

SCALE UP OF PARTICIPATORY PLANNING FOR RESOURCE GOVERNANCE : A CASE IN SAM CHUON LAGOON, VIETNAM

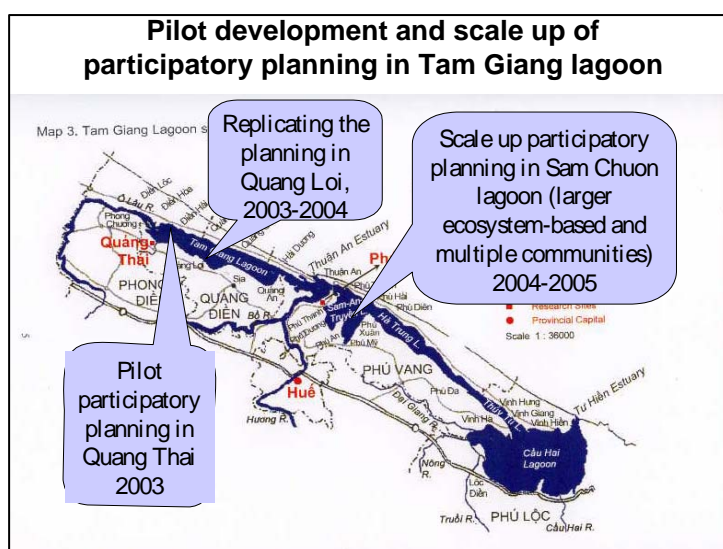
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Abstract

In responding to the overexploitation and degradation of the rich natural resource base in the Tam Giang Lagoon in Vietnam, IDRC (Canada) provided support to participatory research to investigate problems and community-based management. Local farmers, fishers, and government officials joined with the research team in a series of collaborative learning and testing interventions over a period of several years. This led to a pilot implementation of a new model for participatory planning and resource co-management in the lagoon. This not only helped resolve conflicts and ensure a more equitable access to the resources, but also improved the prospects for better governance of lagoon resources in the future. Key to this achievement was a common understanding of the Community-Based Natural Resource Management approach developed among the stakeholders. The essential elements included full engagement of local stakeholders (with emphasis upon marginalized groups), recognition of customary access rights, changes to the processes of local planning and resource governance, and changes to the organization and roles of the key stakeholders. The research team also adopted a new role as facilitators of learning, capacity-building, and more importantly, negotiation and consensus building among the stakeholders. New locally-organized user groups along with leaders of local government played a central role in empowering the community, providing legal support, and organizing the implementation of joint plans. The officers of provincial and district government departments adopted a new role: they provided technical assistance instead of giving direct instructions. Fishers and farmers participated in lagoon planning based on their improved understandings of problems, benefits, and responsibilities, which grew from their ongoing involvement in the research. The challenge of the on going research activity is to identify the process and means for the scale up of the application of the participatory planning with respect to ecosystem base and multiple community involvement. The participatory planning was replicated successfully in Quang Loi lagoon, that had similar context of Quang Thai. It is also being carried out and further developed in Sam Chuon, a lagoon located in the middle of the larger lagoon system with four communes surrounding. The activities in supporting the participatory planning scale up include (1) building community movements for enlarging common lagoon areas and reorganizing exploitation based on livelihood problem solving; (2) supporting community capacity building through strengthening of the Fishing Union newly established; and (3) improving local livelihoods with participatory technology development for pen-culture. This paper introduces the participatory planning process and how its application is scaled up for larger effects in supporting community based resource management and local governance in the Tam Giang lagoon.

Introduction

The application of a participatory approach in natural resource management was considered as a response to the ineffectiveness of the conventional “top-down” approaches in resolving problems in such a complex system like Tam Giang lagoon. The work has been carried out in the Tam Giang Lagoon, Thua Thien–Hue Province, Vietnam since 1995 by an interdisciplinary research team supported by IDRC/CIDA¹. It helped the team carry out the field research activities with involvement of community participation in learning of the lagoon context and how global and national changes were affecting people’s livelihoods. The activities were to support development of CBCRM, particularly to identify the tools, processes, and means in dealing with such complex situation. In a pilot effort, the project carried a participatory planning for the lagoon resource governance. The application brought in positive outcomes and appreciation as effective tools in supporting community



learning and resolving the lagoon resource management problems. The expansion of participatory planning with replication of its developed process and scale up has drawn interests of local communities and stakeholders. These activities started in late 2004 in Sam Chuon lagoon have produced important lessons in dealing with the most critical problems in such complexity lagoon as part of large Tam Giang lagoon systems.

The newly developed participatory planning for resource government

As a response to problems on management of the lagoon resource, the IDRC supported project on CBCRM in Central Vietnam carried out participatory planning for lagoon resource governance in Quang Thai, the northern part of Tam Giang lagoon system. This pilot effort was also built on the participatory research in this communities in previous phase. The general problems addressed in the participatory planning application included (1) rapid degradation of the lagoon environment and fishery resources; (2) unsustainable livelihoods of the local communities; (3) poverty of the traditional fishing families; and (4) lack of means and process for effective local planning for resource governance (Tuyen et al 2004). These problems were also identified in the whole large lagoon system including the Sam Chuon lagoon. However, their extent and priority may vary from one community to the other. The pilot application was successful in development the planning process and methods in supporting the application and scale up

¹ The researchers were from Hue University of Sciences, Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry, and Department of Fisheries of Thua Thien-Hue province. Phase 1 of project (1995-1997) was funded by CIDA/IDRC/VISED. Phase 2 (1998-2001) funded by CIDA/IDRC/VEEM.

