

The Challenges and
Empowerment of Women
Fishery Entrepreneurship Groups
in Japan
: examining the steps taken by the
Umi Hito Kurashi forum

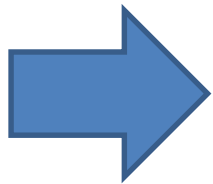
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Background

- The amount of fishery production and the number of fishers are decreasing
- Income earned from fishing is static
- Younger generations are reluctant to enter the fishery industry



Many wives of fishers have launched fishery –related small businesses in order to help overcome this situation

Background

- Their most important activities have been the processing and marketing of fish products.
- When these women started their businesses in various locations around the year 2000, they didn't know what kind of commodities would be successful, or how or where they should sell them.
- They had little opportunity for administrative training to meet these needs.

Background

- We believed that women in fishing communities all over Japan needed opportunities to share their issues and experiences and exchange information.
- create a volunteer group called the Umi Hito Kurashi forum (Forum for Sea, People, and Life) in 2003.
- Supported by Tokyo Fisheries Promotion Foundation

Background

- Face-to-face meetings annually
- Reports and booklets
- Small seminars

Three questions

1. How does the forum benefit women's fishery entrepreneurship groups?
2. Have fishery women increased their empowerment through this forum?
3. How can we support the empowerment of women in fishing communities in the future?

meanings of annual face-to-face meetings

1. That the women themselves are able to learn what they need.

Year	Theme
2005	Thinking about serving ideas and advantages of local fish
2006	Situation and issues for fishery women's groups' activities
2007	Discussing work and issues of fishery women's groups
2008	Situation and issues for fishery women's groups
2009	Sales methods suitable for fishery women's groups

Year	Theme
2010	What we can address in our communities
2011	Activities for the future, extending our networks
2012	Necessary factors in developing exciting fishery products
2013	What we can do at the present time
2014	Seafood culinary culture rooted in our communities and activities
2015	We are taking one step forward
2016	Expressing our own ideas in our own words
2017	Ways to involve the younger generation



