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New Approaches and Challenges for the Sustainable Regeneration of Fishing Villages and Fishery Harbors - Focusing on the Pilot Project for the Revitalization of Fishing Villages

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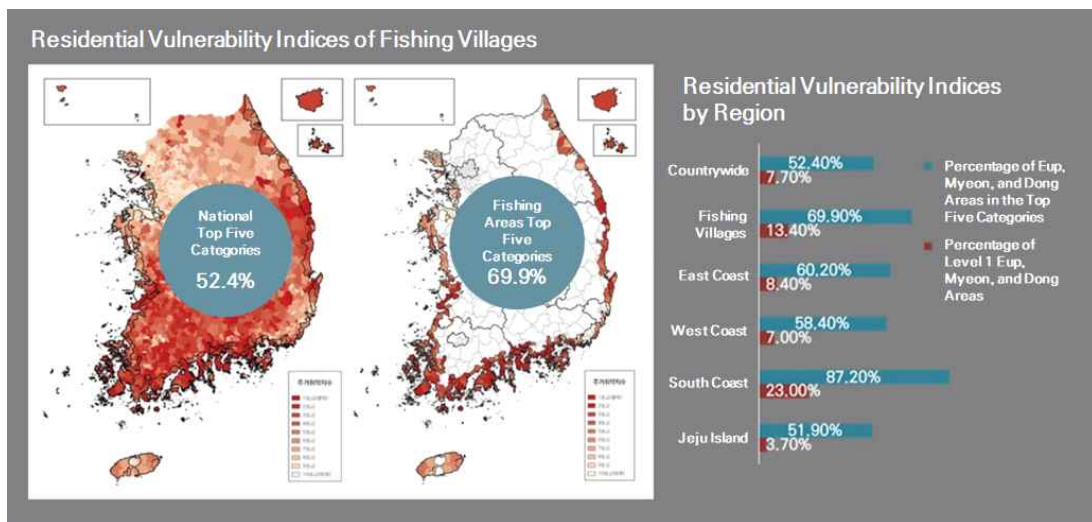
In 2022, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries launched the Pilot Project for the Revitalization of Fishing Villages for the sustainable regeneration of fishing villages and fishery harbors. The pilot project aims to create a service delivery system focusing on fishing village living zones and to establish economic ecosystems for fishing villages. The pilot project is a public-private partnership (PPP) as well as a problem-solving project through which an anchor organization that functions as a local management company is stationed on-site for four years to present solutions to problems in the community. The anchor organization is expected to identify key issues based on the needs of local residents and resource surveys and to develop them into sustainable projects by conducting social innovation experiments. This will be done to create a foundation for revitalizing fishing villages to continue based on local capacity even if national funding ends. This article aims to identify the achievements and limitations of the pilot project and propose future considerations for better implementation of the fishing village and fishing port revitalization project.

● **Background for Launching the Fishing Village and Fishing Port Revitalization Project**

- **Fishing Villages at Risk of Extinction due to Declines in Population and Fisheries**

Fishing villages are in decline due to the super-aging population and the decline in the number of those engaged in fishing, along with the lower productivity of fisheries led by the decline of the primary industry and worsening living conditions.¹⁾ In addition to many blind spots with regard to public transportation and medical services, the proportion of households lacking access to basic living infrastructure, such as education, culture, and leisure facilities, is also more than twice as high relative to that in urban areas (Seo et al., 2021, pp. 28-31). The residential vulnerability index, which evaluates the quality of living conditions in residential areas, was also found to be significantly higher than the national standard, with 70% of fishing villages in the top five categorical listings (Seo et al., 2021, pp.32-33).

National Residential Vulnerability Index by Eup, Myeon, and Dong



Source: Seo et al. (2021.p.33)

Accordingly, 25 out of the 89 depopulation regions designated by the Ministry of the Interior and Safety in 2021 were fishing villages, and it is estimated that 81.24% of fishing villages will face local extinction by 2045 (Park et al., 2018, p.75).