The overall process of participatory planning developed includes the following key steps (1) facilitating participatory learning and building awareness of lagoon context and use; (2) building local capacity (of planning) including strengthening community organizations; (3) involving government and other stakeholders; (4) building consensus on planning approach and priority with government; (5) planning and actions at the community and resource user group levels; and (6) plan consolidation, regulation development, and allocation of management functions (Tuyen et al, 2004)

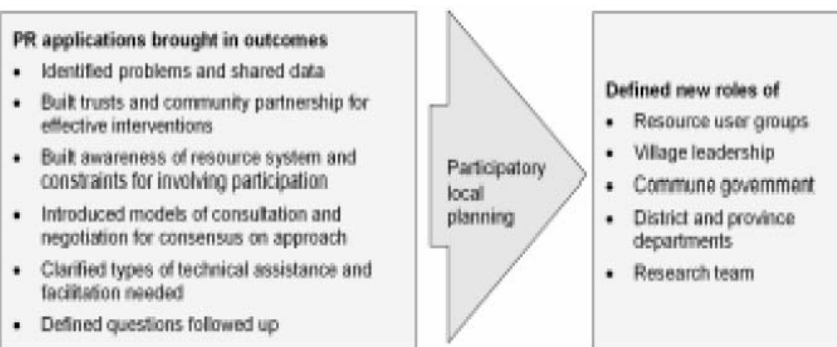


Figure 9. The emerging model for participatory local planning for natural resource management. Source: CBCRM 2004.

Key elements of the participatory planning identified are (1) Common understanding among local stakeholders of the problems, priority, and planning approach; (2) the planning facilitators (research team) capable of providing overall supports; (3) the community organizations strengthened; (4) the functional departments at various levels taken part; (5) the active participation of fishers and the farmers (Tuyen et al, 2004)

The Sam Chuon lagoon as critical part of the large lagoon system

The Tam Giang lagoon is considered to be very important to Thua Thien Hue Province. Of approximately 300,000 people living on and around the lagoon, many are poor and involved in fishing and aquaculture or various agricultural activities along the shores. An estimated 100,000 people depend on fishery and aquaculture for their livelihoods, while 200,000 earn their living from various activities, including agriculture and part-time aquaculture and capture fisheries. A government wealth ranking carried out in 2002 showed that the incidence of poverty in these communities varied from 55 to 70 percent². There are also an estimated 1,500 households living on boats within the lagoon, referred as to Sam pan people (Provincial Department of Fishery, 2003). These households are extremely poor, heavily dependent on aquatic resources for food and income and their livelihoods are threatened by various factors, including declining fish catch and difficulties in gaining access to fishing grounds.

The human and ecological significance of the lagoon goes beyond those people immediately involved in fishing and aquaculture. The lagoon is an important nursery area for inshore and offshore fish species, and thus indirectly supports the livelihoods of people living along the coastal area in the central part of Vietnam. The lagoons of Thua Thien Hue province, their ecological condition, and their capacity to

² Vietnam Development Report, 2004: The poverty rate in rural area at national level was 35.6 percent; The poverty line was determined at the expenditure per person per day to buy a local food basket equivalent to 2100 calories.

support human development, are threatened by various activities (fishing, aquaculture, agriculture, tourism, transport and industry development). However, few of those in charge of lagoon management, properly understand the context of the lagoon's exploitation.

(Figure 1. Map showing Vietnam and the lagoon)

Sam Chuon lagoon as part of the large system located in the middle of the Tam Giang lagoon (see the map). It is the most productive lagoon in terms of capture fishes and of aquaculture development because its location is next to the lagoon opening to the sea bi-tidal scheme, and it has high exchange with Huong river estuary, one of three major rivers flowing into the Tam Giang lagoon. There is a high diversity of aquatic habitats, marine and bracket water species in the Sam Chuon. The soft substrate and shallow water level also provides favourable conditions for aquaculture practices.

The Sam Chuon lagoon shapes as a bay with main water currents at the ease side with an area of 1,350 hectares (The area of whole Tam Giang – Cau Hai lagoon system is 22.000 hectares with approximately length of 70 km along the coast). The average depth of water is 1.6 meter. However, it is much deeper at the main water currents. Aquatic resources and aquaculture practice in Sam Chuon lagoon associate with the water salinity. It is seasonal variation depending on sea tides, river water flows and flooding scheme. Generally, October and November is fresh water period due to rainy and flooding period. It is 0.4 to 0.8 percent during December to February. It increases up to 2.4 or 3.2 percent during March to September. Surrounding Sam Chuon is low lying rice fields with seasonal discharges and residential areas.

Management policy background.

The “*Doi Moi*” reforms, which mandated Vietnam's transition to a market-oriented economy, wrought significant improvements in poverty alleviation and resource management during the 1990s. However the inequality also increased. One such policy reform was the allocation of land to individuals that started in 1989. The Land Laws (1993) recognized legal private rights to the use of land, which previously belonged exclusively to state enterprises and formal collective organizations, such as cooperatives. While the central government still maintains legal ownership, it issued Certificates of Long-term Land Use Rights (*compiled in the Red Book*) to individuals or other recipients. The *Red Book*, which indicates the purpose(s) of land use, defines the types of land to be allocated (e.g. agricultural lands) and those which should remain common properties, for example lagoon and fishery resources. However, recent patterns of lagoon exploitation have rendered existing guidelines on resource use largely inadequate.

Box 1. Customary access to the lagoon and fishing gear management

The traditional fishers in the lagoon are grouped according to the type of fishing gear they use: fixed gear or mobile gear. These fishers have different degrees of access to and control of the lagoon. The fixed gear fishers have had long-standing access to lagoon for many years. The existence of the gear itself (including those structures clearly visible above the water) indicates that the fishing ground has already been claimed, and that these fishers had exclusive rights to harvest from this area. The fixed gear fishers collectively control access rights by limiting the number of fixed gears or rotating the ground to ensure equitable distribution of resources. The above practice may not apply to all types of fixed gear nor is the practice necessarily the same for all communities (Tuyen, Lessons in resource management from the Tam Giang lagoon, 2002).

