**Implementing the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication in Việt Nam**

**Final Project Report**

**Center for Marinelife Conservation and Community Development (MCD) | International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)**

August 2018 - June 2019

**Abbreviations**

CCRF Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries

D-Fish Directorate of Fisheries

EAFM ecosystem approach to fisheries management

EC European Commission

FAO Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

ICSF International Collective in Support of Fishworkers

IUU illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing

LMMA Locally Managed Marine Area

MARD Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

MCD Center for Marinelife Conservation and Community Development

MCS monitoring, control and surveillance

MPA marine protected area

NGO non-governmental organization

PSMA Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing

RIMF Research Institute for Marine Fisheries

UNCLOS United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

UNFSA United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement

**Introduction**

Việt Nam’s 3260-kilometre coastline hosts a diverse variety of marine resources such as coral reefs and sea grass beds, as well as more than 1080 species of fish. The health of Việt Nam’s coastal and marine ecosystems is fundamental to the food security, livelihoods, and social stability of more than 4 million Vietnamese people who directly or indirectly benefit from the exploitation of marine resources.

The health of Việt Nam’s marine and coastal ecosystems, and therefore the sustainability of Việt Nam’s fishing industry, is compromised by overfishing, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and destructive practices. These prevalent illegal practices destroy and deplete nearshore aquatic resources. The negative effects of overexploitation are noticeable in fisherfolk incomes, which are at times not enough to cover costs. These challenges are intensified by weak enforcement of the laws and regulations that prohibit IUU fishing.

Co-management, within an ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM) is used as popular mode of stemming the decline of marine resources, enhancing sustainable development and protecting the rights of fishing communities in many countries, including Việt Nam, where it is also crucial for revoking the “yellow-card” assigned to its fish exports by the European Commission.

Since the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Việt Nam passed the Fisheries Law on November 21, 2017, in effect since January 1, 2019, and issued Decree No. 26/2019/ND-CP dated March 8, 2019, in effect since April 25, 2019, Việt Nam’s Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) has been promoting co-management and the ecosystem approach to strengthen and protect Việt Nam’s fishery resources and reduce IUU fishing activities throughout the country.

The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) were endorsed by the Committee on Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 2014. The SSF Guidelines were developed as a complement to the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and thus support responsible fisheries and sustainable social and economic development with an emphasis on small-scale fishers and fishworkers. They recognize the ecosystem approach as an important guiding principle and also promote co-management and other participatory management systems.

The current project, implemented by the Center for Marinelife Conservation and Community Development (MCD) in partnership with the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), and supported by FAO, was taken up to support the social, economic, and environmental transformation of the small-scale fisheries sector to better contribute to food security and poverty eradication as a result of improved policies, strategies, and initiatives. In Việt Nam specifically, the objective of the project is to better inform small-scale fishing communities about co-managing local aquatic and coastal ecosystems and the benefits of community-based monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) systems to deter, prevent and eliminate IUU fishing practices. The following activities were planned under the project:

* Awareness-Raising Workshop in the central coastal region for local government and small-scale fishing communities on co- management and combating IUU fishing in light of the Amended Fisheries Law of Viet Nam
* National Policy Workshop to develop an action plan on combating IUU fishing in small-scale fisheries through co- management

**Project Activities**

**1. Awareness-raising workshop on co- management and combating IUU fishing in light of the Amended Fisheries Law of Viet Nam**

Between 2014 and 2018, Việt Nam seized over 917 illegal fishing vessels in the waters bordering China, ASEAN and non-ASEAN countries. China-, Indonesia- and Cambodia-flagged fishing vessels have the highest rates of detention in Việt Nam. Actions against IUU fishing are supported by a range of international instrument within the framework of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), including the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA), the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and the 2009 Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (PSMA).

Vietnamese law also provides specific provisions on IUU fishing practices under the revised Fisheries Law of 2017, adopted by the National Assembly at its Fourth Session on 21 November, 2017.

On 28 September, 2018 the Center for Marinelife Conservation and Community Development (MCD) and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development of Bình Định Province jointly organized a “Policy Consultation, Communication and Sharing Workshop on the Mitigation of Illegal Fishing, Co-management and Protection of Fisheries Resources in the Central Coast”.

Using presentations and participatory discussions, the workshop created a platform to discuss resource management issues in small-scale fisheries, engaging a number of fishworker groups and other relevant stakeholders in the central region. It had the following components: a) presentations on the key policies on IUU fishing and co-management of fisheries; b) sharing experiences from the central coastal province, including Bình Định, ThuaThien Hue, Quang Nam and Quang Ngai provinces; and c) discussion to formulate recommendations and actions at the national and sub-national levels.