- The Age of Localism and the Potential of Fishing Villages

Despite the decline of fishing villages, remote workers, referred to as “local-oriented” people who aspire to live as “half-farmer, half-X (anything)” have recently displayed a tendency to migrate and settle in farming and fishing villages as their second homes. Such people tend to create jobs and attract new colleagues at the locations in which they wish to live by assigning a new value to such places and by using their resources.²⁾ Fishing villages have been recognized as places with high potential for people with diverse tastes and lifestyles, not only in terms of food self-sufficiency due to the presence of agriculture and fishing but also in terms of access to a variety of marine recreational activities, such as fishing, skydiving, and surfing.

- The Launch of the Pilot Project for the Revitalization of Fishing Villages to Enhance the “Quality of Life” of Residents of Fishing Villages

The Pilot Project for the Revitalization of Fishing Villages (hereinafter referred to simply as the Pilot Project) launched by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries in 2022 for the regeneration of fishing villages and fishery harbors aims to improve the level of life services lacking in fishing villages, such as education, welfare, care, and culture, and to create jobs utilizing the potential resources of fishing villages to curb population outflow and induce the inflow of local-oriented people.

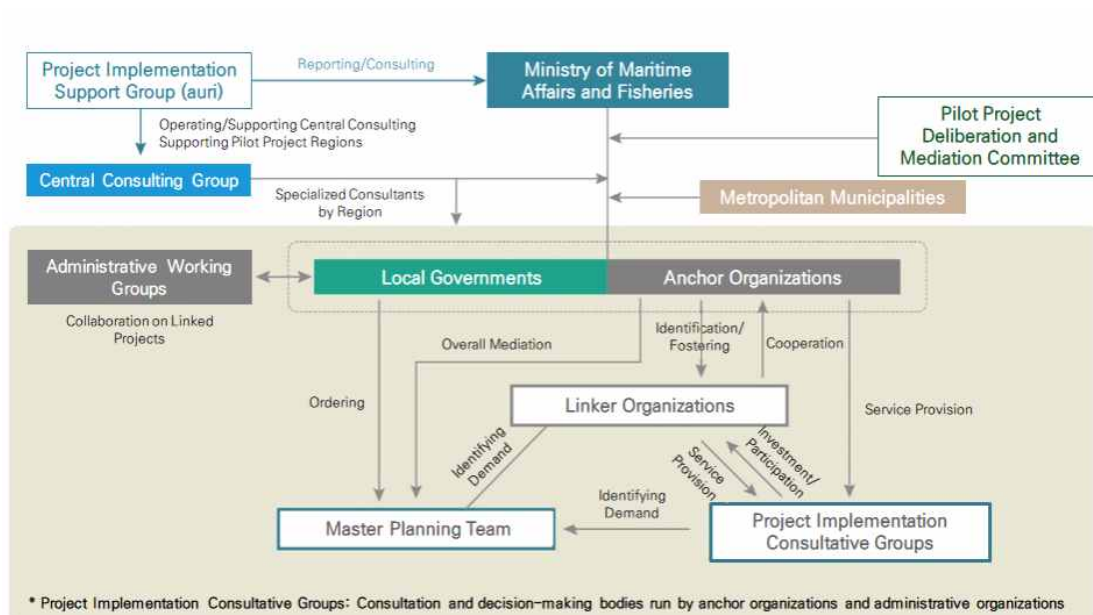
● Implementation System for the Pilot Project for the Revitalization of Fishing Villages

- Introduction of the Public-Private Partnership Implementation System for Enhanced Project Execution

After the decision made by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries that the social problems of fishing villages cannot be resolved via the capacities of the local municipalities and the aged residents alone, the Pilot Project was designed as a Public-Private Partnership through which creative and competent private actors participate as anchor organizations. Anchor organizations are responsible for building collaborative governance structures with local communities and administrative organizations and for acting as the overall planner and executor of

the project. Anchor organizations will be stationed at their project sites to resolve community problems and should search for and collaborate with linker organizations that can develop the resources of fishing villages into valuable projects. Linker organizations are agents that provide and deliver life services and create jobs. These include public and non-profit organizations in various sectors, such as welfare, care, and education, local fishing companies, and social ventures that create social value. Competent neighborhood organizations can also participate as linker organizations.

