

**COMMUNITY-BASED  
COASTAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**  
– *Capacity in the Vietnam Context*

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## **Introduction**

Vietnam's coastline stretches 3,260 km, and is home to approximately 17 million people -- ¼ of the population. These residents rely on quality coastal resources as a source for their daily needs, as well as a natural barrier, protecting them from typhoons and other natural hazards.

Aggravated by an open access regime and long running bad fishing practices, Vietnam's coastal resources are threatened. Primarily, over-fishing, pollution and the use of illegal and destructive fishing methods -- including dynamite, electricity, cyanide and fine mesh-net fishing -- have contributed to rapid degradation. Most of coral reefs are now in poor condition with low living coral cover (below 25%). Mangrove areas have decreased from 400,000 ha in 1950 to 73,300 as of 1993.

The degradation of coastal resources has created serious threats to the livelihoods of residents dependent on these resources. The current "open access" mechanism and centralized management system is seen as not being able to fully meet the needs of coastal planning. Other planning options are now being reviewed and tested – to include co-management and community-based management.

Community-based Coastal Resource Management (CB CRM) is about the enabling a given local community to develop its own means to preserve and develop local coastal and inland natural resources in a sustainable manner. As a resource planning mechanism, CB CRM is a new concept for Vietnam – with only a few pilot-stage projects currently in practice.

There remain a lot of challenges such as lack of enabling legal framework, inadequate resources, low awareness, poverty pressure in coastal communities. In this context, local capacity for CB CRM becomes one of the key factors for determining the success of CB CRM.

### **Key Objectives**

As a means to develop a guideline for capacity building segments of Coastal Resource Management Programs, this research set out to identify:

- (i) A clarified idea of what the local capacity for a Vietnamese Community for CB CRM is;
- (ii) A means to measure said local capacity.

The outputs are for an intended audience of local government officials, communities, and those who are interested in CB CRM (such as International and Local Nongovernmental Organizations).

## **Methodology and Scope of Research**

### **Methodology**

The research incorporated a two-part literature review as well as a PRA survey of two current coastal resource management project sites.

The Literature review involved reviewing papers and project documents, journal articles and reports related to the general concept of CB CRM as well as issues related to local capacity for CB CRM – for Vietnam and abroad.

The PRA, focused on two progressing CB CRM project sites, as a means to determine how and at what level community understanding has developed, as well as lessons learned (in terms of capacity building initiatives).

At the IMA project site, group discussions were held at the district and commune levels, with the Women's Union and marine sanctuary guards, as well as two discussions at the Village level in addition to one group discussion in a neighbouring village. In total, 121 people participated in the discussions. At the CRP site group discussions were held at the district and commune levels, with the Fishers, Women's and Youth Unions and finally with the marine sanctuary guards. At the CRP site, a total of 86 people participated in the group discussions.

Further, the four Project Officers from the respective projects (who also participated in the research) were interviewed separately (as project officers) by two other members of the research team (who themselves are not directly related to either project).

### **Scope of research:**

The areas review in the PRA are as follows:

<b>DISTRICT</b>	<b>COMMUNE</b>	<b>ORGANIZATION</b>
Cat Hai	Phu Long	The Centre for Rural Progress
Van Ninh	Van Hung	International Marinelife Alliance

Questions centered on reflections from project officers, local officials and the communities themselves about level and type of community participation. PRA questions sought to understand at what level the community comprehended the importance of the program as well as how they saw their roles.

***The Team***

Conducted by The Centre for Rural Progress (CRP), a Vietnamese Non Governmental Organization and the International Marine-life Alliance (IMA); the core research team,

was comprised of 8 members, with additional support and feedback given by members of CRP. (See Appendix 001)

***Research Limitations***

Overall, given the research team's previous experience conducting PRAs in the area, and given the current relationships stemming from the projects in there area, few limitations were seen. A few things, however, should be noted. Firstly, each project reviewed is different in terms of scope, means, size and goal.

Secondly, for the purposes of PRA implementation, and as many team members were also project officers of the very programs being reviewed, there was potential for "guided" discussions to reflect what project officers wanted. Anticipating this, moderators were chosen as such -- CRP moderated at the IMA project site, and IMA moderated at the CRP project site.

In terms of true definition of CB CRM, both projects on a sliding scale, favor more to the co-management side. Having said this, the intention of the research was not to critique the actual programs, but rather to extract from the PRA questions issues affecting capacity, in order to understand at what level capacity may be for CB CRM in Vietnam. It was the results of similar activities, and the seeking of where understanding lay, that was reviewed to determine capacity.

Finally, while the question of capacity could incorporate a review of the capacity of all the other stakeholders as well as that of the community, the purpose of this research was to see where the actual ability of the local community may be.

