**MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

**DIRECTORATE OF FISHERIES**

**1ST DRAFT**

**NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR AQUATIC RESOURCES CO-MANAGEMENT**

**MAY 2019**

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# NECESSITY

Fishery sector is characterized by its heavy dependence on natural conditions where it aims to exploit renewable natural resources - biological resources living under water and moving with certain time and space patterns. “*Aquatic resources are owned by the entire people and managed by the State. Organizations and individuals have the right to catch aquatic resources in accordance with regulations of law.*” (Law on Fisheries 2017. Article 4 on ownership of aquatic resources). The State has issued policies and developed institutions for such policies, inspection and supervision of management, exploitation, protection and development of aquatic resources. However, practical lessons indicate that single reliance on the administrative system would not produce expected outcomes in natural resources management. Local communities are direct actors in exploitation and use of this precious natural resource, which also means that if these communities are not directly engaged in the implementation of State policies, or if their only focus is on exploitation, not management, of natural resources for their livelihoods, the protection, development and restoration of aquatic resources can hardly achieve success. Overexploitation, leading to exhaustion of natural resources and depletion of aquatic resources will be a frequent occurrence. Uncontrolled over-consumption of aquatic resources will lead to many consequences, one of which is the EU “yellow card” warning issued to Vietnam in 2017. The yellow card warning has greatly affected seafood exports to the EU market, an important one, affecting local livelihoods and revenue of the fisheries sector.

Co-management is a modern management method that has been introduced effectively in many countries and territories around the world since the middle of the twentieth century as long as there is a demand for management of natural resources and assets owned by the entire people in a certain area, water body or territory. At the heart of the co-management method is mutually agreed sharing of management responsibilities and obligations as well as benefits in the exploitation and use of these resources between government and local communities on basis of framework regulations and mutual consensus between the parties. Co-management entails shared management between the government and communities, creating favorable conditions for communities to have legal access to the management, exploitation and use of natural resources, ensuring effective and sustainable management and exploitation of aquatic resources as well as sustainable livelihoods of the local communities. As long as local awareness and compliance are secured, the co-management method can promote fulfillment of such requirements as: thorough knowledge of fishing grounds, protection of resources, legal and declared exploitation, monitoring of catch documentation.... Thus, co-management also plays an important role in reducing IUU fishing.

In Vietnam, pilot projects by the Government and international organizations on co-management in the field of fisheries have been implemented in many provinces with initial achievements; recently produced reports and studies of different authors have recorded a number of successful applications of fisheries co-management.

With an urgent call for co-management in protection of aquatic resources, Vietnam enacted a revised Law on Fisheries 2017, including Article 10 on co-management. This was supported by the Prime Minister’s Decree No. 26/2019/ND-CP dated March 8, 2019, which governs a number of articles and measures for implementation of the Law on Fisheries; specifically, this Decree has a separate section ( Section 1, Chapter II) to cover issues related to co-management in the protection of aquatic resources. Thus, it can be said that the current legal framework for promotion of co-management in the protection of aquatic resources is relatively adequate, but real actions are needed for the law and decree to be successfully translated on the ground. Development of an “action plan for co-management of aquatic resources” is essential in the current background.

# LEGAL BASIS:

1. Law on Fisheries 2017 - Adopted by the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on November 21, 2017;
2. Decree No. 26/2019/ND-CP dated March 8, 2019 by the Prime Minister governing a number of articles and measures for implementation of the Law on Fisheries

# OBJECTIVES:

To improve fisheries management capacity, engage stakeholders in management, use and protection of aquatic resources, contributing to improved livelihoods for fishermen communities and fisheries development in an effective and sustainable manner.

Specific objectives to 2030:

* 50% of coastal provinces will develop fisheries management plans, including local implementation of co-management programs with community-based organizations to be supported in formation and operation.
* 30% of coastal communal officers will master skills in co-management of aquatic resources and provide guidance and support to community-based organizations
* 70% of coastal population will have access to information on co-management of aquatic resources

# TASKS:

## 1. Capacity building on co-management of aquatic resources:

- Improve the capacity of local government officers and communities to exercise management rights in the protection of aquatic resources;

- Build the capacity of local communities in development of co-management plans, institutional organization and management, development of regulations for implementation and coordination with relevant agencies;

- Enhance communication capacity on co-management in aquatic resource protection for local government officers and communities;

- Build the capacity of local communities on establishment and management of community funds, financial management, implementation arrangements to increase the value of fishing products ...;

- Build the capacity of local communities on protection of the marine environment.