Implementation System for the Pilot Project



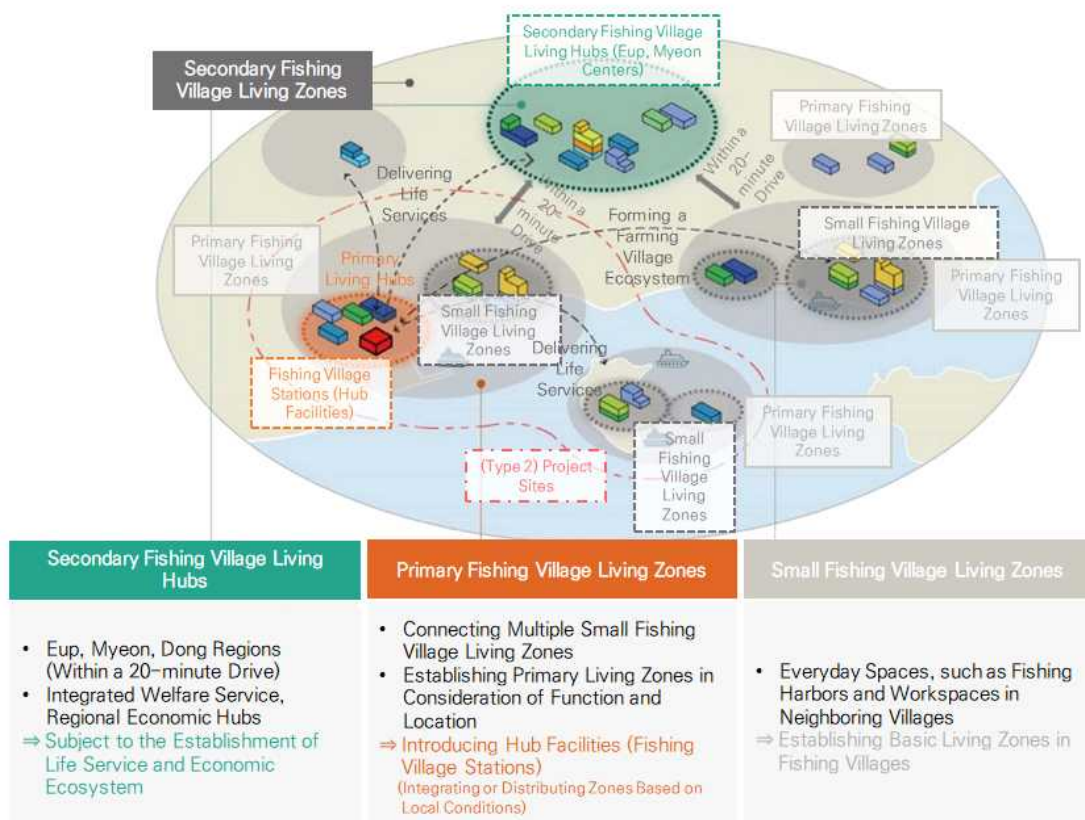
Source: Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (2022)

Anchor organizations and local administrative organizations should form Project Implementation Consultative Groups consisting of members of the Master Planning Team and interested parties to establish collaborative governance when executing the project. The Architecture and Urban Research Institute (AURI) serves as the Project Implementation Support Group, monitoring the entire process of the Pilot Project and running the Central Consulting Group to provide consulting services in specialized areas for each project site.

- Introducing Fishing Village Living Zones and Establishing Living Zone-centered Life Service and a Circular Economy

The Pilot Project should begin by setting up living zones in fishing villages to improve accessibility to life services and establish circular economies. The establishment of fishing village living zones is intended to connect residents to the services they need and to set up minimum units for building circular systems for the local economy, including the consumption and distribution of local specialties and the creation of jobs using local resources. The fishing village living zones can be set up as primary fishing village living zones (within 5 km of a central fishing port) by integrating at least two small living zones that can share life services, consisting of small ports and their neighboring villages, as well as secondary living zones, defined in the Korean context as important eup, myeon, and dong areas that can provide essential life services, including medical, administrative, and welfare services for residents of fishing villages or neighboring state-owned fishery harbors.

Establishing Fishing Village Living Zones – Living Hubs and Project Sites



Source: Seo *et al.* (2021.p.23)

- Planning and Running Social Innovation Programs for Social Problems in Fishing Villages

Anchor organizations should collaborate with the Master Planning Team and conduct complete surveys of project site residents to identify their needs and produce key agenda items by combining the results of in-depth analyses of the potential resources, status, and economic conditions of the project site's location. The feasibility of the key agenda items is verified through social innovation programs. Social innovation programs undergo the planning stage and are implemented for two years, and their results are reflected and confirmed as unit projects and are further reflected in the master plan.