## **Background on Phu Long**

Phu Long is a commune found in Cat Hai District, North Vietnam -- the “gate way to Ha Long Bay, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.” An island district, Cat Hai is composed of two main islands (Cat Ba and Cat Hai) and more than 300 smaller islands. The coastal area is dominated by a large area of tidal flats and mangroves. Natural resources are a key part of Cat Hai District’s development. The area’s economy relies heavily on marine resources – for tourism and fishing. In 2000, the fisheries sector reached 34.05% of the area’s GDP, with tourism at 30.2%. In terms of marine activities, the area is a strong base for the fish-boat catering business (gas/supply stations), fish trading and aquaculture.

A growing population and increasing economic development activities, in combination with heavy marine dependency, has resulted in severe resource degradation and over-fishing. Most of the coral was killed off ten years ago. Fishing yields have fallen 30-60% and mangrove conversion has resulted in an 82% reduction in the forest. People are falling further into the poverty trap.

Phu Long Commune has 5 villages, with 440 households amounting to approximately 2000 residents. Fishing and shrimp farming are the main income generating activities in Phu Long. Fishing involves 90 households, making up 20.45% of the total, of which 70 households participate directly in fishing and the other is fishing service. Shrimp farming involves 80 households, accounting for 18.18% of the total. People also earn from livestock breeding, cultivation and providing other services.

At present, there is no legal framework guiding the zoning of local coastal resources and management thereof. The State has developed some regulations pertaining to the management, protection and exploitation of aquatic resources. However, such regulations have not been fully executed, particularly at the grass root level. Illegal exploitation and bad fishing practices still occur.

Hai Phong Agency of Fisheries Resource Preservation was assigned to manage and protect the area’s marine resources. The agency, set out to develop a pilot project in a single commune on community-based coastal resource management as a means to explore the CB CRM mechanism of marine management. This was the ground work for the current project, currently sponsored by the Center for Rural Progress and Konrad Adenaur Stiftung.

### ***Objectives of the Project***

The ultimate goal of the project is understand CB CRM, and how it can work in the Vietnamese context, that it may be replicated throughout the entire district. Immediate goals include supporting local residents to stabilize and improve their income with particular emphasis on poorer fishermen who are dependent on fishing activities as their main source of income.

Fishing households are supported in their shift from fishing to sea farming at tidal flats. The local fishing community is supported in the management of their coastal resources.

Consultation is given in the establishment of CB CRM mechanisms and the development of organizational capacity for CB CRM. Financial and consultative support has been given in the establishment and maintenance of a marine sanctuary in the Commune.

### **Local Involvement and Support**

During a pre-project survey, September 2001, 99.28% households agreed with the establishment of a marine sanctuary, thinking that it would contribute to the rehabilitation of the local resources. An additional 92.75% of households agreed to participate in the setting of regulations self-management of the area. Only 56% of the households thought that the project would have a impacts on local livelihoods. The project, commencing January 22, 2002, concentrated on five key activities.

#### **1) Marine Sanctuary and Management Council**

Initial project activity incorporated the development of a marine sanctuary, prohibiting all fishing activities – with the exception of hook-and-line and drag net (with mesh net minimum 3 cm) -- within a six meter depth area along the Phu Long coastline. The Phu Long Commune People's Committee was empowered by the Cat Hai District People's Committee with regards to the new seawater zoning. In turn, The Phu Long Commune People's Committee established a Phu Long Community-based Marine Sanctuary Management Council (MC CMS). The council incorporates a primary management body, a patrol team, an information, education and cooperation group (IEC) as well as a income generation group. The board makes all the decisions for the program, no consultation stemming from individual members of the local community is sought out.

#### **2) Patrol Activities by Community Members**

Members from communal, military and police, and farmers groups volunteered to participate in the patrolling activities for the CMS. The patrol team is there to protect and manage water area within sanctuary – watching out for illegal and destructive fishing activities. Their actions are three-fold: distribution of brochures on the CMS, primary warning and finally punishing pecuniary. Patrolling activities total 10-days per month – based on tide and fishing season.

#### **Resulting patrol activities for 2001:**

No	Description	May/June	July/Aug	Sep/Oct	Nov/Dec
1	Patrolling Trips	15	19	10	17
2	Warned Violators	80	100	100	35
3	Pecuniary Violations	0	16	5	5
4	Monies Received (VND)	0	1,160,000	730,000	1,000,000

#### **3) Training courses**

With assistance, the management council and local farmers (12 households) were able to develop and submit a plan on sea farming activities, in the Bai Gia tidal flat area, for

approval. Various technical training courses on new sea farming (clam, shell, oyster, green mussel) were offered to local residents. As well, more than 10 households were able to participate on a study tour to other provinces.