## 2. Strengthen the capacity of inspection and supervision of community-based organizations (CBOs) and government agencies.

- Build the capacity on plan development, patrolling, supervision and protection of marine areas for managers and CBOs.

- Build the capacity to reduce IUU fishing among local communities, and the capacity for rapid assessment of resources availability among CBOs.

## 3. Develop and improve legal documents on state management of co-management of aquatic resources.

- Undertake and formulate mechanisms and policies to encourage co-management in aquatic resource protection activities.

- Develop mechanisms to address disputes and conflicts.

- Develop monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and assessment criteria.

- Review and strengthen sanctions against violations of fisheries law in protection and development of aquatic resources. In addition to an upgrade of the fine levels and confiscation of vehicles harmful to aquatic resources, it is necessary to prosecute acts that destroy aquatic habitats and result in damages to aquatic resources.

- Develop policies and regime for seafaring, insurance for marine accidents for members of community-based organizations, officers of relevant parties involved in patrolling and protection of marine resources in the water bodies under management of community-based organizations.

## 4. Undertake education and communication on co-management of aquatic resources:

- Undertake communication and propaganda on co-management of aquatic resources;

- Develop an extracurricular program on co-management of aquatic resources for high schools students in coastal districts and communes;

- Promote awareness raising on co-management; protection of aquatic resources; protection of marine environment...

- Improve understanding of fishermen communities on prevention of and response to IUU fishing;

- Organize study tours and workshops to exchange experiences on protection of marine areas under community management for fishermen's organizations.

## 5. Generate livelihoods to support local communities.

- Organize vocational training, develop additional or alternative livelihood models for fishermen.

- Study, propose and issue credit policies to basically address the difficulties and obstacles in production and livelihoods of fishermen, ensuring that fishermen have access to support credit and are provided with enabling conditions for repayment. Research and develop a model of “community credit fund” which forms part of the system of banks to to build confidence among fishermen on loan taking and repayment.

## 6. Provide support to information sharing and multi-sectoral linkages for CBOs:

In the long run, as the policy of empowerment for co-management aims at sustainable development goals of coastal fishermen communities, information sharing and multi-sectoral linkages are very important.

- Develop information sharing stations via Internet gateways at CBOs. Each CBO, after having its office and institutional structure in place, should have access to Internet connection and the techniques needed to collect, search, share information and images, and stay connected with the outside world. At the same time, established Internet gateways also support data storage, statistics, information disclosure and activity reporting.

- Develop a model of linkages between CBOs and enterprises, banks, social and non-governmental organizations and research and training institutions. Once the CBOs are established and effectively operated, especially if recognized as a legal entity, this will create favorable, both legal and physical, conditions for the development of multi-sectoral links for a community’s common goals as well as fulfillment of diverse interests of its members. According to international and Vietnam’s experience, the CBOs can play the following specific roles:

1. A partner of businesses in trade, investment and tourism projects in the field of exploitation, protection and development of aquatic resources;
2. A guarantor for loan transactions with a bank of a community-based organization member;
3. A recipient of projects, non-profit support activities of social and non-governmental organizations; and
4. A party in training and research linkages projects with academic institutions on exploitation, protection and development of aquatic resources.

# IMPLEMENTATION SOLUTIONS:

## 1. Communication and human resources training:

- Promote communication and education on co-management, protection of aquatic resources, responsibilities and interests of local communities, especially fishermen engaged in fisheries exploitation as well as teenagers and students in coastal provinces;

- Organize training of enforcement officials and local communities on implementation of the process of empowerment: Training on preparation of a co-management application (Fishermen registration and empowerment, proposed plan for CBO establishment, Regulations on operation of CBOs, Plan for protection of aquatic resources, Community-level regulations on management of aquatic resources); development of co-management plans; inspection and supervision of co-management and protection of aquatic resources nationwide to promote wider implementation of the empowerment of CBOs in management, exploitation, protection and development of aquatic resources.

- Training on patrol and supervision of protected marine areas for government officers and local communities.

- Training on communication, planning, supervision and protection of marine areas;

- Training of CBOs on rapid assessment of resources availability, collection of output data, recording and reporting.

## 2. Science, technology and fishery extension:

- Undertake scientific research projects on endangered precious and rare aquatic species in order to provide additional information on biological and ecological characteristics, and population changes for proposal ò appropriate means of protection;

- Undertake surveys of resources, make adjustment and restructuring of fishing operations in conformity with the permitted fishing capacity towards controlled development and gradual reduction of a number of non-selective fisheries exploitation activities, especially in coastal areas;

- Organize basic surveys on different water bodies, biodiversity, aquatic resources ...as scientific basis for zoning and empowerment;

- Using the extension system, build a team of community supporters to support the establishment and development of community-based organizations.