Operation Process of Social Innovation Programs



Social innovation programs are open to linker organizations and can be linked to programs supported by various government branches and administrative organizations. Once the feasibility of the project is confirmed through the social innovation program, the functions and scales of fishing village stations can be established.

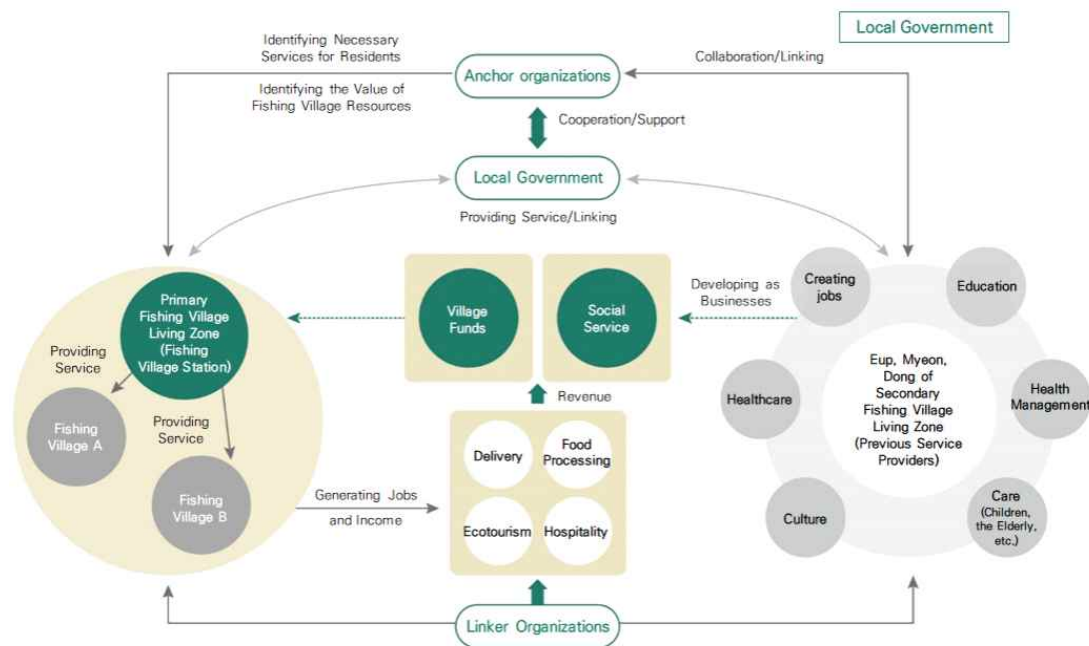
- Creation of Fishing Village Stations as Small Hubs for Linking Life Services and Forming Economic Ecosystems

In the primary fishing village living zones, fishing village stations provide life services, such as care, education, culture, and economic activities. Fishing village stations can differ according to their function, such as care stations for providing welfare services for village residents, fishing village economic activities stations for establishing networks for economic activities, and fishing village living stations to encourage the inflow of the living population.

Health, care, and educational programs centered at fishing village stations

can be implemented as social-service-related commercial businesses, and programs supported by local governments can be operated consistently in conjunction with relevant departmental projects. In addition, a portion of the revenue generated from economic activities using local resources can be used for operating fishing village stations or as village funds. As such, anchor organizations, together with the linker organizations that participate in the project, should devise strategies for the continued operation of the fishing village stations after the end of the government-funded project.

Fishing Village Station Operation Strategies



- Case Studies of the Project for the Revitalization of Fishing Villages

- Pilot Project Process and Outline

The pilot project is in its third year, with four sites selected in 2022 through an open call for proposals by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries in December of 2021. Local governments held open calls and selected anchor organizations before applying for the government-funded project, and the project sites were selected by assessing the capability of the anchor organizations. Among the four sites, the selected anchor organizations for Geoje and Donghae were local organizations, while in Taean-gun, a consortium of local and non-local organizations was selected. A non-local organization was selected in

Goheung-gun, as it was difficult to find competent local anchor organizations due to its less favorable geographic conditions.