#### **4) Credit and Savings Fund**

The Management Council developed an organizational structure to manage an income generation fund -- to include a chief, an accountant and a cashier. The fund was designated to mariculture farmers and poor fisher folk households. There are 92 eligible households with a total capital of 197.5 million VND. Eligible activities include clam (chip venus), oyster and blood ark-shell farming; animal husbandry; fish and crab farming, as well as apiculture.

#### **5) Awareness and Information Dissemination:**

Activities meant to increase awareness and knowledge on coastal resource management concepts among fishermen and local government officials have been extensive and effective. Activities include commune public radio, brochures, and environmental education campaigns. Support for local organizational development has taken the form of study tours for Cat Hai District and Phu Long Commune leaders to project sites in Khanh Hoa, Ninh Thuan and Vinh Long Provinces, as well as Ho Chi Minh City.

## **Background on Van Ninh**

In November 2000, Xuan Tu village had 803 households with a population of 4161. Although agricultural land accounts for two thirds of the total area, agriculture is not the main livelihood in the village, the majority rely on fisheries. With the introduction of lobster and shrimp farming, the standard of living improved greatly. Over 600 households (75% of the village population) participated.

However, even though it may be considered one of the richest villages in the commune, Xuan Tu Village still faces a 26.4% poverty rate. Generally, the academic standard of the villagers is quite low, most of them finishing only primary or secondary school. Many drop out of school to earn money to support their families.

Xuan Tu Village and Van Hung Commune, have seen the economic benefits of lobster and fish farming, but these also have drawbacks. Unmanaged development, in addition to uncontrolled over-fishing and destructive fishing practices, has led to a severely deteriorated coral reef and a reduction in abundance of fish stocks associated with the reef..

The latest survey work revealed a 10% decrease in natural marine resources in the area. Further, some species such as abalone, sea cucumber and grouper are now rare catches. Previous the start of the project in the are, local lobster farmers were noticing a trend in the disappearance of lobster larvae from the wild, (used in stocking cages) as well as a lower growth speed of lobsters and an increased occurrence in diseases. Hard coral cover is rapidly decreasing peaking at 40-60% on just one reef.

### ***Objectives of the Project***

In 2000, the International Marinelifelife Alliance (IMA) along with the People's Committee of Van Hung Commune, Van Ninh District, worked to develop a project to incorporate and address the concerns of the area. The project set introduced a marine protected area, as well as a mass educational campaign, as it related to the reef and program activities specifically, and environmental awareness in general.

The long-term objectives of the program set to sustainable manage and conserve the coastal coral reef ecosystem and its associated resources in Van Hung Commune (Van Ninh district, Khanh Hoa province), enhancing the socio economic situation through improved management of current livelihood options and increasing the overall diversity of options.

### ***Local Involvement and Support***

The project, concentrated on five key activities.

**1) Project Management Unit**

The establishment of a project management unit and local working group made up of staff from the local district and commune. All the activities of IMA are implemented through the coordination as well as the participation of the project

management unit and the local working group. Participants in this core group also contributed to patrolling activities of the projects marine protected area.

**2) Biodiversity Training**

Providing training on marine biodiversity, conducting survey work on the current health status of the local coral and its resources. The training targets were fisheries staff and fishermen. After the training, fishermen were involved in conducting the underwater survey, monitoring and assessing resource status. Results from the survey, both socio-economic and biological were discussed thoroughly with the local community and reported to local .

**3) Awareness Activities**

Conducting of local environmental protection and resource protection awareness education campaigns incorporating such events as international coastal clean-up, and study tours for school children.

## **Capacity and CB CRM in Vietnam**

### ***Researchers Perspective***

Capacity is an intangible thing to define. The research team from the beginning, set out to determine what exactly was being looked for, and any obvious factors that can further quantify capacity, thereby leading to a means by which to measure it.

Capacity is fluid, given the right “capacity-building” activities, capacity levels can be upwardly adjusted. Further, capacity itself can be considerably external as well as internal. For example, it is not enough to measure the ability of the local level to change the way coastal resources are managed. One must also look at the willingness of other stakeholders to allow the balance of decision making power at the local level. However, as mentioned in the limitations section, the purposes of this research was primarily a review of local capacity.

The first step was to develop a working definition of local community suitable for the Vietnamese context. Vietnam can be broken down into five main levels of governance: Central, Provincial, District, Commune, and Village. For the purposes of the study, the research team determined that community or local people as those living, and working at the local level – resource users, general population, as well as local authority bodies. Given the way in which local communities are organized and work, it was necessary to incorporate the village and community level authorities into the local community definition. There were advantages to this definition as well. By incorporating the local authority, the definition already incorporated social institutions that would easy lend to the community mobilization process in the pre-planning stage.

The second step was reviewing what it is the community is being asked to do, thereby knowing what their ability level is. Stemming from the literary review stage, participation was found to be a key element. Further, most aspects which may limit capacity could ultimately be defined such that it was limiting the community's ability to participate in “active management and taking full responsibility for the process of” (Philippine Coastal Management Guidebook series. No.4).

