



**PROJECT «NETWORK FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
THINK-TAKS FOR COUNTRIES IN MEKONG SUB-REGION (NARDT)»**



Regional research

Agricultural innovations review in Sub-Mekong region countries

Co-management model of coastal aquatic resources

in Thua Thien Hue province

2023

1. General information

Tam Giang - Cau Hai lagoon in Thua Thien Hue has a length of 70 km with a water surface area of about 22,000 ha, one of the largest lagoon systems in the world. About one third of the population of Thua Thien Hue province live in the lagoon area and depend on the industries they can exploit in this area such as fishing, aquaculture, transportation, tourism, etc. It can be said that the Tam Giang - Cau Hai lagoon plays a particularly important role in the socio-economic development of Thua Thien Hue province in general and the lagoon area in particular.

In recent years, the pressure of over exploration on the lagoon area has put great pressure on the environment and resources here. Many conflicts have appeared, people's livelihoods have become unsustainable as a result of the lack of a well-organized and managed mechanism for exploiting lagoon resources. This pressure leads to the need for timely and effective actions to avoid the risk of degradation of the entire biodiversity of the lagoon environment, protect natural resources and ensure the quality of livelihoods of people.

2. Model development

Since 2005, based on access to aquatic resources and co-management, the IMOLA project began to provide support to Thua Thien Hue province in “developing and implementing an integrated regional lagoon, built on consensus among stakeholders, thereby balancing the sustainable use of lagoon resources with the livelihoods and needs of resource users”.

The overall objective of the project is to improve people's livelihood by promoting sustainable management of aquatic resources in the lagoon, which will be community participatory and in line with socio-economic requirements, society and production of the population. Over the past 4 years of implementation, the project has achieved many important results, especially the application of modern techniques and technologies to the assessment of the lagoon situation, the development of planning, plans to be linked to community commitments in exploiting resources in Tam Giang lagoon to bring about a new institutionalized co-management mechanism.

The development of planning and plans to exploit and develop resources is not a new job for many development projects. However, the difference of this project is that the activities range from assessing the status of environmental resources to building community commitments and institutionalizing principles of resource exploitation and

management. All resources here have the participation of the community and related actors in the area.

Faced with the unsustainable situation in the management and exploitation of lagoon resources, along with the province's view on community-based management, the IMOLA project implements a "co-management" approach by building branches Association of Fisheries and form a relationship and share management roles between the Fisheries Association and local authorities and related units. This approach is not new and is the experience drawn from many models of co-management of aquatic resources in the world, but it is very new in Vietnam, in line with view of giving autonomy to the community, creating a new relationship between the state, the community and the private sector in rural management. With shared resources, the participation of the community in management together with the state is necessary to ensure environmental sustainability, livelihoods as well as local socio-economic development.

Area of lagoon of Tam Giang - Cau Hai



Source: Thua Thien Hue Newspaper

In a specific area such as Tam Giang - Cau Hai lagoon, the project identifies indigenous communities with their long-standing skills, knowledge and experience in exploiting lagoon resources as the main assets. It is the most valuable tool for organizing the community, promoting the community's self-management ability and implementing the co-management mechanism between the community and the local government. The project's approach has shown that promoting the internal resources of people and communities is not only about material things, but more valuable skills, understanding

of the environment, nature, production and organization of the people. settlement that the Resolution of Agriculture, Rural Area and Farmer and the National Target Program on building new rural areas are considered as the key points of the rural development perspective.

Up to now, there have been more than 7,000 members, gathered in 85 official grassroots Fisheries Associations, which have developed widely in communes, in 5 coastal districts, in both lagoon and marine fisheries with different types of fishery (caught or farmed), different scope (inter-village, intra-village...). In addition, all the supported associations were established with the initiative of local fishermen and commune authorities with their own way and management.

This development has recognized a fisherman organization system that has formed in Thua Thien Hue with an increasingly large scale, democratic form of organization, self-financed, the State does not subsidize in terms of budget.

The organization of the system of grassroots Fisheries Associations in Thua Thien Hue is different from the Fisheries Associations of neighboring provinces. The local Fisheries Association can be granted a license/right to fish in a certain water body, which can be considered as a “red card - land use right” for fisheries. This is a great motivation for the development of the Fisheries Association because fishermen always want to have a long-term use right in the fishing ground, officially recognized in writing by the State. The effort and money of fishermen spending in the structure of organizing together in the short term to protect the fishing grounds, preserve and regenerate the common aquatic resources with the State, should be ensured in the long term for the use of fishery products for stable income. Initially, fishermen were more responsible for developing and implementing fishery management plans in their fishing grounds and farming areas instead of relying on the State. After all, it is only natural because fisheries resources and the ability to convey the environment are only to serve the livelihoods of local fishermen.