The workshop was attended by 47 representatives from the Directorate of Fisheries (D-Fish), the Bình Định Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Departments of Fisheries in the central provinces of Thua Thien Hue, Phu Yen and Bình Định, the Bình Định Fisheries Association, the Quy Nhon City People’s Committee and commune council, community organizations of four Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) communes in Quy Nhon and representatives of fishing groups in the central areas of Cu Lao Cham and the Ly Son marine protected area (MPA).

The main contents of the workshop included: (i) an overview of local policies in the central regions; (ii) discussions about the need for co-management awareness, minimization of destructive fishing practices and application of successful models in the region; (iii) link policymakers, regulatory agencies, and fishworker organizations.

**Key results and finding**

Illegal exploitation is a matter of concern to governments and fishing communities. Article 10 of the Fisheries Law 2017 on the co-management of fisheries resources, which contains provisions for the participation of fishing communities recognizes the powers of district committees to assign fishing rights in their areas. The co-management committees are responsible for coordinating with relevant authorities to patrol, prevent and investigate fishing violations in the assigned area and to report on the operations of community organizations.

Bình Định province has 6,245 fishing vessels, which employ 44,350 fishers (29,512 offshore and 14,838 coastal), of which 2,312 ships (36.9% Trades: 454 (7.3%), trawl net: 486 (7.8%) Other: 1,448 ships (23%). Total production in 2017 was 223,000 tons (Tuna 47,000 tons, Atlantic tuna (big eyed, yellowfin tuna) 9,700 tons, Ink 22,000 tons, Shrimp 1,200 tons, and other species 143,100 tons).

Fishing vessels operating without fishing permits or with expired fishing permits account for 46 percent of all vessels in the province. Some fishing gear are prohibited, such as the use of explosives, electric pulse, circus machine and cage netting. To overcome these practices, provincial authorities have been reviewing the registrations of fishing vessels.

Bình Định will continue to carry out its plan of recording the number of vessels in the area by unifying data provided by grassroots statistical offices every quarter. Better coordination between boat registration, inspection and other management authorities is another necessary intervention. It is also crucial that fishworkers and communities be made aware of the law.



**Photo 1:** Policy Consultation, Communication and Sharing Workshop on the Mitigation of Illegal Fishing, Co-management and Protection of Fisheries Resources in the Central Coast, 28 September, 2018

**Opportunities**

* Build a national database of fishing vessels and fishing permits through registration and synchronous actions at central and local levels.
* Promote bilateral co-operation between Việt Nam and its neighbours, to prevent IUU fishing
* Improve monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) capacity by requiring fishing vessels over 15m in length to install vessel monitoring systems.

**Challenges**

* Gaps in policy, institutional capacities and in monitoring of small-scale fisheries
* Lack of alternative livelihoods for coastal communities, which could reduce pressure on fisheries
* Several communities lack incentives for fishing sustainably due to fierce competition

**Recommendations**

A number of recommendations were made at the workshop for mitigating IUU fishing and strengthening fisheries co-management in Việt Nam:

* Raise awareness among fishing communities through the use of information and communication tools (including media campaigns) to change perceptions, developing programmes at the provincial, district and commune levels, in collaboration with fishworker associations
* Support livelihood development schemes for fishing communities, including post-harvest value addition, alternative employment, coastal tourism and vocational training for you
* Support the implementation of co-management regulations through capacity building and training of community organizations, including on sustaining fishing practices, management and conflict resolution
* Strengthen MCS systems by improving local registration and reporting and community-led monitoring of fisheries

**2. National Policy Workshop to develop an action plan on combating IUU fishing in small-scale fisheries through co- management**

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) is using co-management of fishery resources in an effort to strengthen and protect Việt Nam’s fisheries and reduce illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities. This action is taken in response to the Fisheries Law on 21 November 2017, in effect since 1 January, 2019; and Decree No. 26/2019/ND-CP dated 8 March, 2019, issued by the national government and in effect since 25 April, 2019. Decree No. 26/2019/ND-CP details several provisions and measures to incorporate into the Fisheries Law. In Article 10, Section 1, Chapter II, the Decree has regulations for co-management for the protection of fishery resources.

Towards the implementation of the fisheries law, an action plan for the co-management and protection of fishery resources is to be developed in order to sustain marine resources, coordinate efforts from national to local levels, and enhance the effectiveness of fishery resource management throughout the country. A “yellow-card” warning from the European Commission (EC) in October 2017 with a recommendation to Việt Nam to overcome IUU fishing in its seafood industry significantly changed the viewpoint of actors in all sectors of the industry. Actors from all levels of government, local authorities, and seafood-related occupations have realized the importance of developing Vietnamese fisheries in accordance with international standards.