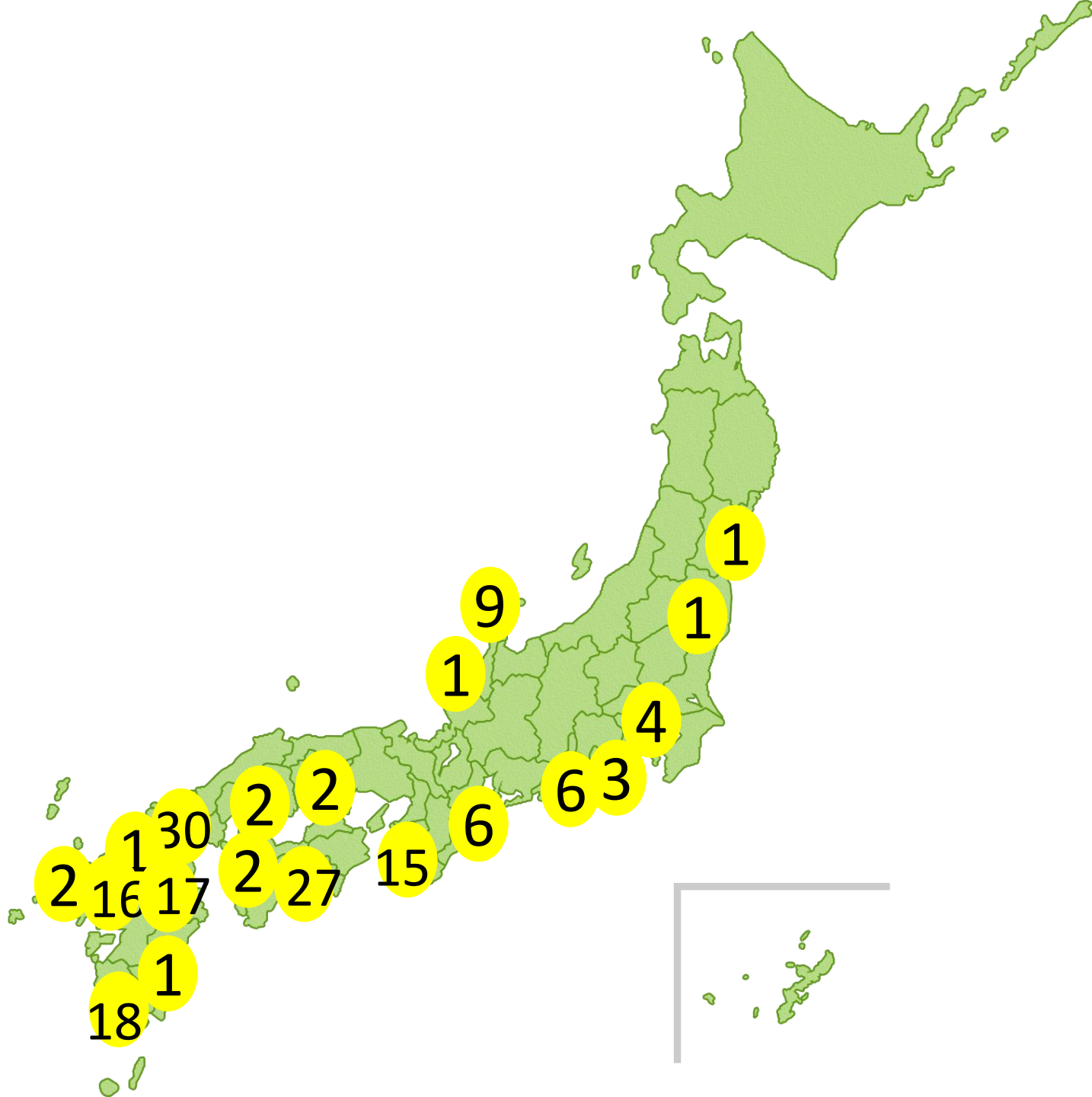
Food tasting events



meanings of annual face-to-face meetings

2. Seeking to understand and reveal local efforts in each area

- A different host prefecture is selected every time in order to reveal these efforts.
- Fisheries promotion officers at the prefectural government level know a lot about local activities.
- However, when we conduct interviews, we often uncover efforts and activities that even the fisheries promotion officers don't know about.



meanings of annual face-to-face meetings

3. Playing a role in reunions

- Japanese fishing communities have strong critical tendencies “The nail that sticks out gets hammered down”
- Entrepreneurship groups cannot often gain sympathy from local people
- They cannot complain about matters in their local communities

- A platform form for women to emphasize various shared issues and air cross-regional complaints, catch up on each other's lives, and offer friendly support and restore each other's energy.

Small workshops for picking up on specific needs

- Small workshops for specific needs for 10 or so attends.
- These needs include learning about business (such as opening up new markets, product development, accounting and controlling sanitation.)



- One effort that emerged from this series of small workshops was the aim of running a booth at a major convention (Japan International Seafood & Technology Expo)
- Held a small workshop considering the keys to success in business negotiations at the expo, and we ran booths in 2017 too.



- Participants came up with the idea of displaying the unified logo of Umi Hito Kurashi in these activities.
- The intent was to show that they have learned from each other as members of Umi Hito Kurashi Forum.
- This idea is currently under consideration.

- Another initiative was the case of fishery women organizing and managing a small workshop under their own motivation.
- Fishery women in Oita volunteered to hold a small workshop in 2015.
- They selected their own theme and lecturers, requested lectures, managed the venue, and moderated the discussion on the day.



- Voluntary proposals and initiatives by fishery women can be observed over these years.

Conclusion

1. There is little administrative support for fishery women's groups, particular entrepreneurship groups, as their purpose is business. The Umi Hito Kurashi Forum has provided opportunities to learn and create a network for fishery women's groups.

2. We can observe changes in awareness among these women-for instance,

“Thinking of the next plan”

“Pursuing concrete dreams”

“Mutually helping other women or women’s groups,”

“Expressing ourselves in front of others,”

“Having our own opinions,” etc.

“bargaining with others (such as buyers) at the expo”.

We believe they are gaining empowerment through this Forum.

3. On the other hand, when thinking about empowerment, people tend to speak about economic empowerment. We believe changes such as “Expressing ourselves in front of other people” are also important. Unfortunately, It is not easy to present these facts objectively and they are difficult to evaluate quantitatively. However, we have a strong sense of these changes through the Umi Hito Kurashi Forum’s activities.

4. How do we help increase the initiative of these women? Sometimes the presiding group sets up the framework for a face-to-face meeting and fishery women are just “guests.” We are currently considering ways to grant fishery women more ownership.

5. The reason we are able to continue these activities is financial support from the Tokyo Fishery Promotion Foundation. It is highly significant that some people at the Foundation appreciate our activities, despite the difficulty of assessing our efforts in terms of numbers or analyzing our results in terms of objective targets. However, this condition will not continue in perpetuity. Securing our own future financial opportunities is a crucial issue for the Forum.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