Looking at how people participate in the CB CRM process reveals where their abilities, strengths and weakness may lay – i.e. capacity. The PRA questions were designed to gauge not only what the understanding level of the community was, but also the type of participation taking place. Does the community have a role? Does the community sense that it has a role? What part of the planning cycle has the community taken part in? What activities does the community take part in? What has resulted from these activities? What was the sense of the project officers with regard to the communities willingness/unwillingness to participate?

The latter two columns on the table below -- taken from the Philippine Coastal Management Guidebook series. No.4 -- was used as a breakdown typology of participation. The first column in the table below was added during the analysis stage of

the research as a means to further quantify participation, based on who was instigating the activities. The idea was to know was there evidence of the community's ability to take the leading role in CB CRM.

<b>SOURCE OF ACTIVITY</b>	<b>TYOLOGY</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
External Stakeholder Takes Lead	1 Passive participation	People participate by being told what is going to happen or has happened. It is a unilateral announcement by the administration or project manager, without listening to people's responses.
	2 Participation by information giving	People participate by answering questions posed the extractive researchers using questionnaire surveys or similar approaches. People do not have the opportunity to influence proceedings.
	3 Participation by consultation	People participate by being consulted, and external agents listen to their views. Such a consultative process does not usually concede any share in decision-making.
	4 Participation for material incentives	People participate by providing resources, such as labor or information in return for food, cash, or other material incentives.
Community/Stakeholder mutual Instigating role	5 Functional participation	People participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project. Such involvement often occurs after major decisions have been made. These groups tend to be dependent on external initiators and facilitators.
Community Instigates	6 Interactive participation	People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation of new local institutions or the strengthening of existing ones. These groups take control over local decisions, and so people have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.
	7 Self-mobilization	People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems. The develop contracts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used.

So what influences the community's ability to participate? From the preliminary literary review, six factors were outlined as major influences in the success or failure of any given Coastal Resource Management Project. These factors include: stakeholder involvement, community structure, knowledge/awareness, money, ownership and attitude. It is important to note, that each of these factors are fluid, thereby lending to the fluidity of capacity. The capacity for a community to handle CRM can be increased -- built -- with the altering of any or all of these factors.

Each of these key elements, themselves, on the surface was felt to be too broad to generate a meaningful discussion. However, during group discussions in the PRA, aspects derived from three of the six factors emerged as being key elements in determining capacity. As such, researchers chose to focus more on that knowledge/awareness, attitude, and ownership in terms of how they affected participation.

Knowledge/Awareness while seemingly two different concepts, do relate to each other. Knowledge can be meant as a technical skill, but also in terms of saliency towards a giving subject. During group discussions, both words were used interchangeable by the participants. As such, it was felt to incorporate both as a single factor. Having said that Knowledge/Awareness as a "single" factor with an effect on local capacity, can be broken down three-fold. First there is the awareness that something is happening to the coastline, and that corrective measures are required. "Education may help understand why management is necessary and may initiate participation..." (Menez) Secondly, there is the knowledge of how to conduct baseline studies, and analysis for the area in particular. Finally, there is the knowledge of how to act upon the information received -- planning.

Conceivably, the presence of other stakeholders, such as non-governmental organizations, can assist in such things as baseline studies and planning initiatives. NGO presence is, however, by nature, not permanent -- projects are limited in term. What happens when "consultants" pull out. The researchers were looking for whether there was recognition of what needed to occur after the NGO leaves as well as the type of participation that has occurred along the project process. "...in the few recorded successful initiatives in the Philippines, the ability of communities to decide on how they manage their resources was critical in ensuring the communities' interest and participation continued beyond the projects lifetime." (ELAC)

Ownership here is key as well, because when ownership becomes local, "ownership of responsibility increases and the compliance to rules increases." (CB CRM) Beyond that of property rights, there is also the legal recognition of the community. Is the community recognized legally, such that it can "manage it's own financial resources, levy user charges, enforce compliance with exclusion orders, etc." (World Bank) This is key to the aspect towards the establishment of community involvement but it may not go far enough. A community may have the ability to make decisions regarding it's own

coastline, but if there is no legal framework or guideline for such, then the decisions made are of little consequence. "To encourage collective action among fisher folk communities, property rights or the rights to use and control fishery resources must be obtained and assured." (SEAFDEC)

Finally, there is the attitude of the community, as well as the other stakeholders. How do the locals regard their coastal resources -- do they think it is viable for them to become the decision makers and law enforcers of the resources around the villages they live in, "...an empowered and enlightened fisher folk can be effective managers and responsible users of fishery resources." (SEAFDEC)

## **Measuring Capacity**

Figuring out how to measure capacity proved to be the most difficult part of the research, one that emerged only after the PRA. The means to measure had to be simple, transferable and easily understood, but not necessarily numeric. At first, attempts were made to use the six factors relating to capacity as the measuring stick. These six factors, however, were cumbersome, and proved to become a very general means to analyze the situation. From the PRA we saw how 3 factors emerged influencing community involvement, and from this it was important how each of these factors influenced the CB CRM cycle: 4 stage mechanism. this makes it easier to follow your argument.

The choice of how to measure capacity for a Vietnamese community, in the end, became an arbitrary one. As Coastal Resource Management is a four-stage planning mechanism, it made sense, to use the four stage cycle, to view how the key factors influenced the community's ability to participate. A SWOT test was used to as a means to further quantify and identify any resulting determining factors stemming from the PRAs.

For the SWOT test, strength was identified as a capacity, a factor that was seen with the potential to be effectively used in achieving set objectives. Weakness was seen as a limitative factor, with the potential to hinder the process. Opportunity was determined as a favorable situation present now that with the right developmental support, could grow into a strength. Finally, threat was viewed as an unfavorable situation that could obstruct the future process of CB CRM.

From there the factors were analyzed based on where -- on a spectrum of participation -- actual community participation was.

**The SWOT TEST – Preplanning**

	<b>Strength</b>	<b>Weakness</b>	<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>Threat</b>
<b>Preplanning</b>	For Van Ninh, the support from the beginning at the District Level was key in mobilizing the community. For Phu Long, the incorporation of District Members into the rural area appraisal at the pre-planning stage, furthered District level understanding and support of such a project for the area.	Pre-planning was dominantly carried out by external consultants who only asked for consultative participation of the community, but did not seek to further community understanding of the process.	Both projects incorporated the use of Vietnamese mass organizations as a means to mobilize the communities from the beginning.	During the preplanning stage, few community members showed recognition to the importance of this process.

### The SWOT TEST – Planning

	Strength	Weakness	Opportunity	Threat
<b>Planning</b>		When asked about planning, local people did not show recognition of the process.		There is no precedent for community involvement in the planning process in Vietnam.
		Local people are not involved in the management team for either area. Further, a lack of Legal Ordinance (Phu Long) in recognizing the role of the commune in the area, limits the recognition of the role of the commune in the planning stage.		Overall planning skills were not found to exist in either project with all of the activities derived from the implementing agency (the NGOs).
		The level of community ownership in the project(s) still limited- better in Van Ninh than that in Phu Long, yet still insufficient for sustainability of the project. Projects still are seen as primarily belonging to CRP and IMA.		The feeling of ownership still proves to be not very strong- people and local authorities are still somehow inactive in working out further solutions for continuing the project upon the withdrawal of the donor support.
		When asked to rank the importance of different aspects of the project, Van Ninh District, ranked “co-management” as the 8th of 9 priorities as it relates to the project specifically. Interestingly, however, when ranking the priorities for the area in general, co-management was ranked as the 2nd of 9 priorities.		In Phu Long, the role of the Community was not recognized at all. Project Officers noted concern with mobilizing District recognition of Phu Long, given other more lucrative issues in the area.

**The SWOT TEST – Implementation**

	<b>Strength</b>	<b>Weakness</b>	<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>Threat</b>
<b>Implementation</b>	All participating stakeholders seem to be aware of their roles in making project success and participation in activities is growing. In Van Ninh, the participation of local people in project activities is extremely high.	The community and local officials, however, sometimes play only passive participatory roles in project. People still don't play an important role in project in the management of implementation their participation is limited to that of receivers of project activities.	All local people in projects' sites stated that they understood these projects to be "theirs" and understood the importance of their actions specifically and the project in general in relation to their livelihoods.	In Phu Long financial expectation from local community is high while their commitment to self-mobilization or even functional participation is low.
	Stemming from awareness activities, people showed recognition of the dangers of exhausting ocean resources and the necessity to protect ocean resources in a sustainable manner.			Only the awareness of people in project sites has improved while people in neighbouring regions still don't realize the significance of protection.

				In Phu Long, other viable economic options exist. While the choices are limited, they are there. This has resulted in a lack of willingness to be involved in the project.
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**The SWOT TEST – Monitoring And Evaluation**

	<b>Strength</b>	<b>Weakness</b>	<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>Threat</b>
<b>Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	People recognize the importance of obeying to regulations set out for the conservation areas. Further participation in this stage, by the local community, is higher than that of the pre-planning stage at the outset of the project.	The involvement of local community, esp. the people in the monitoring and evaluation of the project turns out to be modest in both cases. It can be explained by the limited ownership, people participate but still do not monitor the project closely.	The means by which the monitoring and evaluation stage mainly was implemented by project officers is targeting to further community confidence in the CRM process.	Communities still do not have decisive role in checking up and punishing violations. The authority involved in directing but not regularly supervising and speeding up and not strictly punish the violations resulting in inefficiency (PRA in Phu Long)

## **Discussion**

### ***Preplanning***

The preplanning stage is about assessing the current status of the area – resource and community-wise – as a preliminary for the planning stage. “Local knowledge is a critical part...” (Coastal Management Guidebook series. No.4) The community role is primarily as a consultative participant, providing information about the local situation, and participating in community meetings and discussions. The key to capacity, here, is two fold. Firstly, the capacity in terms of how the community is organized, such that it can further participation. Secondly, the capacity of the project instigator, in this case the NGOs – CRP and IMA.

In terms of the community organization, the benefits of mass organizations in Vietnam, lends ease to this process. Communities, are set up to allow for participation, albeit through Farmers/Fishers Unions, Women’s Union’s and Youth Unions, as well as Commune and Village Authorities, etc. For Vietnam, this can lend to the capacity for mobilizing the community around the project.

When the project instigator is coming from outside of the community, the key then is the ability to build a strong relationship directly with the Vietnamese Community and Local Authorities. This allows for a certain level of legitimacy when working at the village level. Both CRP and IMA were invited into their respective communities to explore and assess the potential for CRM projects. In this sense, the groundwork for a strong partnership was set.

Further, for CRP a major part of their implementing strategy, for any type of project, is the training and hiring of local authorities and members of mass organizations to work on the local assessment. The “newly-trained” officials prove extremely valuable. They not only facilitate the field work itself, but also make positive contributions which enhance the quality of the final report. A further spin-off effect is that, by training and working directly with these officials, their own capacity has been strengthened.

One criticism that was made during group discussions about this process, was that external consultants (i.e. CRP and IMA) only asked for consultative participation of the community. Members of the community wanted to have more access to awareness and a clearer understanding of the project from the start. How that translated was that few community members showed recognition to the importance of this process. This in turn, could have developed into a bigger struggle later on the course of the program, when community participation becomes essential. Project officers commented that while the idea of incorporating an awareness segment to this stage in the project cycle may be useful for later phases in the cycle, their own experience suggested that this was not easily accomplished. Officers complained that while there is a current acknowledgement to the importance of awareness, when both projects began, the respective communities weren’t in a position to receive the knowledge – they seemingly weren’t interested.

**Planning**

The planning stage of the project cycle is about setting the vision, and outlining the path for the program. The role of the community is integral to this, and can be expressed through active participation in a group consultation setting. Through the right guidance, communities can assist in the prioritization of issues, and activities thereof. The role of the District, as the government partner through this, has the opportunity to provide the framework, and further the plans integration into the larger development strategy for the area as a whole.

Community participation needs to be a part of the planning process. "...true participation requires that some authority in the management of coastal resources is there and that the community concerns are met." (Tuyen). Ideally, some form of functional or consultative participation should be seen.

There is very little precedent for involving Vietnamese Communities in the planning process. Planning, traditionally a centralized effort, is only now – slowly -- becoming decentralized. How this translates is that Vietnamese Communities have had very little experience in the planning process.

In both projects reviewed the communities officially manage the planning activities through the respective management boards. Local people from the Village level downwards, however, were not directly involved in the management team in either area. Further, it was found that most activities were planned by the sponsoring NGOs, as well as through consultative efforts at the district level. Individual members of the communities did not have a voice in this process. In discussions at the Village Level about this stage in the project cycle, very little recognition of the process was revealed.

Group discussions did reveal an awareness of the project's objectives and the importance of participation in all aspects of the project. Ownership of the projects, however, are very limited. In Phu Long, there is a lack of Legal Ordinance to recognize the role of the commune in the area, thus limiting the recognition of the role of the commune in the planning stage. In Van Ninh, the participation (of project activities) by the local people is very high, but the sense of ownership still proves to be not very strong. As per a group discussion participant in Van Ninh, "when people don't own something, they feel less responsible for it." Both communities are inactive in working out further solutions for continuation of the project. The projects in both areas, are still seen as primarily driven by CRP and IMA. The communities reveal an attitude of passive participation -- awaiting for further guidance.

Wanting to review the result of community involvement in the planning process, researchers looked at Tam Giang Lagoon, a former CB CRM research project located in Central Vietnam. The course of this project allowed for a more functional participatory approach to the planning process. In reviewing the lessons learned, however, it was found that, "one of the most challenging tasks for the research team has been the planning of specific CB CRM research activities. In general the [participants] are not skillful at...planning. Moreover, CB CRM and participatory approaches are new

concepts. Poor planning resulted in considerable unexpected problems in implementation.” (Tuyen).

Ultimately, what was found is that the capacity for Vietnamese Communities to take part in this stage of the project cycle in a functional way is just not there. There is room for growth in this area. An interesting result occurred during discussions in Van Ninh at the District Level. The District was asked to itemize positive impacts stemming from the project. From there they were asked rank the importance of the impacts, relation to the project and then again in relation to the overall development of the area. Community participation in the planning process was the 9th item mentioned. When ranked in accordance to the project, it was given a 7 out of 9. However, when ranked in accordance to the more general view, community participation in the planning process became number one. What this shows is the District’s acknowledgment for Community voices to be heard in the planning process. (see graph below). At the very least, it shows a change in attitude – of the District – to incorporate a community voice into the process. While the capacity may not be there immediately, in terms of planning ability, at least access to the process is slowly occurring.

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Project Priorities</b>	District Development
1. Raised Awareness	4	6
2. Community Participation in project activities	5	4
3. Building of community management capacity	3	3
4. Destructive fishing practices ceased	1	2
5. Restoration of biology diversification/resources	6	5
6. General improvement in environment	8	9
7. Coral Reef is Protected	2	8
8. Reduce poverty	9	7
<b>9. Community participation in planning process.</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>

### ***Implementation***

While the role of the community in the implementation stage is dependant on the type of activities planned, awareness and understanding is a big part of this. “... Clearly, when people are not interested and still do not understand well, it is difficult for them to perceive rather new ideas -- it takes time for them to learn and get it tested by their own.” (Tuyen) What this suggests, stemming from lessons learned, is that awareness and attitude can in turn lead to mobilization and finally advanced forms of participation. Capacity therefore, must be viewed in terms of the attitudes, as well as the results of awareness activities. What is the attitude towards the activities? Are the concepts understood? Did this new understanding create for further participation. For both projects, on the surface, all participating stakeholders seem to be aware of their roles in making project a success and participation in activities is growing.

Awareness is a key part of Van Ninh. Further, awareness activities leading to functional participation was very evident in the area. When asked to breakdown and prioritize the

positive results of the project, many groups ranked improved awareness of the people as number one. So they were aware, link this to their activeness in implementation. Groups were aware of the project's objectives and how the project led to improving livelihoods in the area. Activities meant to increase awareness and knowledge on coastal resource management concepts among fishermen and local government officials have been extensive and effective. Responding to the activities, community members even wrote a song about the program.

In general, the concepts discussed in PRA were easily understood. During discussions with the district level, a keen commitment was expressed towards supporting project activities, inter-cooperation, and information-dissemination. Further, the community showed recognition of the dangers of exhausting ocean resources and the necessity to protect ocean resources in a sustainable manner. Additionally, community members claimed the importance of "reaching out" to ask for support in areas where little knowledge is known. However, the actual role of the community-at-large in the program was limited to taking part of awareness campaigns (and a clean up initiative). People didn't play a major role in project implementation resulting in their participation limited to a lesser functional level.

In Van Ninh there was a limited source of income generating activities available. The project itself did not have a "career-switching" aspect to it. So, with a rise in fish stocks, stemming from conservation activities, so too came a rise in fishing activities. While people were still dependant on the fish in the area, and while it would seem that while capacity is there to understand about asking for assistance, the jump between understanding, and taking action was limited. The people knew that over fishing led to environmental problems. The people understood the concept of asking for external assistance in areas where they lacked the knowledge. Yet, they didn't reach out for this, they simply increased their fishing activities. Somehow the knowledge stemming from the awareness campaigns did not fully translate into a form of functional or mobilized participation. The community didn't instigate the lead or responsibility in asking for help.

Whereas Van Ninh had a limit to income generating activities, for Phu Long, an opposite situation occurred, which in itself led to a different concerns with implementation. While awareness activities did occur to same extent, I thought this is more limited in Phu Long, the attitude of the people has not changed radically. This was felt because, overall less people in the area were dependant directly on fishing activities for their livelihoods, which led to a struggle in getting the community to become more involved. For the general community, the financial expectation was high while their commitment to self-mobilization or even functional participation was low. Awareness activities were present, but getting the participation in those activities was a struggle for Project Officers. A further frustration stemmed from the lack of awareness from people outside of the project area. While the local people respected the marine protected area, non-community members did not respect the boundaries, often tampering with them.

Community members – those directly dependant on fishing activities -- did take quickly, however, to other aspects of the Phu Long project. Training programs for career-

switching purposes were well supported. The micro-credit section of the program, had a high participation rate and a high repayment rate. Further, one sector of the retraining

program showed a certain level of participatory initiative – being a joint development effort between a small group of farmers and the management body.

The situation is slowly changing in Phu Long, however. “Seeing is believing,” and with a rise in fish-stocks stemming from project activities, people in the general community have expressed a higher desire to commit to the project. More and more, people are demanding an increase in awareness opportunities. This has shown that the capacity for the program in Phu Long is there, but a delayed one, and stems more from participation by incentives. People needed the results before the commitment.

### ***Monitoring and Evaluation***

This is a two part segment, and can be described in terms of both the evaluation process of the projects progress, as well as the general monitoring aspect of particular types of activities. Patrolling marine sanctuaries being an example of the latter.

In both areas, yearly reviews, were a part of the process in order to gauge changes made over the course of the project. Community members were involved in a consultative participatory way. In fact, participation in this stage, by the local communities in both areas, were higher than that of the pre-planning stage at the outset of the project. Emerging results of these yearly assessments were then utilized, particularly in Phu Long, as a means to encourage more participation. No full external evaluation, however, has yet to be made of either program.

Researchers chose, therefore, to focus more on the monitoring aspect of the program. Key parts of this relate to the capacity of the patrol teams and the relationship of the community to those patrol teams. Capacity here is two-fold. Firstly, capacity relates to the active participation by the patrol team and acknowledgement by the community of their importance to the project. Secondly, is the recognition of the patrol team, in terms of their ability to punish violators.

In both areas reviewed, people recognized the importance of obeying regulations set out for the conservation areas. Stemming from training activities, communities gained insight not only for a sense of responsibility and awareness, but also general knowledge of regulation and legal framework in coastal resource protection.

Over all the results have been good. Violators are being caught, further bad fishing practicing are seen as ending. The actual involvement of local community, however, turns out to be modest in both cases. It can be explained by the limited ownership, and the relationship between ownership and taking responsibility. Stemming from a lack of ownership by communities, is a limitation to means for the community to punish violators. According to the Project Officers, people participate in the monitoring aspects of (both) projects but they do not intervene or speak out confidently against the violators. As mentioned, with the increase in fish stocks in Van Ninh, so went an increase in fishing activity within the Marine Sanctuary.

During group discussions with community members at both project sites, community members claimed to acknowledged their role in prevention marine sanctuary violations. The complained, however, that their power to do so, was still limited. The understanding

is there, but the lack of legal recognition of the community (Phu Long) has limited capacity, and in need of more cooperation from district authority and marine policy.

## **Final Remarks**

On a sliding scale, going from External Stakeholders instigating activities to Community and External Stakeholders having a mutual role, to finally the Community heading off, or instigating activities, the participation rate of Vietnamese communities as seen through this PRA is more in the primary range. Overall the capacity for a Vietnamese Community to understand the process, and concepts (relating to the awareness initiatives in the implementation stage) is seen. However, the capacity that is there is more set to receive direction on project activities, rather than instigate them.

In the preplanning stage, the presence of mass organizations lent ease to the instigation for the fact gathering/baseline studies activities. Furthermore, community hindsight suggested the recognition of the importance to this stage, demanding for more awareness activities. Project officers, on the other hand, commented on the difficulty in incorporating such a concept.

At the planning stage, the capacity for community involvement just isn't there. Partly, this stems from a lack of ownership. Partly this stems from lack of access. Partly this stems from lack of experience. What emerged from the discussions is a need for more work in the building of capacity for the planning segment of the process, as well as the recognition of the community's right to make decisions with regard to program activities.

As far as implementation goes, capacity is seen for certain types of activities, depending on the area. For Van Ninh, as more people are dependant on the local marine resources, participation was high and knowledge stemming from awareness activities showed. However, a gap seen in the applying of that knowledge. For Phu Long, as less people depend directly on the resource, participation of the community at large came when results showed an impact. Attitude towards the project in Phu Long was linked to dependency on the project, further participation was dependant on attitude.

Finally, in terms of monitoring and evaluation, while bad fishing practices were ending in both areas, the community's role in participating in this was seen as limited. Part of this stemmed from the lack of legal recognition of the community to enforce laws. Project officers commented on the general community population witnessing violations in the marine sanctuary area, but lacking a voice in saying something.

Overall, passive and consultative participation was very evident in both communities reviewed. It was the transition however from passive participation to functional participation (going from external stakeholder instigating to a mutual community and external stakeholder instigation of activities) that was deemed to be problematic. Part of this stemmed to a lack of ownership, lack of legal recognition, and the limited access and knowledge of the planning segment of the project cycle.

One key general criticism, coming from the project officers themselves, is that both projects were limited in size and timeline. It was felt that to further the concept of CB CRM, more efforts, on a bigger scale is needed. From here the concern for the NGOs is

a financial one. As CB CRM concepts is so new, the access to funding sources is limited – lending to the limits set on the programs reviewed in the PRA. Even the Tam

Giang Lagoon project found this a concern, “Making the CB CRM activities sustainable was also one of the most difficult tasks of research team. A CB CRM activity required not only local resources but also external support such as capital and investment and technical support. The research team struggle to gain access to such support and funding.” (Tuyen)

**Appendix 001 -- The Research Team**

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