Therefore, a “National Consultation on the Development of an Action Plan for the Co-Management and Protection of Fishery Resources and Reduction of Illegal Fishing” was organized on 31 May, 2019 at Hanoi by the Việt Nam Directorate of Fisheries (D-Fish) and the Centre for Marine Life Conservation and Community Development (MCD) to promote the management of fishery resources and reduce IUU fishing in Việt Nam. There were 57 participants including representatives from D-Fish; Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD); the Department of Fisheries from 12 provinces in north, central, and south Việt Nam; intergovernmental organisations, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); research institutions; non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and associations; the media; and experts in the field.

## **Objectives**

* Consult with participants on the Draft National Action Plan for Aquatic Resources Co-Management
* Discuss and guide regulations related to co-management in accordance with the 2017 Fisheries Law;
* Enhance the participation and cooperation of all stakeholders in the implementation of the Plan and the reduction of IUU fishing in Việt Nam

The main content discussed in the workshop was:

* Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM);
* Policy framework to implement co-management and reduce IUU fishing;
* Experiences in co-management in Cu Lao Cham Island, Bình Định Province, and Bình Thuận provinces; and
* Draft National Action Plan for Aquatic Resources Co-Management

## **Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM)**

Experts in various areas of fishery resource co-management attended and contributed to the Workshop. One expert, Mr. Vu Viet Ha, a representative from the Research Institute for Marine Fisheries (RIMF), shared information about EAFM. According to his research, fishery activities can have direct and indirect negative impacts on the structure and function of an ecosystem. EAFM is a way to manage and maintain sustainable ecological resources as well as protect the balance, stability, and integrity of ecosystems. As a result, marine biodiversity (i.e. species and ecosystem diversity) is key to protecting fishery resources and allowing these resources to grow and flourish. The resources must be protected from overexploitation and depletion.

EAFM is widely applied in many countries and regions across the globe. This strategy for the integrated management of land, water, and living resources promotes conservation and sustainable use. The scope of application for this approach can be flexible according to management objectives but must ensure the application of its three components: Ecological wellbeing, human wellbeing, and good governance. In addition, five operational objectives must be accounted for: (i) reducing the impact on target and non-target species (e.g. reducing capacity), (ii) protection or rehabilitation of habitats and biodiversity (e.g. through zoning and MPAs), (iii) reduction of risk to the resource and to people (e.g. by improving forecasts), (iv) improvement of food safety (e.g. lobbying for reduction of pollution), and (v) improvement and/or decentralization of governance.[[1]](#footnote-2)

During the general discussion portion of the workshop, participants made recommendations based on the application of EAFM and co-management in Việt Nam. Major comments and critiques were as follows: a) Quotas should be managed for offshore fishing vessels; b) Mobilize people and community organizations in coastal areas; c) Promote seasonal closures and sustainable livelihood alternatives to minimize pressure on capture fisheries.

## **Policy framework to implement co-management and reduce IUU fishing**

According to Article 4 of the Law on Fisheries, 2017, “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.” Coming at the heels of the EC “yellow-card”, the 2017 Law on Fisheries frames co-management in the context of combatting IUU, preventing the risk of depleting fishery resources. Article 3(4) of the Law defines “co-management” as a State sharing governing power and responsibilities with community organizations in the protection of fishery resources. A “community organization” is defined as an organization established voluntarily by members who jointly manage, protect, and share benefits of fishery resources in a defined geographical area. These organizations may or may not have legal status, but are recognized and entrusted by the competent authorities to participate in co-management. According to Article 10(2) of the Law, permission of the competent authority is required in order for community organizations to be granted management rights.

In order for community organizations to be recognized and assigned management rights in the protection of fishery resources, members (households or individuals who live in and benefit from fishery resources in the area) must register to participate in the Management Board in a geographical area. The community organization must have a plan to protect and sustainably use the resources with clear operational regulations.

The responsibilities of community organizations, defined in Article 10(6) of the Fisheries Law, include strict compliance with the recognized and assigned contents of management; observance of the provisions in the law on fishery activities; and coordination with functional agencies to carry out patrols, checks, inspections, and investigations, prevent and handle violations, and report to competent state agencies on their organization’s activities. Community organizations have the right to organize, manage activities, conduct patrols, prevent violations, be consulted for projects for which their activities are directly related, enjoy preferential policies, and establish a community fund.