In principle, mobile gear fishers could fish anywhere within the local territory; however, they must not impede potential benefits to the fixed gear fishers or others using traditional fishing practices. For example, the fixed gear fishers informally prohibit any fishing activity at the opening of their fish corrals during periods when tides or currents were most favorable for capturing fish. Mobile gear fishing areas were open to any fisher with priority informally allocated to whomever set their gear first - i.e. Rather than compete intensively, mobile fishers would rather choose an unoccupied area to set their gear. In fact, mobile gear fishers do not limit their activities to their own communal boundaries but fish in lagoon areas outside their territories. They may not even be aware of the communal boundaries (Tuyen and Brzeski, IASCP paper, 1998)

Reforms introduced in the Fishery Laws (2004) were the government's way of acknowledging that the strategy of allocating resources to households – which worked well in boosting the productivity of agricultural land – was not as applicable to the fisheries sector. Instead, the government recognized the need for co-management approaches through which government authorities can work together with locally defined user groups in managing fishery resources. This implies the development of user groups among local fishers as a base for implementing fisheries co-management schemes.

Box 2. Fishing Union (Fishing Society at national level)

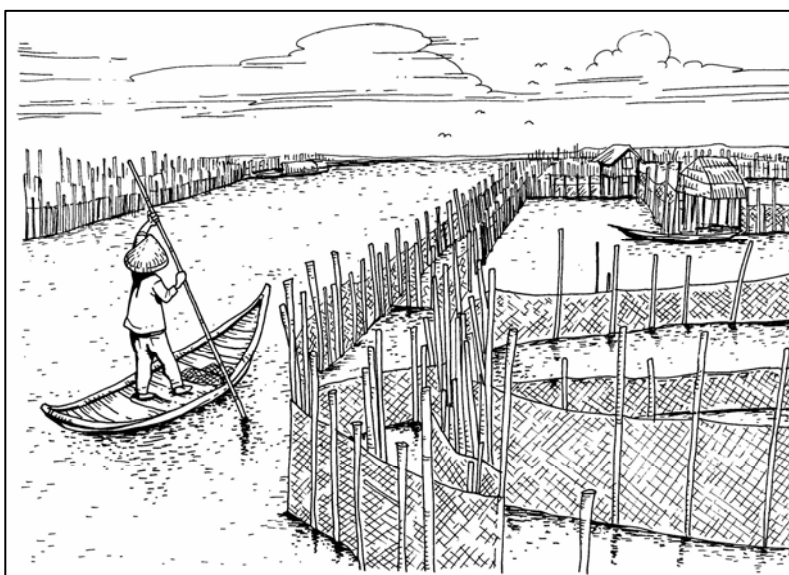
In responding to the fisheries policy reforms, the provincial government was forced to re-think its traditional strategy of allocating areas in the lagoon to individual households, and consider how it could allocate them to groups of fishers instead. The problem was that local co-management groups were required to be legally established entities. There are already a number of “mass organizations” which involve most local residents in any village, such as the Farmers’ Union, Women’s Union, National Fatherland Front, etc. These are sanctioned by the national government but do not have the appropriate legal standing to receive resource under the Land Law (1993). The national Fishing Society was formally established and constituted as a legal entity capable of holding formal resource rights. Its organizational structure had different level. The basic units referred to as Fishing Unions may involve the villagers who exploit aquatic resources in the lagoon. This new user organization developed a formal constitution addressing membership and procedures, and subsequently played a

major role in the planning for lagoon resource use. The open registration was made to include all the fishing and aquaculture households. However, due to the member is the household, which is represented with the household heads. Most of them are men.

Recent change in lagoon resource use and livelihood problems

Before 1990 when the aquaculture was not introduced the lagoon resource users mainly were from the traditional fishing communities and practiced natural fishing. The number of lagoon users and exploitation diversity was not very high. After the aquaculture introduction in 1987 and adoption in 1990s. The number of lagoon resource users and types of activities increased with new comers and technologies. In 1990s, aquaculture was expanding rapidly. It was mentioned as “a boom” when the lagoon areas were claimed by individual households on their own without clear regulations from local government. In this practice the local people who had traditional access rights to the lagoon for fishing, e.g., the fish-trap corral owners, have enclosed lagoon areas with nets, mentioned as net-enclosure practice in which they integrated pen culture and natural fishing. In collusion with commune government representatives, they have been able to secure “exclusive rights for aquaculture”. The rapid and widespread expansion of net enclosures by fixed gear (E.g. the fish-trap corral, bottom nets, left nets) fishers had led to the marginalization of mobile gear fishers (gill nets, drag nets, push nets) already the most disadvantaged group in the community. Sam Chuon lagoon was well know in local perception as the first place when the aquaculture was introduced and the net-enclosure practice taken place as a boom. It was because this lagoon is rich in fishery resources and favourable for aquaculture development especially the net-enclosure. The shallow water level, rich sea weed habitats, and the “exclusive rights” provides ideal conditions for integrated natural fishing and pen culture.

In recent years, the number of households participating in aquaculture and aquaculture facility such as pens, net-enclosure, and ponds per household has also increased rapidly. This wave of privatisation has reduced the communal lagoon areas and widened the disparity between those who had been able to close off the lagoon with nets, and thus have easy access to lagoon resources, and those who had been excluded



from their traditional fishing grounds. The small mobile fishers have become increasingly marginalized as resources came under more direct control by the wealthier users or user groups in the community. While small fishers have always had to compete with wealthier members of the village who own larger fishing gear,

recent competition for lagoon resources has taken on a scope and intensity unseen in the past. This is because of the sheer number of current users and the many ways in which they are now making use of the lagoon resources.

Currently (2004) there are approximately 45,000 inhabitants located in four communes and 20 villages around Sam Chuon, who are directly or indirectly involved in lagoon resource exploitation for livelihoods (Phu Vang district statistic year book, 2004). Among the villages there are four traditional fishing villages, mentioned as the “settle villages”, one in each commune. The households in settle villages are generally poor according to government classification and the local perception. Most of them are the traditional fishing families that previously belonged to the Sampan groups (living on boats in the lagoon). They rely on natural fishing to earn their living and live far behind the government poverty line. Especially, the small mobile gear fishing families are considered as the poorest groups because they do not have neither net-enclosure nor aquaculture ponds. For reducing natural disaster risks (floods and typhoons) and for poverty alleviation the local government made efforts to settle in land of these groups by providing residential lands and other supports. The programs started in 1985 and have been under ways.

Table 1. Distribution of Sam Chuon lagoon user households by type of activities

Commune	Thuan An		Phu My		Phu Xuan		Phu An		Total	
	Settle village	Others	Settle village	Others	Settle village	Others	Settle village	Others	Settle village	Others
Total # of households	192	3,574	136	2,163	143	1,479	265	1,333	736	8,549
# lagoon user households	147	357	128	55	128	300	249	122	652	834
# earth pond households	39	178	14	26	25	275	7	133	85	612
# net-enclosure households	107	164	86	21	109	0	129	68	431	253
# natural fishing households	132	0	120	0	122	0	236	0	610	0
# Fishing hhs without pond or net-enclosure	16	0	12	0	15	0	72	0	115	0

Source: Phu Vang district statistic year book, 2004 and field research data, 2005

After the aquaculture introduction in 1987 the direct lagoon resource users in Sam Chuon come from not only the traditional fishing villages but also other villages. Number of new lagoon resource users who are not the traditional fishers increased rapidly with aquaculture expansion with net-enclosure and ponds in 1990s (Table 1). Statistic data in 2004 show that in the settle villages (or the traditional fishing communities) 88.6 percent of total households are the direct lagoon users. That in other villages is only about 10 percent. However, absolute number of lagoon user households from traditional fishing villages is lower than that from other villages. The traditional fishing households engaged more in net-enclosure practices and natural fishing. A considerable number of these households only practice natural fishing but do not have any aquaculture facility. These groups are also losing their fishing ground

due to lagoon area claims for aquaculture. The households from other villages mainly practice earth pond aquaculture and net-enclosure.

The dense and diverse lagoon exploitation in Sam Chuon lagoon lead to livelihood problems of the lagoon communities. The most critical problem is the unplanned claims of exclusive rights by individuals. This increased lagoon privatisation with net-enclosure and ponds that prevent substantially the water flows. The pollution and lagoon environment degradation effect most of households who practice aquaculture either ponds or pen culture. Fish catch decreased effect most the natural fishing groups, especially the traditional mobile gear fishing family. This group also are facing with losing their fishing ground due to claiming lagoon areas for aquaculture. In terms of sustainability of the access to lagoon resources, the new comers with aquaculture practice are more secure because the local government formally allocated the area to them for aquaculture. The traditional fishing communities including the ones who are able to participate in net-enclosure practice have never received formal recognition of their access to lagoon resources.

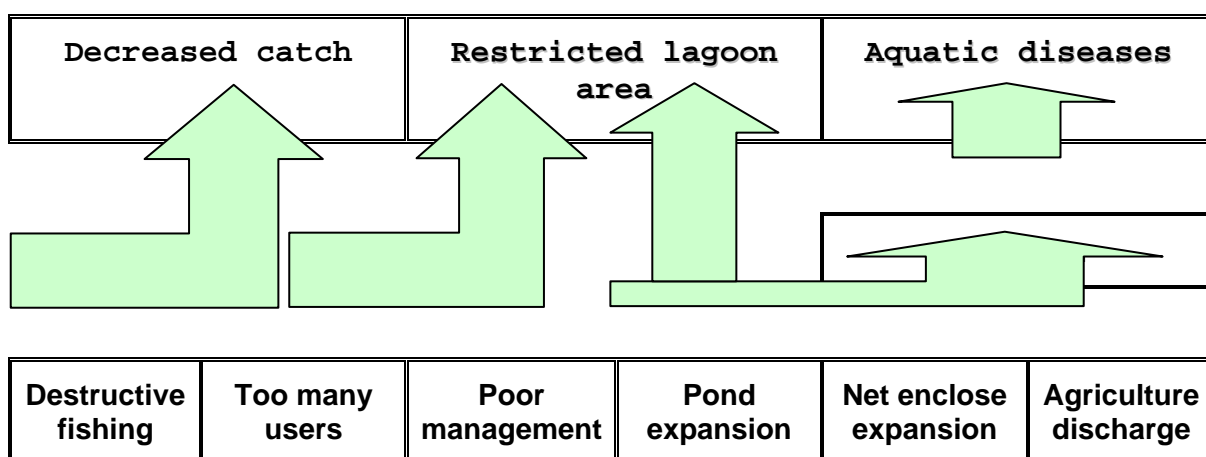


Figure 1. Livelihood problems in Sam Chuon identified by the workshop participants

Local government responses and institutional arrangement

The degradation of lagoon resources as a result of this indiscriminate and unplanned exploitation has resulted in declining fish catch in the lagoon. The dense net-enclosure and aquaculture ponds that reduces water flows lead to water pollution. The aquatic diseases become more and more critical. The harvest from aquaculture is lost and unstable because of risks from aquatic diseases. Local people and government were more and more concerned of this situation and looking for alternatives or dealing measures. As a response, started in 2000 the local policy and actions were making enforcements to open water ways in the lagoon to increase water flows and navigation needs. This implied necessary removing parts of the net-enclosure to widen the common water lanes. For a longer term, the provincial government formally put a policy (2001) that phased out the removing all net-enclosure practice in the whole lagoon system. 2010 is targeted year when all net-enclosure units must be removed and replaced with another “appropriate practice”. However, not any specific production systems have been identified or developed. The interpretation from local authority was that the net-enclosure practice destroyed the lagoon environment. This was illegal under the land law because water area under the net-

enclosure was allocated to the owners. The recommendation on replacement of net-enclosure were the resumes of the previous type of fishing e.g. the fish corrals. Unfortunately, these had no legal rights because there have never been any formal program so far on allocation of fishing rights or of lagoon use rights such locations to fix the fishing gears.

Meanwhile, the local government still maintain its supports to (earth) pond aquaculture though this was identified as the major source of lagoon pollution. In addition the expansion of pond aquaculture also destroy the natural lagoon. There are two types of pond aquaculture based on categories of lands under the pond construction. The lower aquaculture ponds were constructed on lands next to the lagoon edge. These are lagoon area as common property. The commune government with agreement from district government developed planning of the lagoon areas. It then allocated these lands to individual households or enterprises for pond aquaculture through contracts of land uses (*commune government is not authorized to give the land certificates referred to as red book*). The land recipients may then apply for land certificates from district government. The upper aquaculture ponds were converted from agriculture lands around lagoon. The owners of these lands were awarded the red books under the land law 2003. Among others, the local government supports earth pond aquaculture because it has initially high economic returns e.g. via exports thereby expectedly good contributions to socio-economic development and to local government budget. It is clearly that the user rights of the aquaculture pond owners are much better secured with legal status and the government recognitions. However, most of aquaculture ponds owners are new lagoon resource users. The current institutional arrangements in the lagoon system do not support sustainability of the access to the lagoon resources of the traditional fishing families and thereby increases the marginalization of these groups who mainly practice natural fishing and net-enclosures.

In recent year, **started in 2000**, the commune governments made lots of efforts to enforce the opening water ways in Sam Chuon lagoon by implementing regulations at the district level without consulting or seeking the participation of the resource users and without regard for the likely impacts on the ecosystems. There were not any alternative approach to governance, preferably one involving or led by the affected communities e.g. the traditional fishing groups. General process of water way opening enforcement are as follows:

- The commune government and village leaders organize community meetings to inform and develop plan for water way opening
- The commune government design and identify locations and demarcate the water ways in the lagoon based on the guidelines and regulations at district government
- Make announcement to community and the resource users who are involved in the opening the water ways, e.g. who are to remove parts of their net-enclosure, about the actions required and activity plan
- Commune government made directly contact with individual net-enclosure owners, whose net-enclosures are as parts of or within the water ways identified to get these households' commitment/promises in removing their net-enclosure in a time frame
- Pushing the implementations through communal loud speaker systems and community meetings

- Organizing the enforcement with armed force (local police and military) to remove the net-enclosure.

In most cases, the owners did not remove net-enclosure on their own. They even went strike to against the enforcement. The armed force simply destroyed the nets and other materials to open the water ways. These enforcements have been replicated with time intervals to maintain the water ways because the users reclaimed the new opened area. There have been a number of problems or issues raised from the top-down enforcements of opening the water ways:

- What are alternative approaches which are more peaceful and effective for opening the water ways or common water areas as needed in the lagoon?
- Is it the opened water way system appropriate and effective in addressing the environmental problems in the lagoon?
- Is it reasonable to provide supports or compensation to the households who faced the livelihoods lost from removing their net-enclosure?
- What measures to maintain equity among resource users in addressing the common problems on resource management? The enforcements made some individuals lost for common benefits.
- It was observable that the local government itself is not capable of continuing the current enforcements. It needs to be supported to develop more appropriate and practical approaches with local people participation in dealing with problems on the lagoon resource management.

The problems raised also after enforcing opening of the water ways regarding the user rights of the opened common water areas. The commune government expected to increase the fishing grounds to the mobile fishing gear groups. However, in order to manage the water ways the commune governments formed the net enclosure owners into groups and assigned to each of them particular management responsibilities. The conflicts grew worse and even led to violence between the mobile gear fishing groups and net-enclosure owners. The mobile gear fishers assumed that they would be given access to the water ways, but they were kept out by the net enclosure owners. It even came to the point when the two groups of users could not even meet to discuss their problems or negotiate a solution among themselves. Hence, the most urgent challenge to them was to strengthen the values of the community and to restart the negotiations among the parties concerned.

The learning objectives

The overall research objective of the project is to involve local concerned stakeholders into learning activities that would support the scale up of participatory planning application for resource governance including multiple communities and ecosystem based in Sam Chuon lagoon.

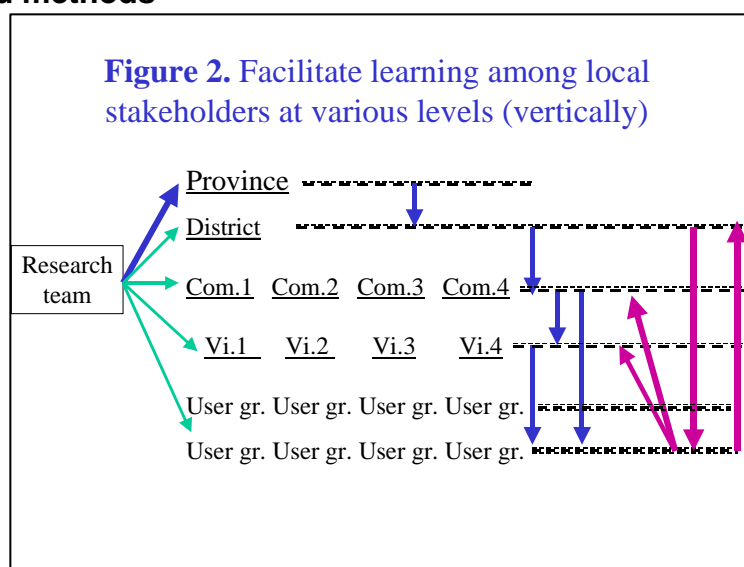
Immediate objectives are:

- to build common understanding and awareness among user groups and local stakeholders on the current lagoon resource use, livelihood problems, priorities, and management approaches
- to introduce local participatory planning for lagoon resource governance as alternatives for management and problem solving.

- to strengthen community organizations and build local capacity in undertaking local planning and community based lagoon resource management
- to facilitate the learning of stakeholders between various levels so that to develop consensus of the planning and lagoon management approach
- to identify processes and methods in supporting the scale up of participatory planning application for resource governance in Sam Chuon lagoon through livelihood problem solving

The learning process, tools and methods

Figure 2 presents an overall process of facilitating the learning activities involving stakeholders between various local levels: province, district, commune, village and the user groups in Sam Chuon lagoon. In preparation stage, the project team benefited from previous participatory research in the region such as in Tan Duong village of Phu Tan commune (previous name of Thuan An town) made visits to Sam Chuon communities and



establish initial relations and rapport with the local authority, villages and some user groups in Sam Chuon. This provided a base for proceeding other learning activities. A series learning workshops were organized involving local stakeholders and different groups. There were separate workshops for specific groups. There were also workshops to facilitate discussions between different groups and stakeholders. In general, these workshops were participatory learning. Different participatory tools and communication methods were used in the workshops. Most of workshop with local groups or stakeholders lasted for one day, but had different sessions. The outputs of the preceding workshop were employed as inputs for the next one as the continuous follow up activities.

Introduction to participatory planning at provincial level:

After developing the pilot participatory planning in Quang Thai, 2003. The team in collaboration with province department of fishery (DOF) organized a introductory workshop at provincial level on the planning in Tam Giang lagoon (October 2004). The workshop involved representatives of provincial departments, district leadership, and selected communes of the project sites. Some other groups working in the lagoon were also invited. The workshop participants reviewed the planning activities and distinguished two types of planning. One is the overall planning for lagoon use that was mainly undertaken at the provincial level. This type of planning is much with sector development with district involvement. The other type of planning is the local and detail planning within the framework of the overall planning mainly at the commune, village and user group levels. The pilot participatory planning conducted in Quang Thai, 2003, was introduced and discussed as an alternative approach for

local planning. The current planning (opening water ways) in Sam Chuon lagoon was also reviewed and reflected with the participatory planning in Quang Thai for building of awareness.

Orientation on participatory planning in Sam Chuon at district

This workshop organized in Phu Vang district which has jurisdictions over the Sam Chuon management. The participants were the officers at the district departments, district leadership, DOF officers and commune government officers from four Sam Chuon communes. The workshop facilitate the learning of planning needs in Sam Chuon lagoon, management problems and problems on the current planning. A training session on overall planning at the whole lagoon system and local planning. Participatory planning processes was introduced and discussed. The participants were also exposed with ecosystem management principles and how these may be applied in Sam Chuon. The discussions were for reflection of current planning and enforcement to open the water ways and the participatory planning. Awareness of participatory approaches and of ecosystem management among local officers was strengthened. Among others, an important perception among the participants was that the four communes needed to cooperate to develop a common water way system of the whole Sam Chuon lagoon but not one of the individual communes. The participatory planning was perceived as a peaceful approach that was the most interesting. However, the local officers did not a slow process. Above all, they did feel difficult to get people to change their practices without the enforcement.

Workshops on participatory planning with Sam Chuon communes.

Four separate workshops at Sam Chuon communes one each. The workshops at communes involved participation of commune officers, some of whom already attended the workshop at district could work as facilitators. Other participants were representatives from villages, community organizations, and different groups such as mobile gear fishing families and net-enclosure owners. The participants were facilitated by the researchers to identify the livelihood problems regarding the lagoon resource exploitation. They also reviewed the current planning activities e.g. opening the water ways and discussed on the needs of planning and roles of community in planning and lagoon resource management. A training session was conducted using PowerPoint presentation to introduce the participatory planning. The discussion afterward focussed on reflection of strengths and weakness of the current planning and management. This was also on possibility of application of participatory planning as a new option.

The discussions in the workshop showed that the level of access to lagoon area was the most critical aspect and every one compete or fight to increase their access. The participants were most concerned of equity in planning and in required community actions. This was not only among the individual resource users but also equity between the groups in the community e.g. the village such as mobile gear fishers, net-enclosure owners, and pond aquaculture households. Equity was a critical concern among the villages and communes. It was clearly that the participants in commune level workshop perceived the needs of planning for lagoon governance because this would help address the livelihood problems. The primary objective of the current planning activity in Sam Chuon was to opening the water ways and

enlarge the common water areas to favour the water flows thereby resolve the environmental problems. This would provide common benefits to the resource users. However, this requires actions on reducing the area of net-enclosure or of pond aquaculture. The current commune planning enforcement involved losing area of specific individual households. It meant the gains of ones were from losing livelihoods of the others. This explained why the people participation in the current commune planning was so difficult.

There were common and variation among four Sam Chuon communes. The common important outputs of the commune workshops were raising awareness for local people that the participatory planning was a good alternative that helps address equity issues in the local planning so that increase the people participation. In this line the participants and local officers also perceived the essential roles of community in planning and management. Therefore increasing community roles would contribute to strengthen local capacity. In four communes the identified livelihood problems were similar. In addition the first priority was the same in four communes that was given to the environmental pollution. The variation among four communes was different priority given to other problems (Table 2).

Table 2. Livelihood problems and priority in four Sam Chuon communes

Livelihood problem identified in the commune workshop	Priority rank (1= most prioritised)			
	Thuan An	Phu An	Phu My	Phu Xuan
Permission on continuation of net-enclosure practices	N/A	1	N/A	N/A
Environmental Pollution (reduced catch & lost aquaculture harvest)	1	2	1	1
Reduced water lagoon area (lost access to lagoon area)	2	5	2	3
Decreased fishery resources (less catch of natural fishing)	3	3	4	4
Destructive fishing (less catch and declined fishery resource)	4	4	3	2

Source: Sam Chuon lagoon workshops at communes, 2004 - 2005

A fundamental difference found among communes related to the local authority given to net-enclosure practices to the specific "lagoon zones". In Phu An, the commune government did not permit net-enclosure practices in a lagoon zone that it designated for natural fishing. Therefore it considered 81 households who currently practiced net-enclosure in this as "illegal users". In three other communes, the communes governments did not have to deal with this problems because all net-enclosure households were permitted. The complexity was from difficulty in user right institutionalisation. All net-enclosure owners did not have formal user rights allocated by the authorized government (district). However, they were able to claim the lagoon area based customary rights and informal contacts with commune government. The commune government is not legally authorized to allocated the

land or lagoon area. But it interprets its jurisdiction over the territory as the local government ownership of the natural resources. The higher levels of government with legal authority in land/ water area allocation often operate functions through commune government.

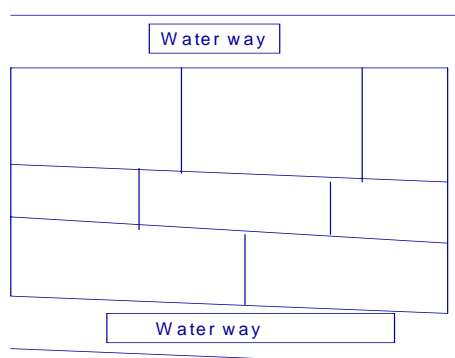
Table 3. Outputs on planning approach from the commune workshops

Workshop generated strategy	Thuan An	Phu An	Phu My	Phu Xuan
1. Enlarging common lagoon area to protect environment and increase fishing grounds (for the poor), and fishery resource	Yes	N/A (claim permission first)	Yes	Yes
2. Participatory technology development of policulture with “environmentally shellfish” as a livelihood measure to support people participation	Yes	Yes		Yes

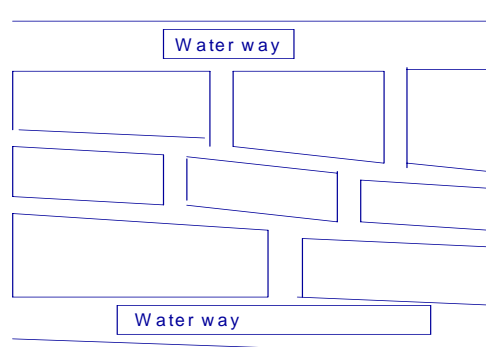
Selected planning measures for carrying the generated strategies

1. Building a movement of making space between the net enclosure units through community participation
2. Applying participatory planning to involve user groups in determining the space width, where, who, when, and how to implement
3. Targeted working groups for actions were the net-enclosure owners. This group was most feasible participation/contribution in the planning. Therefore the traditional fishing communities (or the settle villages) were also targeted working villages.
4. Targeted beneficiaries in rank of priority: (1) Mobile gear fishers who have no ponds of net-enclosure (from increased fishing grounds and fishery resources); (2) the net-enclosure owners (from reduced risks of aquatic diseases; (3) pond aquaculture groups

C u r r e n t n e t e n c l o s u r e



N e t e n c l o s u r e v i s i o n i n g



Facilitating livelihood problem solving at user groups

As follows up from the commune workshops, the research team has carried a big amount of work with the net-enclosure groups in the four settle villages around Sam Chuon. The objectives of working with user groups at village levels were:

- to build awareness and capacity of undertaking participatory planning for lagoon resource governance at user groups and village levels
- to facilitate the application of participatory approaches involving resource users to identified planning methods and process that support community participation in the planning for opening water ways and common lagoon areas.
- to support strengthening community organizations so that they are able to undertake the planning and community actions
- to identify the process for participatory planning for lagoon resource governance through community livelihood problem solving

In carrying out above objectives, the research team facilitated and supported two major activities of the net enclosure groups in the settle villages. One was supporting livelihood problem solving that would involve the participatory planning application. The other was supporting the establishment and development of organizational structure of Fishing Union at the village. This activity was in collaboration with the Fishing Union at the province. Different participatory tools and methods were employed in working with the user groups. The process and tools may also varied from group to another. These included the visits to individuals households and farms, focus group discussions, production technical advice, and training workshops. General process of facilitating user group learning was as follows:

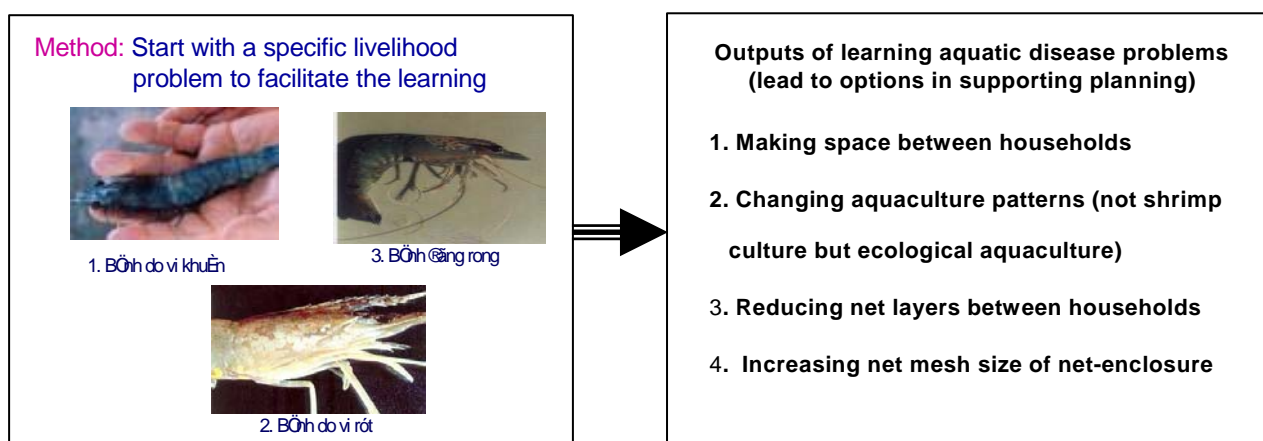


Figure 3. Example of inputs and outputs of a working session with user groups

- Organize the working session or meeting for a livelihood improvement topic with local officers assistance
- Start with participatory identification of specific livelihood problems and priority such as shrimp diseases
- Facilitating learning activities to raise awareness of the problems and addressing approaches

- Provide a prepared training module on management or resolving the problems. In most cases this involved PowerPoint presentations. For some sessions e.g. the shrimp disease treatment practice on farms was followed
- The followed discussions were to reflect the current application, identify measures, or plan for next practices or actions. These discussions were often leading to dealing with the most critical livelihood problem pre-identified, that was the environmental pollution. Thereby this involve supporting the planning and actions to open the common lagoon areas.

Integrated participatory planning in local programs

The work with user groups at villages helped raise local awareness on the application participatory planning in addressing the local problems on lagoon resource management. The local stakeholders perceived better the expected planning outcomes, people who to undertake it, and the processes and tools for carrying out it. In the beginning and pilot stages, the researchers were directly involved and undertook substantial roles in organizing the activities. However, for the purpose of scaling up the participatory planning, the local communities or stakeholders should be able to undertake these roles. On the other hand, the capacity of the research team is not necessarily to handle a larger scale of activities including multiple communities.

The integration of ongoing participatory planning started with involving participation of individual local officers at various levels, e.g. commune and district. These local officers worked as the team members in supporting the capacity building and participatory planning activities at village levels. The locally team members were engaged in undertaking increasing roles of organising activities such as establishing the Fishing Unions and facilitating the user group meetings. The outcomes of efforts to involve the local government were very important in terms of learning for change. They not only made it possible for departments at various local levels to get involved in the planning but also encouraged government officials to make the appropriate modifications on their approaches.

After getting involved the officers in four communes, the project in collaboration with DoF organized a workshop at district to formally integrated the participatory planning as parts of local programs. The workshop involved participation of district leadership, departments, representatives from DoF, and leadership of four Sam Chuon communes. In this workshop the communes made reports on reviewing the ongoing planning activities. The research team delivered a synthesis PowerPoint presentation of the processes, tools, methods, people involved, progressed, and initial outcomes. A proposal on follow up activities in the communes were also specified. The discussions in the workshop supported the formal adoption of participatory planning application in Sam Chuon lagoon. The district leadership made the following (oral) conclusions:

- The district adopted the participatory planning as complimentary approach for the opening the common lagoon areas. This activity is to be included in the local program for carrying out or continuing where it already started. The local

staff would be responsible for organizing community activities with supports from the projects and other concerned stakeholders

- The district also supported establishment of Fishing Unions at villages as units of the Province Fishing Union. The Fishing Unions were expected to undertake activities of lagoon resource users at community levels in supporting community-based resource management.

In line with the district adoption, a plan of activities in the four Sam Chuon communes were redefined for implementation. Though the district adoption of participatory planning did not guarantee with a written document, the scale up of the application and community activities were paid more attentions and efforts of the commune level. The most important change was that the local officers perceived their roles in implementing participatory planning. This would definitely influence their conventional approach.

Initial outcomes of participatory planning scale up in Sam Chuon

- The district adoption of participatory planning as a commentary approach to the conventional applications was among the most important changes toward supporting participatory approaches in lagoon resource management.
- The local officers, e.g. commune staff, undertake the key roles as their formal tasks in carrying out participatory planning implied positive learning and changes in their conventional practices toward increasing the community participation in lagoon resource management or CBCRM. The change in local visions and strategies for lagoon management were from the short term and top down, e.g. the enforcing opening water ways, to integrated long terms, ecosystem based, and people participation, e.g. building community movement to enlarge the common water area for multiple effects
- Awareness and capacity of community and other local stakeholders on the participatory planning for resource governance was strengthened substantially. This is indicated with their interests and active participation in learning, in changing their practices and in designing specific measures for supporting the planning and community actions
- The lagoon resource users, especially the net-enclosure owners, were better organised among themselves in dealing with the livelihood problems and lagoon resource management with the key roles of Fishing Unions which had formally established in the settle villages and developed their organizational structure e.g. the user groups in democratic manner.
- Except in the Phu An , three other communes in Sam Chuon have proceeded actual application of participatory planning for opening the space between households and water ways in as least one zone of a specific net-enclosure group. The planning was developed by the group with endorsement . The planning demarcation was also completed. All activities were endorsed, witness and approved by the commune government.
- The planning in Phu An prioritised to resolve disagreements between the 81 net-enclosure households represented by Fishing Union and the local government on the type of activities in the lagoon area under claim of these households. In previous year the commune government regularly involved the

armed force to remove the “illegal” net-enclosure units. In 2005, the Fishing Union was active in moderating the actions of commune government. But It was also able to convince and organize community education in removing some of the non authorized net-enclosure units. The current negotiation was that, the resource users must follow the commune regulation on removing the non authorised net-enclosure units. Then the planning can be developed. The commune government is willing to consider the net-enclosure practice at certain extent regarding size and raising patterns.

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