Pilot Project Sites

Category	Donghae	Geoje	Goheung-gun	Taeon-gun
Region	Daejin Port/Eodal Port and Neighboring Villages	Jangseeungpo/Neugpo Port and Neighboring Villages	Geumjin Port and Neighboring Villages	Mageompo Port, 3 Small Ports and Neighboring Villages
Anchor Organization	Cooperative Cultural Powerhouse Gonggam	Create2Share Inc.	Traditional Culture Contents Institute Yeon	Local Development Network+Local Motive Inc.
Organization Type	Cooperative	Preparatory Social Enterprise	Incorporated Association	Cooperative, Corporation

Anchor organizations are commissioned to identify local social problems, analyze resources, plan and run social innovation programs, identify linker organizations, and establish and execute implementation systems as guided by local governments. While the situation may differ by region, the master plans for the pilot projects have been set, and social innovation programs are currently underway. This article introduces two case studies in which the details of the pilot projects have been confirmed.

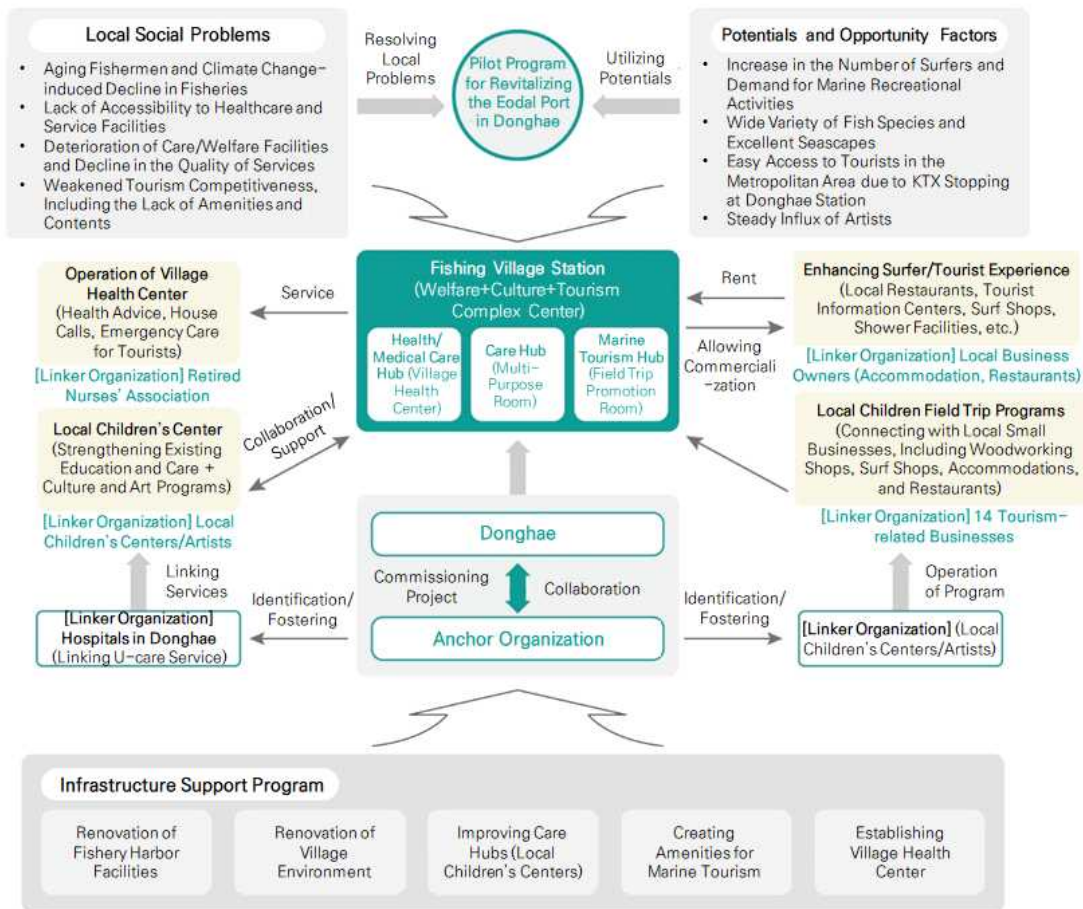
- Revitalizing Fishing Villages in Donghae through a “Village Health Center” and a “Fishing Village Field Trip Program with Local Children’s Centers”