## **Co-management in Bình Thuận province: Planning and experience**

Bình Thuận province has been implementing four co-management models. These models are operated according to a methodical process with seven steps: (i) project formulation; (ii) consultation with communities and stakeholders; (iii) fundraising; (iv) project approval from the Provincial People's Committee; (v) project implementation; (vi) evaluation, monitoring, and adjustment; and (vii) project replication.

Since the implementation of co-management in 2012, Bình Thuận Province has developed mechanisms to support the approach, including: (i) regulation on the coordination of co-management implementation among stakeholders; (ii) development of a sustainable fisheries development plan; (iii) the decision on recognition and assignment of internal rights to protect fishery resources; (iv) conflict resolution and management; (v) operational regulation; and (vi) funding commitments from donors and local authorities,.

Co-management has been implemented with several activities such as communication and capacity-building training for the community, establishment of a rotating loan fund for fisher families, organizing regular meetings between stakeholders, and supporting the planning and supervision of patrols. Active participation from the fishing community and stakeholders, the support of local authorities, the stability of financial resources for the deployment of these activities, and the enthusiasm of the members of the Management Board make this model successful.

Some challenges in implementing this model include the difficulty in mobilizing fishermen to fully participate in management; organizational and capacity limitations; lack of mechanisms for community organizations to participate in co-management; physical characteristics of the coast, which expose the province to rough weather and coastal erosion; and the socio-economic dependence of the community on fishery resources. Each of these factors reduces the efficiency of the model.

Some suggestions on how to overcome the above limitations were made at the Workshop: (i) support is needed in the form of data and information on marine fishery resources and their habitats, as a basis for managing the defined area; (ii) fishery resource protection needs to be linked with co-management; (iii) training courses and manuals on management are needed to increase the capacity of managers and local fishing communities; and (iv) local managers need capacity building to access resources and raise funds.

## **Co-management in Bình Định province: Planning and experience**

Bình Định province began improving co-management of its fishery resources in 2007 with external funding programs and projects. As of December 31, 2018, the province has 15 co-management models in 20 coastal communes/wards, of which there are 3 large models in Tra O lagoon, Northern Dam Thi Nai area, and Quy Nhơn bay.

With the coordination of local authorities, the active participation of the fishing community, and funding support, the management of fishery resources in Bình Định province has seen success through the following activities: (i) legal advise on community-based fisheries management; (ii) communication and training for commune/ward officials and local fishermen on co-management; (iii) regular campaigns to clean the coast, monitor coral reefs, eliminate destructive starfish species, and rescue sea turtles; and (4) periodic patrols and inspections of fishing activities in coastal waters. As of 2019, 2.1 hectares of coral reefs in Nhơn Hải commune have been piloted for zoning and 12 hectares of Hon Kho Nho beach area is allocated to the community of Nhơn Hải commune for management.

However, despite these successes, the implementation of co-management in the province faces many challenges: (i) no legal basis to recognize and assign management rights to community organizations; (ii) limited funding to maintain operations; and (iii) alternative livelihood support is limited, which prevents fishermen from leaving fisheries.

Some solutions, recommendations, and proposals were made at the workshop: (a) develop a pilot co-management model and adapt it within the province; (b) consult community groups and understand their specific needs; (c) identify and train influential community actors in co-management; (e) provide alternative livelihood opportunities for fishers; (f) issue documents to direct and guide laws and challenges; and (g) try to develop at least 5 co-management models according to the 2017 Fisheries Law.

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## **Co-management in Cu Lao Cham MPA: Planning and experience**

*“Co-management of resources and common cooperation is leading to the MPA’s success and reduction of illegal fishing. Success comes from engagement. It allows for all people to be part of the process, where they can understand how to best practice their livelihoods.”*

***Mr. Tran Hoan, Co-Management Group Leader, Bai Huong Sub-MPA***

Since the establishment of the Cu Lao Cham marine protected area (MPA) in 2005, its management has achieved four notable results. First, the general regulations of the MPA are put into practice through operational regulations in the Community Management Board, regulations on management of Bai Huong Sub-MPA, and community regulations to protect coral reefs. Second, leaflets, study tours, coastal clean-up activities and community training programmes are used to disseminate regulations and raise awareness. Third, the community is provided with equipment and conducts regular patrols to manage its fishery. Fourth, eco-tourism services provide alternative livelihoods for fishworkers.

The lack of resources and unpredictable weather are persistent challenges in the management of the MPA. Moreover, communities are not well-equipped to resolve disputes.

The MPA is governed by the Management Board, which initially operated the Bai Huong Sub-MPA unassisted. However, fishermen community groups have gradually come to share the responsibility of marine conservation.