## 3. Policy mechanisms:

- Issue mechanisms to encourage and support fishermen to switch to selective and environmentally friendly fishing activities as well as other occupations as their alternative livelihoods to reduce pressure on aquatic resources and environment;

## 4. Socialization of investment:

- Call upon and encourage private companies and businesses to participate in the co-management

- Strengthen international cooperation in training and development of human resources for co-management of aquatic resources.

- Mobilize technical and financial support from international organizations, especially those in this field, such as: IUCN, WFF, JICA, SEAFDEC, FAO ASEAN, NOAA, ….

- Organize study tours, exchanges, experience-sharing events on co-management and management of marine areas of high biodiversity, surveys and studies on aquatic resources in collaboration regional and other countries.

# ARRANGEMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

## **a) Directorate of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development:**

- Advise the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) on development of legal documents, mechanisms and policies, especially those that target sustainable financial resources for nationally consistent co-management of aquatic resources;

- Develop training programs for fisheries extension workers (Community supporters) for transfer to provinces to promote wider implementation of the empowerment of CBOs in management, exploitation, protection and development of aquatic resources;

- Provide scientific research, technical and financial assistance (especially in the initial phase of co-management);

- Supervise the issuance and implementation of local mechanisms to reduce the abuse of power and manage conflicts beyond the authority of local governments.

## **b) Provincial People's Committees:**

- Provincial People’s Committees shall demarcate water bodies for co-management of aquatic resources as part of their master plans for agriculture, forestry and fishery development; develop provincial mechanisms and policies for co-management of aquatic resources, especially policies that target sustainable financial resources for the government at all levels, stakeholders, community-based organizations and fishermen communities in co-management of aquatic resources on demarcated water bodies; approve coordination mechanisms for co-management of aquatic resources between governments at all levels, stakeholders and community-based organizations; lead and coordinate with CBOs in patrolling, inspecting, controlling and handling violations according to its authority in co-management areas.

- Assign Provincial Departments of Agriculture and Rural Development to provide guidance to community-based organizations and fishermen on development of options or plans for management, exploitation, protection and development of resources in co-management areas in line with legal provisions and provincial development plans.

- People’s Committees at all levels and fisheries management agencies shall inspect and supervise operations of community-based organizations and stakeholders; update plans, mechanisms, policies, coordination regulations and regulations of community-based organizations on co-management; update and revoke decisions on assignment of rights to manage, exploit, protect and develop aquatic resources

- People’s Committees at provincial, district and commune levels shall issue official guidance on the implementation of policies and organize measures for local policy implementation. Government agencies at all levels (within their authority) and within the scope of their power shall:

- Provide regulations on responsibilities, inspection and supervision regimes, sanctions and power to handle legal violations in water bodies managed by the community;

- Provide technical and financial support within their capacity to facilitate implementation of local co-management plans.

- People’s Committees at district and commune levels shall provide support, organize and supervise the implementation of co-management and delegate their monitoring power to local CBOs.

## **c) Fishermen communities:**

- Develop an action plan to, together with government agencies, inspect and supervise protection and development of aquatic resources.

- Develop regulations, agreements or community-level regulations for management of assigned water bodies to ensure effective and sustainable management and generate a high sense of consensus within the community;

- Undertake awareness raising of community members on the Law and policies to protect and develop natural resources and aquatic resources; provide guidance to community members and fishermen to implement the Law on Fisheries and fisheries development policies;

- Develop a management mechanism on aquaculture that is mutually agreed within the community, ensuring employment, sustainable livelihoods, harmonious sharing of benefits within the community, proper implementation of plans, efficient and sustainable fisheries development in assigned water bodies;

- Establish and organize patrolling teams to protect aquatic resources, inspect and supervise aquaculture activities for secured compliance with legal provisions in assigned water bodies while developing a coordination mechanism to work with government agencies in proper handling of legal violations in demarcated water bodies.

- Actively draft production development plans; community development plans; and investment plans for livelihoods projects for improved quality and living standards of local communities;

- Actively establish commune-level community funds in combination with aquatic resources restoration funds for financial availability and autonomy, reduced financial dependence in fisheries production and community development.

# ANNEX

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Task** | **Lead agency** | **Coordinating agencies** | **Implementation time line** |
| 1 |  |  |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |