

Learning from Experience

The fishing industry in south-central Vietnam relies on co-management and the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management (EAFM) to sustain the health of coastal marine areas

Vietnam's 3,260-km coastline hosts a diversity of marine resources such as coral reefs and seagrass beds as well as more than 1,080 species of fish. The health of Vietnam's coastal and marine ecosystems is fundamental to the food security, livelihoods and social stability of more than 4 mn Vietnamese people who directly or indirectly benefit from the exploitation of marine resources.

Small-scale fisheries are abundant in Bind Dinh, located in the southcentral coast of Vietnam, making up nearly 40 per cent of the country's small-scale fishing fleet. Fishing is a common source of livelihood and income generation at the household level.

The health of Vietnam's marine and coastal ecosystems and, therefore, the sustainability of Vietnam's fishing industry, is compromised by illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities. They include overfishing and destructive methods like trawling and the use of explosives. These prevalent illegal practices destroy and deplete near-shore aquatic resources. The negative effects of overexploitation are visible. For example, fishermen's earnings from fishing activities are at times not enough to cover costs. These challenges are intensified by weak enforcement of the Fisheries Law of 2017 and other regulations that prohibit IUU fishing.

National and international organizations are currently using co-management and an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management (EAFM) to reduce the decline of coastal marine resources in Vietnam. They encourage sustainable development, protect the interests and rights of local communities and work toward removal of the 'yellow card' assigned by the European Commission.

Under the governance system called co-management, control over resources in a specified geographic area is shared between the state and community. It is part of the EAFM approach that integrates a balance of ecological wellbeing, human wellbeing and good governance into decision-making processes. EAFM helps valuable resources to replenish by protecting ecosystem stability and maximising ecological and social benefits in fishing areas. For this reason, EAFM has become common practice throughout Southeast Asia.

While fairly new in Vietnam, the national government supports the use of EAFM by agreeing to the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) mooted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Policies, legislation, and practical experience with EAFM remain limited in Vietnam, but the practice is gradually being implemented at the local level.

National and international organizations are currently using co-management and an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management (EAFM) to reduce the decline of coastal marine resources in Vietnam.

Co-management and EAFM have been priorities for Vietnam's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) since the Fisheries Law 2017 and Decree No. 26/2019/ND-CP came into effect on January 1, 2019, and April 25, 2019, respectively. The revised law formally defines the concept of co-management, while Article 10 of the decree provides guidelines for implementing the law and regulations for co-management

*This article is by **Than Thi Hien** (tthien@mcdvietnam.org), Vice Director, Centre for Marinelife Conservation and Community Development (MCD), Hanoi, Vietnam*