The Eodal Living Zone in Donghae is a fishing village where fishing and tourism coexist with struggling fisheries led by a climate-change-induced decline in the supply of squid, the region's main product, and aging fishermen. Although it takes twenty minutes to drive to the secondary fishing village living zone where the public health center, hospitals, and pharmacies are located, many households are unable to receive medical welfare services due to the high proportion of elderly and low-income residents who have difficulty driving. Furthermore, this village lacks restaurants or amenities despite being a tourist destination for surfing and fishing. To counter such local social problems, the anchor organization operated the “Village Health Center” as part of its social innovation program, with the retired nurses’ association as its linker organization. By running the anchor organization office as the temporary Village Health Center starting in August of

2023, approximately 170 residents, representing 63% of the residents, received health advice until December of 2023, and patients with serious illnesses were connected to specialized healthcare facilities. The Village Health Center is also receiving an increasing number of surfers and beachgoers who require emergency medical care, which was an outcome that was not anticipated before the planning of the social innovation program. The Village Health Center was expanded during its operation and currently provides house calls from Korean medicine doctors who are a part of a medical volunteer organization in Gangwon-do. Through the social innovation program, the anchor organization has confirmed the necessity and feasibility of the Village Health Center for residents and tourists. As a result, the Fishing Village Resident Center located at Lighter's Wharf was remodeled as the Village Health Center, and the Donghae Health Clinic has agreed to run a mobile health office in the future.

Another ongoing social innovation program would be the Fishing Village Field Trip Program proposed by local children's centers that serve as linker organizations. The anchor organization collaborated with local small business owners, including a local woodworking shop, a leather workshop, a bakery, accommodations, restaurants, and surf shops, to design programs for local children's centers. The pilot project is underway as accommodations or small businesses participating in the field trip program offer discounts to visitors, and the anchor organization creates one-day or two-day programs for local children's centers that have expressed a desire to participate. The Gangwon State Office of Education and the local association for children's centers are participating in this program, which will be expanded to neighboring regions through after-school and vacation programs. The social innovation programs will provide opportunities for small businesses, such as accommodations and surfing schools, to increase their competitiveness. In relation to this, amenities such as public restrooms, shower booths, and parking lots at Lighter's Wharf will also be renovated.

Status of the Pilot Project Site and Project Details in Donghae



Source: Architecture and Urban Research Institute (2024, p.59)

- Healthcare for Fishing Village Residents in Medical Welfare Blind Spots in Goheung-gun and Creating Jobs through Fair Tourism