Model of local On the practical side, fishing rights have been officially granted to 47 Fisheries Associations, covering more than 73% of the lagoon area, and 23 Aquatic Protection Areas with a total strictly protected area of 614.2 hectares (approximately 2.5% of the lagoon area). Since 2014, the coastal marine fishery has also assigned 06 pilot fishing licenses/rights to 06 associations of coastal marine fisheries for management and exploitation. Thus, along with the assigned rights and

interests, the fishing community and the grassroots Fisheries Association will have more responsibility in managing and protecting fishing grounds and aquatic resources.

Co-management at coastal area in Thua Thien Hue province



Source: Government E-Newspaper.

In addition to the limited state funding, there have been 07 domestic and international non-governmental organizations joining to mobilize investment resources from the society, especially the efforts of fishermen and NGOs and projects have been interested, funded, and provided technical support in terms of surveying, developing documents, proposing the establishment of community-based fisheries conservation zones in the lagoon system; training to improve management and exploitation capacity for the fishing community, developing community-based tourism; sponsoring dozens of community fishing boat.

Although the system of grassroots Fisheries Associations has officially developed widely, compared with other organizational systems, this is only the initial step, there are still many difficulties and challenges ahead... Therefore, the State and NGOs need to continue to provide policy and organizational support, strengthen the system of grassroots Fisheries Associations better and better, and have specific technical means for self-management at the grassroots level.

For people-based management, it is first necessary to empower an organized fishing community, which is a prerequisite for the development of the system. After that, the grassroots Fishery Associations promote self-management over the granted fishing and aquaculture rights to gradually organize and mobilize human and property

resources, assign them to jointly manage and coordinate the fishing activities. State forces. Thus, the fisherman organizations manage themselves together, and together with the State better manage aquatic resources.

3. Opportunities and challenges

Practice of co-management and community-based fisheries management and fisheries protection zones in Thua Thien Hue have been operated under the new institutions such as "co-management" and "fishery resource protection zone" to encourage restructuring the Aquatic Resource Protection Area and co-management system for better management of coastal aquatic resources.

The great prospect of a people-based fishery co-management and management system for higher efficiency and effectiveness of fisheries management is already a reality. However, the challenge is not small because the state management mechanism in this respect is very new, requires a lot of thinking and creativity in order to achieve legitimacy, selective traditional inheritance and approach to modern and scientific fisheries management methods of some advanced countries in the world. On the other hand, despite the institutional arrangements, the decentralization and authorization of local governments at district and commune levels is often slow progress due to the implementation capacity of grassroots officials is often limited and most of the new thinking is not fully understood. For the majority of fisheries managers, they still expect and rely on the power of the State, but often underestimate the power of the people. So, it is necessary to:

- Thoroughly grasping the idea of "depending on the people" to each fishery management officer, through the study and application of specific fisheries management methods, for each type of fishery, for each specific region.

- Applying "people-based" results achieved in the lagoon to freshwater fisheries and marine fisheries in coastal waters, which have been decentralized by the Government to the province, in order to "develop management models". community participation in the management of aquatic resources at the shoreline".

- Promote decisions to delegate authority to the grassroots Fisheries Association to manage identified fishing grounds and water surface whenever they are fully qualified and well prepared in terms of technical expertise.

4. Conclusion

The model of co-management in lagoon fishery in Thua Thien Hue has solved the conflict between the State – Fishermen in resource protection and utilization. The State only coordinates, guides and supports fishing communities to self-manage each other in the relationship of using resources. The state only focuses on key and necessary issues, makes policies, strategies, planning, institutions. Fishmen are main users who have to utilise these resources effectively and environmentally sustainable.

The fisherman's organization built in Thua Thien Hue, the grassroots Fisheries Association, whose legal status (seal) is a consultation between the local authorities at the commune level and Thua Thien Hue Fisheries Association. The fisherman organization has become a legal entity, acting as a bridge between the local government and the fishermen. Ensuring people's rights specifically to self-manage internal community issues has been enable aquatic resources to serve the livelihood of local fishermen. The local fishing community is responsible for managing them together for sustainable development. This model of co-management can be applied to other natural resources such as lakes and forest management.