

Vietnam MPAs: a Fact Sheet

Efforts of Vietnam on MPAs

Marine Conservation Policy at National level

Vietnam is endowed with a long coastal line and diversified marine ecosystems which have brought Vietnam a great potential to develop a prosperous marine-based economy. Therefore, maintaining a healthy state of marine resource and environment is a prerequisite for Vietnam to achieve goals of both conservation and socio-economic development in coastal areas.

The significance of sustainable management of marine resource has been fully recognized by the Vietnamese Government through the approval and effective implementation of Biodiversity Action Plan, Vietnam Agenda 21, international commitments as well as national laws and regulations on marine conservation. Currently, a “Master Plan of Vietnam MPAs to 2015 and its vision to 2020” has been drafted and submitted to the Government for approval.

Current MPA network

The development of a MPA network has become an important national issue. In 2001, Hon Mun MPA (now known as Nha Trang Bay MPA) in Khanh Hoa province was the first MPA in Vietnam established under a 4-year project (2001-2005) initiated and supported by GEF through WB, DANIDA, IUCN and the Government of Vietnam and implemented in cooperation with former MoFi and Khanh Hoa PPC. In 2005, Cu Lao Cham MPA in Quang Nam province was the second one established with support from DANIDA. Two latest MPAs (Phu Quoc MPA in Kien Giang province in 2007 and Con Co MPA in Quang Tri province in 2008) were established under the effort of the provincial governments with only technical support from DANIDA. These four established MPAs are in the proposed national MPA network in Vietnam. Besides nationally established MPAs, Trao Reef MPA was established in 2002 by efforts of Van Hung CPC and with the technical and financial supports of MCD Vietnam. Although Trao Reef MPA is not in the list of proposed national MPA network, it is the first Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) in Vietnam.

Achievements

- *Effective management of MPAs at local level*

Most MPA management systems have been designed using participatory planning and they are now self-sustaining. Main management activities include:

- Development of community based management, co-management and locally managed marine area model at MPA sites.
- Capacity building for MPA managers in environmental governance, coastal resource management, involvement of local community in management process, development and implementation of management plan, enforcement of MPAs rules, monitoring and evaluation, eco-tourism, habitat mapping, and socio-economic assessment, etc.
- Implementation of IEC program to raise awareness of marine ecosystem and biodiversity's value, the importance of marine conservation and sustainable coastal resource management.

Effective management activities have helped to achieve the MPA goals of species conservation, habitat protection, sustainable use of marine resource and contributed significantly to poverty reduction in coastal areas in Vietnam.

- *Livelihoods improvement for people living in and around MPAs*

In coastal communities in Vietnam, about 20% of the population depend directly and 60% depend (much or less) on marine resources for their living. The main source of income of communities living in and around MPAs comes from fishing (accounting for 70-80% of total income). The establishment of MPAs with regulations on conservation and sustainable use of marine resources will make part of resource users reduce their exploitation or move to alternative jobs, leading to a fall in their income.

Some livelihoods interventions have been implemented in some MPAs based on comprehensive understanding of livelihoods of coastal communities in three main forms:

- creating favorable environment (such as solid waste management system, development funds, education support projects),
- improving the current livelihoods (handicraft production, fish sauce production, dried fish production, and aquaculture), and
- creating alternative or supplementing livelihoods (tourism development such as training for tourist guides, cooks and servants, home stay service, eco-tourism...and agriculture development (animal husbandry and cultivation).

Livelihoods interventions have increased and stabilized incomes of target community members in the long-term. They also help local residents reduce their dependence and negative impact on the marine ecosystems.

- *Financing for MPAs*

MPAs in Vietnam now are operating by funds from two sources: local government budget and international donor, but the situation is different across MPA sites.

The first and second MPAs (Hon Mun and Cu Lao Cham) were established with support from international donors. In the initial stage of the development, significant funds were put to build infrastructure and set up a management system. A four-year management project of Nha Trang Bay MPA received over US \$ 2 million from the GEF, the WB and IUCN. Despite of establishment by Quang Nam Province, Cu Lao Cham MPA received little financial support from the local government and its daily operation depended heavily on financial assistance from DANIDA. Since the provincial governments did not provide much financial support, it was very difficult to maintain the operation and management of the MPAs once the donors had phased out their supports. In this regard, on the way to assure the sustainable financing mechanism for MPA operation, NhaTrang Bay MPA started to collect visitor's fee from the end of 2005. Part of the revenue (45%) has been returned to the MPA Management Board and used for marine conservation work. It is expected that a proposal for "marine conservation fee" will be submitted to KhanhHoa Province People Council for approval by the end of 2009.

In Phu Quoc and ConCo MPAs, which were established on local needs, local governments deeply got involved in the development of the MPAs and provided the MPAs with human resource (staffs for MPA Management Board) and a limited annual budget for operation of the MPAs. However, financial support from local government is insufficient which makes it difficult for MPA managers to run their offices as well as to implement management activities such as installation of marker buoys system and enforcement of MPA regulations.

Trao Reef MPA is a small site managed by Van Hung Commune (Van Ninh district, Khanh Hoa province) with some 30 million VND for MPA annual activities from Van Ninh District People Council. Unlike four nationally established MPAs with technical and financial supports from provincial governments and international donors, Trao Reef MPA has been established and managed with full involvement of the local community which is considered to be the first of its kind of LMMA in Vietnam.

- *Research and networking*

Some studies such as Sustainable Livelihoods Strategy for Vietnam MPAs, socio-economic and environmental assessments of livelihoods interventions in MPAs in Vietnam, development of socio-economic profile for forthcoming Cu Lao Cau MPA, management effectiveness of MPAs in Vietnam have been undertaken. Besides, various workshops at national, provincial and international levels have been held to raise awareness on marine conservation and serve as a bridge between policy makers, practitioners, lecturers and researchers in the field of coastal resource management in Vietnam from which a network of international donors, government agencies, local communities, non-governmental organizations, universities and research institutes is further developed.

In Nha Trang and Cu Lao Cham MPAs, LMPA Component already supported baseline studies for biodiversity assessment when the sites were established and the Component continued to finance two more biodiversity reassessments of coral reef and sea grass beds in Nha Trang and Cu Lao Cham MPAs in 2007 and 2008 respectively. This biodiversity data has been used to develop a GIS database for the national MPA network. In 2009, LMPA also helped Phu Quoc MPA to carry out a biodiversity assessment with assistance from experts of the National Institute of Oceanography.

Challenges

- *MPA management effectiveness*
 - Insufficient legal system on marine conservation at national level.
 - Community participation issues: which level of community participation, legal recognition of community management, and economic incentives for participation.
 - Unofficial approval of the national MPA network: the MPA network still remains a cluster of individual sites rather than a network of MPAs supported at the national level which leads to a lost opportunity in providing a systematic approach to MPA development in Vietnam, including standardized effective MPA management system; capacity building for the network; national monitoring data linked to regional/global initiatives, etc...
- *Sustainable livelihoods in MPA*
 - There is no national program of poverty reduction targeting fishermen communities.
 - It is very difficult to introduce a none-fishing livelihood into the local fishermen community as their main income comes from fishing and they have no other resources such as land for agriculture. Moreover, since making a living by fishing is always much easier than other livelihoods, an alternative livelihood is usually not welcomed by the fishermen.
- *Sustainable financing in MPAs*

Most MPAs in Vietnam now are operating by external funds since they receive little budget from provincial governments. This raised the question of sustainability of MPAs without donor's support. Collection of visitor's fee is considered one of components of sustainable financial mechanism for MPAs. However, not like National Parks where the Management Boards can collect visitor's fee and the revenue is reallocated for management of the Park, the Ministry of Finance has no regulations that allow MPA Management Boards to collect visitor's fee. KhanhHoa Province had justified the proposal for visitor fee collection and utilization of NhaTrang MPA Management Board and the MPA is provided with a substantial fund from the province. In the contrary Kiengiang Province did not allow Phu Quoc MPA managers to collect visitor's fee since the MPA is not regarded as a cultural or heritage site according to regulations of the Ministry of Finance. The MPA Management Board is still struggling to have the proposal for visitor fee's collection approved. Therefore, in addition to funds from local governments, donors and user fees, there is a need for a National Action Plan for MPA financing mechanism.