Based on this analysis, the Sub-MPA Co-Management Group has proposed solutions and recommendations to develop a co-management plan for well-managed fishery resources and marine conservation. The solutions include a participatory approach that involves all fisheries stakeholders; granting legal recognition to co-management groups; and the identification and allocation of legal fishing gears to fishing communities within the specified areas.

**Draft National Action Plan for Aquatic Resources Co-Management**

The general objectives of the Draft Action Plan are to strengthen management capacity, mobilize participation of stakeholders in management, and use and protect fishery resources. (*Refer to* ***Annexure 1***) In addition, specific objectives have been outlined for the year 2030:

* 50 per cent of coastal provinces have plans for fishery resources that must include co-management programs which are implemented in areas where community organizations support the establishment and operations;
* 30 per cent of local coastal officials master the skills of co-management of fishery resources and provide guidance to support community organizations;
* 70 per cent of the coastal population has access to information about fishery resource co-management.

**The mission of the action plan is to,**

* Improve capacity for co-management in the fisheries sector
* Strengthen the capacity to monitor and supervise community organizations and management levels
* Develop and improve documents on state management of fishery resource management
* Communication and education about co-management in fisheries
* Develop alternative livelihood support in the community
* Support the development of a network for information-sharing to procure multi-sectoral linkages for community organizations

In order to fulfill these objectives, specific actions should be implemented such as communication and education about how to strengthen co-management capacity and protection of fishery resources, in addition to creating a plan on how to advocate for the responsibilities and rights of the community. It is essential to involve fishermen, women and youth. At the same time, training for executives on planning, inspection and supervision of co-management activities is essential to strengthen the capacity of these management areas. Further activities include training and skill development about patrol and surveillance on the sea, training of communication activities to develop plans for the sea area, training community organizations on how to assess resources, and collecting data on the production of fishery resources.

For comprehensive solutions, the participants discussed the need to focus more on fisheries science, technology promotion. More specifically, it is necessary to conduct scientific research on endangered, vulnerable, and rare aquatic species in order to supplement information on biological and ecological characteristics, population changes, and propose appropriate types of protection and management strategies. Resources need to be investigated so that fishery exploitation can be adjusted and restructured, ensuring compliance with the exploitation capacity in order to reduce unsustainable reduction of marine species populations. Baseline surveying of the various types of water bodies, species, and fishery resources is essential for the scientific basis of effectively planning zoning and allocating rights. Through a system of decentralisation, community organizations will be able to take part in developing and maintaining these spaces.

It is necessary to issue a mechanism to encourage and support fishermen to switch to selective, environmentally friendly fishing mechanisms or convert livelihoods to other jobs to reduce pressure on resources and the aquatic environment.

Workshop participants gave several suggestions for the continued improvement of marine conservation:

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| *The action plan is critically needed and it covers the main contents. Regarding human capacity training, it is necessary to clearly identify the trainees (district, commune, and community officials) and put the implementation time into the plan. The plan should clearly describe the time to conduct the survey of resources, the resources to support the community team and specifying policies to support livelihoods to reduce illegal exploitation of people.*  ***Nguyen Kim Anh, Representative of Thua Thien Hue***  *The action plan needs to make a specific roadmap and budget for implementation, from which to determine the approval level. There should be more financial sources for environmental protection and regeneration of fisheries resources.*  ***Expert, Pham Thi Tinh, Department of Legal Affairs –Directorate of Fisheries***  *We need to complete the guiding manual for co-management based on the Fisheries Law and Decree 26. To recognise legal status of the co-management group, people need to have the capacity and clearly defined roles. In order to empower effective management, the State needs to rely on the people and improve their capacities..*  ***Nguyen Tien Lap, Lawyer*** |

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# **Conclusion**

The two workshops succeeded in bringing together stakeholders to discuss co-management issues in and reduction of IUU fishing. Participants had the opportunity to share past experiences and propose actions and recommendations for the implementation of the Fisheries Law and the Draft National Action Plan for Aquatic Resources Co-Management. The experiences in Bình Thuận, Bình Định, and Cu Lao Cham showed some progress but also challenges in the protection of fishery resources. Nevertheless, these provinces are models for potential improvements and replications with engagement of community, government and other stakeholders. The Draft Action Plan provides a framework to take co-management activities forward and set Việt Nam on the road to a more sustainable and equitable fisheries.

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**Annexure 1**

**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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l. 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.

# ll. 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

# lll. 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

# lV. 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.

# Vl. 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.

# Vll. ANNEX

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

1. Adapted from *Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries: A Review of Implementation Guidelines*. Serge M Garcia and Kevin L Cochrane. ICES Journal of Marine Science, 62: 311e318 (2005) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)