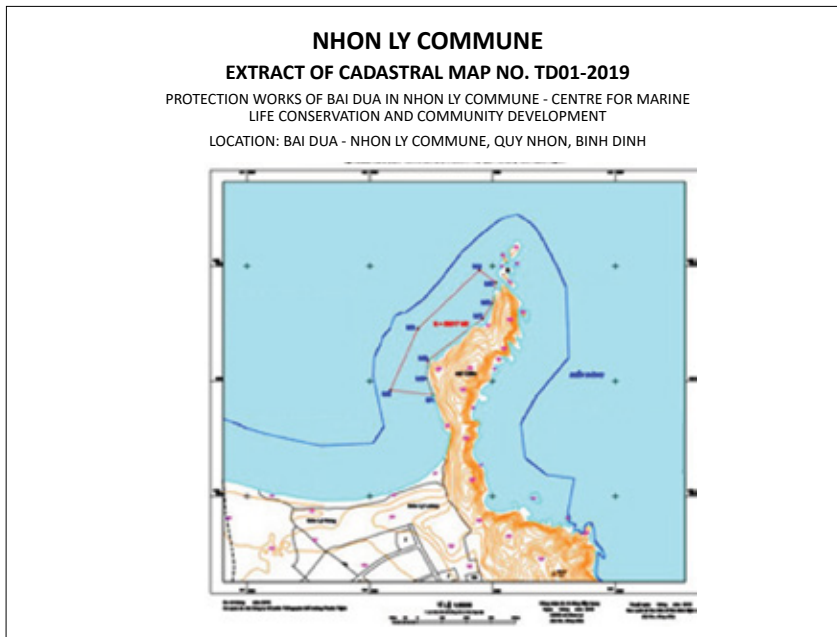


Figure 1: Map of Bai Dua Beach in Nhon Ly Commune, Quy Nhon LMMA, Binh Dinh

ecosystems in Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMA) in the South Central Coast of Vietnam', is the title of the project implemented by MCD with the support of Hong Kong-based ADM Capital Foundation. It aims to strengthen institutional capacity, practice and policy development in coastal areas in South Central Vietnam by improving local capacity and experience with EAFM practices. Active from early 2017 through March 2020, this project intends to use EAFM to enhance the resilience of ecosystems and local communities, creating a model that could be used throughout the country. For instance, an EAFM plan for 2016-2020 was developed for the Quy Nhon LMMA in Binh Dinh province in the southcentral part of the country. Managed by Nhon Ly, Nhon Hai, Nhon Chau and Ghenh Reng communities, LMMA is home to a rich diversity of endemic species, including the orange-spotted grouper and the black sea cucumber, as well as 88 ha of coral reef, about 81 per cent of the coral reef in Binh Dinh's coastal area. The plan looks to reduce illegal fishing, protect important habitats, restore economically valuable fish populations, improve livelihoods, engage local communities in management and prevent overfishing, among other objectives.

Bai Dua has an estimated coral reef cover of 4.5 ha that offers a high diversity of species. According to Nha Trang Oceanographic Institute's survey in 2017, there are 207 types of aquatic species in Bai Dua. This number includes 11 species of seaweed, 14 species of echinoderm, 69 species of fish and 87 species of hard coral. The area is a spawning ground for many species such as bigfin reef squid, lobsters and snails.

Since 2016, there have been many tourism projects in Nhon Ly. It is estimated that 329,000 tourists visited the commune in 2018, a 6.2 per cent increase from 2017. The increase in tourism is creating jobs and improving the economic wellbeing of the residents; the total community revenue was 6.1 billion dong (42.9 mn dong per capita) in 2018, which is 18 times more than the revenue of 340 mn dong in 2015.

in the protection of fishery resources. The institutionalization of co-management through the highest form of legal documentation is a significant achievement.

The goals of Vietnam's Fisheries Law 2017 greatly align with the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines). These Guidelines are implemented in Vietnam by the Center for Marine Life Conservation and Community Development (MCD), with the support of the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF). The SSF Guidelines are realized through improved policies, strategies

The Nhon Ly Community Organization is now legally recognized and responsible for the management, protection, exploitation, and development of aquatic resources in this area...

and initiatives, such as those in Bai Dua, Nhon Ly, Quy Nhon Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA).

Co-management-in-law, EAFM in action

'Enhancing resilience of small-scale fishing communities and marine



Small-scale fishing in Nhon Ly commune, Quy Nhon City, Binh Dinh province. Fishing is a common source of livelihood and income generation at the household level and in Binh Dinh, 80 per cent of the workforce are fishermen

Bai Dua is a critical area for community livelihoods and is greatly impacted by human activities, especially unplanned and uncontrolled tourism development. Local people and commune authorities in Nhon Ly agree that Bai Dua needs to be co-managed and protected by the local community in order to safeguard valuable marine resources from depletion. This makes Bai Dua an ideal location to apply co-management in accordance with the Fisheries Law 2017.

Relevant activities in Southcentral Vietnam include annual community assessments of coral reef health following three training sessions conducted by MCD, the Fisheries Sub-Department and local community groups, with support from Cu Lao Cham MPA, in the month of May during 2017-2019; an awareness-raising workshop in Quy Nhon City on September 28, 2018, supported by ICSF; and a National Policy Workshop to develop a Co-Management Action Plan for the Protection of Fishery Resources and Reduction of Illegal Fishing on May 3, 2019, organized by the Directorate of Fisheries (D-Fish)

and MCD. These activities increased local capacity in and awareness of marine ecosystem and coastal resource conservation in Quy Nhon LMMA through community participation and policy development.

Strong support from community members and local authorities inspired MCD, the Sub-Department of Fisheries and the Binh Dinh Fisheries Association to support Nhon Ly commune in applying for recognition and assignment of rights to manage and protect Bai Dua's marine resources in 2019. Strong community support led to a high level of consensus on the management plan and operational regulations, including an agreement to contribute annually to a Community Fund to ensure the initiative's financial sustainability.

The community is developing the 'Plan for protection and exploitation of aquatic resources and tourism in Bai Dua' and the 'Regulation on operation of community groups'. The Plan notes the necessity of co-management; priority to protect aquatic resources; responsibilities, rights and power of the community and local authorities;

funding specifics; and zoning, patrol, supervision and coral reef protection teams.

The Regulation on Operation of Nhon Ly Community Representative Board for Aquatic Resource Protection consists of seven chapters and 32 articles that outline principles, objectives, organisational structure, operations, responsibilities, enforcement and powers of community organizations in co-management in accordance with Article 10.

Since the implementation of co-management, the commune has been able to further protect its resources by detecting illegal activities. The commune organized eight Border Guard patrols in 2018 wherein seven cases of off-line activity and one case of illegal diving were discovered.

Progress

Nhon Ly was the first locality in Vietnam to apply the co-management model under the Fisheries Law 2017. It is now also one of the few coastal communes selected to implement the Fishing Village Cultural Architecture Conservation Planning for Sustainable Community Tourism Development by the People's Committees of Binh Dinh Province and Quy Nhon City. The area has also been recommended to the Provincial Department of Tourism for a pilot community-based tourism model.

Participants at the two workshops in South Central Vietnam provided many recommendations to continue this progress, further improving co-management efforts and the Co-Management National Action Plan. Recommendations included increasing capacity and participation of community members; providing viable alternative livelihoods for fishermen; using science and technology to form comprehensive solutions; strengthening national and international collaboration; improving monitoring; creating specific, actionable objectives; using policy to encourage behaviour change; and developing localized action plans.

Managing the future

Despite the ongoing progress of the co-management model in Bai Dua, such as the increase of hard coral cover from 35

per cent in 2017 to 54 per cent in 2019. In Nhon Ly, fishing effort has decreased by 30 per cent since the households taking part in full-time fishing now have access to additional income from ecotourism. The area's coral reefs have become a popular tourist attraction. However, rapid tourism development has also caused increased water pollution from sewage; tourist boats and cruises to coral reef areas need to be regulated. These challenges must be overcome in Bai Dua and throughout Vietnam through further improvement of policies, strategies, and initiatives; implementation of co-management and EAFM; continued active participation of community members in planning, managing, protecting and exploiting marine resources in co-managed areas;

On 4 February 2020, the Nhon Ly Community Organization has been given the right to co-manage fisheries resources, pursuant to the Fisheries Law 2017. The Quy Nhon People's Committee passed Decision No. 445/QD-UBND approving the Plan for Protection and Exploitation of Aquatic Resources in Bai Dua sea area. The Nhon Ly Community Organization is now legally recognized and responsible for the management, protection, exploitation, and development of aquatic resources in this area, including consulting on relevant projects, patrolling and inspecting fisheries activities, preventing and handling violations, and establishing a Community Fund. 3

For more

<http://mcdvietnam.org/en/>
Centre for Marine Life Conservation and Community Development (MCD)

https://igsf.icsf.net/images/ICSF_FAO%20PROJECT1/VIE%20002b_Vietnam_National%20policy%20%20Workshop%20report%20May%2031st%202019.docx

Workshop Report National Consultation on the Development of an Action Plan for the Co-Management and Protection of Fishery Resources and Reduction of Illegal Fishing, Hanoi, May 31st, 2019