

IWD 2022 – GENDER EQUALITY TODAY FOR A SUSTAINABLE TOMORROW

Reflections on Ocean Sustainability

International Women’s Day presents a unique opportunity to reflect on the invaluable role women play in societies across the globe – and to recognise the major challenges and inhibitions they face. The [theme this year](#) rests on the intersection between a burgeoning recognition of the need to ensure a sustainable planet for generations to come, and the immutable power women have to drive innovation and change towards this end.

Perhaps this intersection is even more prominent in the area of ocean sustainability, where a convoluted mix of threats shroud a myriad of opportunities. The ocean space presents a peculiar conundrum that can never fully be addressed without the inclusion of all segments of society – especially the often marginalised and vulnerable groups. As a matter of fact, case studies from around the world have corroborated the need to [include female leadership in the management of coastal and marine ecosystems](#) for more beneficial outcomes.

From [the protection of the marine environment](#) in general, to advancing sustainable fisheries in particular, investments in women often have rippling effects across entire communities. In 2017, UN Women shared a vivid portrayal of this posit – [the story of a 68-year-old woman](#) who defied all odds by becoming the first fisherwoman in her community in Thiaroue-sur-Mer, Senegal. Yayi Bayam Diouf went on to empower several other women within her community to engage in sustainable fishing and aquaculture as a means of safeguarding their livelihoods.

Women’s active participation in marine environmental sustainability could also wield much deeper undertones than ever envisaged. For instance, research has begun to show that countries that have larger numbers female parliamentarians are [more likely to ratify international environmental agreements](#). Again, women offer unique perspectives for addressing marine environmental concerns that could otherwise be missed.

In spite of these crucial contributions of women, a segmentation of roles within several blue economy sectors has systematically positioned them to earn much less remuneration than their male counterparts. As a matter of fact, [women are approximately 90% more involved in low-paid tasks](#) and are usually unable to engage in “higher-value” work based on societal segregations, despite constituting half of all seafood workers across the globe. What’s more, they are often the most adversely affected by major oceanic challenges, from the climate crisis to plastic pollution and illegal fishing.

International Women’s Day should represent an awakening of individuals across the globe that the ocean needs women as much as women need the ocean. Productive dialogues centered on the active integration of women into leadership roles to address complex sustainability challenges such as those facing the ocean are a crucial first step driving impactful change. We must #breakthebias...for the ocean.