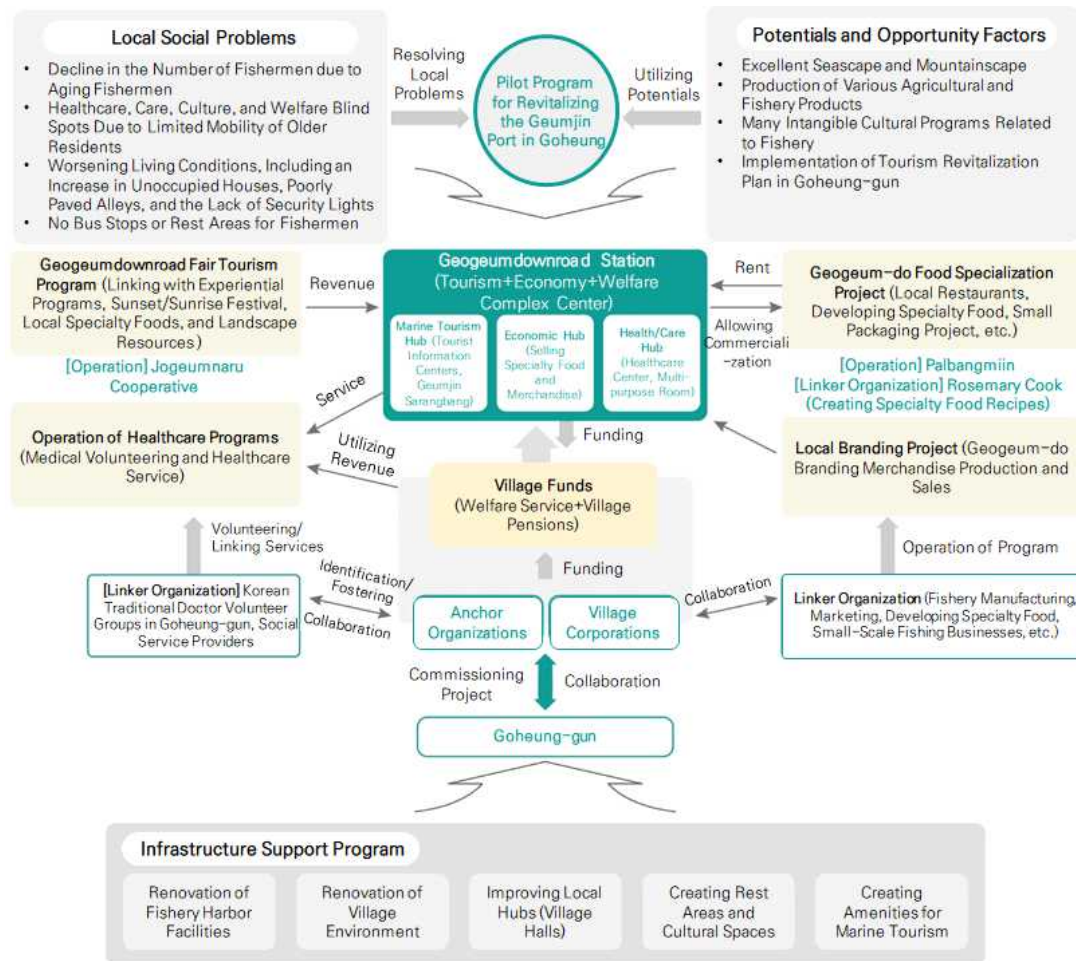
The Geumjin Living Zone in Goheung-gun is a tranquil fishing village near Sorokdo Island but has recently experienced an increase in the number of anglers and those of the younger generations returning to their hometown after the opening of the Geogeum Bridge, which made the region more accessible. However, the number of people working in fisheries has decreased, as younger people are more reluctant to work in the industry, and the elderly have difficulty accessing services such as medical welfare, care, and cultural activities due to inconvenient public transportation.

Accordingly, the anchor organization has launched a volunteer house call project by recruiting doctors of Korean medicine interested in the region.

Furthermore, the organization plans to collaborate with the neighboring Sorokdo National Hospital to run a healthcare program as part of a medical volunteer program. Acknowledging that healthcare and care programs can only be regularly provided with trained professionals stationed in the village while the house call service can be maintained through local volunteers, the anchor organization plans to run training programs for interested residents so that they can obtain care-related certifications.

For social innovation programs, the organization has planned to sell lunch boxes for anglers and fishermen and planned a fair tourism program centered on the status of the New Approaches and Challenges for Regenerating Sustainable Fishing Villages and Fishery Harbors - Focusing on the Pilot Project for the Revitalization of Fishing Villages. The problem of there being no places to eat in the village during fisheries operations and fishing seasons was identified as the organization searched for social problems in the fishing village. To resolve this problem, it established a plan to create and sell lunchbox recipes using local specialties. Furthermore, the organization plans to run a fair tourism program utilizing the region's excellent seascape and diverse food culture. The initial targets are people from this hometown living outside the village, such as hometown associations, and the organization plans to expand the targets gradually to local socioeconomic organizations interested in participating in workstations. As a part of this plan, a sunset and sunrise festival that gathered approximately 5,000 people, including local residents and tourists, was successfully held on December 31, 2023. This festival has provided momentum for preparing more programs in collaboration with local restaurants, accommodations, and fishing village associations. The fishing village station will also be equipped with a tourist information center, a kitchen for manufacturing and selling lunch boxes, a space for resident healthcare and cultural care programs, as well as a multi-purpose meeting room.

