and women don't participate in this group's meetings.
- Women are not permitted.

What can I say in my context?

- Thus, even though they engage in fisheries through their work at sea or on land, they have not had the right to speak out in the FCA or in fishing communities as “members of the fishing industry.”
- Many women in fishing communities are directly in contact with both the fishery economy and the local economy through work at sea or on land, they are able to grasp accurately fishing issues and local issues.

- From now, in order to sustain communities and regional fisheries and to enjoy life in the community while focusing on fisheries, it is necessary to change the social system that has been based until now on gender consciousness.
- To do so, it will be necessary for the women of fishing communities to gain opportunities to share in the responsibilities of society and to speak out.
- As a step toward this, women becoming regular members of the FCA will surely become more and more important.