Status of the Pilot Project Site and Project Details in Goheung-gun



Source: Architecture and Urban Research Institute (2024, p.103)

● Achievements and Future Challenges of the Pilot Project for the Revitalization of Fishing Villages and Fishery Harbors

- The Need to Establish Guidelines for the Entrustment of Management of Public Properties for the Operation of Multi-purpose Fishing Village Stations

The pilot projects in Donghae and Goheung-gun showed that while it may be difficult to establish medical facilities in declining fishing villages, preventive medical welfare services can be provided through regular health management, local medical volunteer activities, and by improving the social welfare delivery system. In the two regions, the feasibility of the project was confirmed and the necessary space for providing exercise or educational programs or conducting

simple checkups, such as blood pressure measurements, allowing local residents to monitor and maintain their health regularly, was secured. Based on the achievements of the social innovation programs, the Donghae pilot project plans to create village health centers offering healthcare or house call services, and Goheung-gun will establish health management rooms at the fishing village station. Both pilot projects plan to create revenue-generating spaces in the corresponding fishing village stations.

However, as a publicly funded space and a space for generating revenue coexist within a single fishing village station, it is difficult to establish detailed operational plans, especially due to the lack of guidelines on selecting operating entities to manage the revenue-generating spaces, setting the rent, and responsibilities for managing public properties. While such guidelines should be established in accordance with ordinances on public property, preparing them will take time, considering that the implementation of the pilot project is under the purview of maritime and fisheries departments, with the management of public properties managed by relevant departments. As guidelines on the entrustment of managing public properties will be needed for running hub facilities created through regional revitalization projects, including revitalization projects for the fishing villages, local governments should devise relevant guidelines through administrative working groups based on the achievements of the pilot projects.

- Basis Needed for the Linker Organizations Identified through Social Innovation Programs to Continue Operating Fishing Village Stations

Although social innovation programs can be directly operated by anchor organizations, they can be more effective with the participation of specialized linker organizations. For Donghae, specialized organizations such as retired nurses or local children's centers are participating as linker organizations. In Goheung, resident organizations and the anchor organization serve as linker organizations. Through these social innovation programs, these organizations identify, experiment with, and verify the means by which to advance the project, ensure its longevity, and incorporate these ideas into the creation, operation, and management plans for the fishing village stations. For the organizations that participate in social innovation programs to become the operating entities of the fishing village stations that are created as public property, they should be

designated as entrusted institutions in accordance with the “Public Property and Commodity Management Act.” However, according to the “Public Property and Commodity Management Act,” an operating entity of public property cannot be entrusted through a private contract, except for spaces serving several functions, such as the selling of local specialties or functions related to the requirement of special equipment. While linker organizations and anchor organizations are eligible to participate in the open competitive bidding process, there is no guarantee that they will be selected as the entrusted entities.

If a third party is selected through an open competitive bid, there is no guarantee that the party will run the fishing village station according to its mission and uphold the achievements of the social innovation program. Therefore, reasonable procedures or an institutional basis would be needed when selecting entities that have been verified through social innovation programs to operate fishing village stations until the stations are functioning stably and adequately to solve local community problems.

- Institutional Foundation Needed to Implement Fishing Village Living Zone-based Projects

Since 2023, the Fishing Village Revitalization Project has spread nationwide, and the revitalization project for fishing villages and fishery harbors has been implemented in many local governments. After the pilot project, Goheung-gun and Taean-gun were selected as sites for two Fishing Village Revitalization Projects (Type 2), and Geoje was also selected as the site for a Type 1 project. Accordingly, many project sites have been found to share secondary fishing village living zones, which calls for a comprehensive strategy at the local government level to connect life services and to establish economic ecosystems prior to the establishment of a master plan for each project site. However, according to the “Fishing Villages and Fishery Harbors Act,” there is a lack of a legal basis for establishing master plans for revitalizing fishing villages and fishery harbors on the local government level. As such, in order to increase the effectiveness of fishing villages and fishery harbor regeneration projects, which are slowly progressing, an institutional foundation is needed to establish the fishing villages and fishery harbor regeneration strategies based on the fishing village living zones.

- 1) The fishing household population declined at a rate of 4.7%, from 1,710,000 in 2010 to 1,140,000 in 2019, and the aging rate in fishing villages is 36.5% as of 2018, indicative of a super-aged society (Seo *et al.*, 2021, p.3).
- 2) The Ministry of SMEs and Startups has designated people leading this lifestyle as local creators and is running support programs for them. Of the 526 teams that received support through the "Region-based Local Creator Vitalization Support Project" implemented by the Ministry of SMEs and Startups in 2020, 215 teams were active in fishing villages (Park *et al.*, 2018, p.55).

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