

Management of Natural Resources in the Coastal Zone of Soc Trang Province

Management of Natural Resources

Executing Agency: Provincial People's Committee (PPC) of Soc Trang Province

Other Partners: Forest Protection Sub-department of the Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) in Soc Trang

Overall Duration: 5 Years: 03.2007 - 02.2012

Current Phase: 1st Phase: 03.2007 - 02.2010

Programme Area: Soc Trang



Context

The Mekong Delta, although relatively small in size compared with the entire country, plays an important role as “rice bowl” for the whole of Vietnam. Intensive rice farming, the infrastructure resulting from large-scale water control systems needed for irrigation and the fast expansion of profitable aquaculture (shrimp farming) have contributed to economic growth and poverty reduction but have been accompanied by rising concerns over environmental and social impacts.

Soc Trang province generates its main income from agriculture (rice farming) and aquaculture. Recently, the province has experienced rapid economic development, mainly due to the shrimp production. A short-sighted focus on rapid economic growth has resulted in the large-scale transformation of coastal areas into shrimp farms. The land is sold or leased to investors; the poor, landless residents are increasingly pushed into the hinterland. This process endangers the function of the coastal forests which protect the land behind the dykes from flooding and salinisation and as a result the maintenance costs for the national dykes have increased significantly.



The lack of an integrated approach to sustainable management, utilisation and protection of the coastal zone, unclear responsibilities of local authorities and economic interests in shrimp farming have led to the unsustainable use of natural resources with negative affects on the coast protection role of mangrove forests and reduced income for local communities. The coastal zone is not only at risk from the negative ecological consequences of shrimp farming, it will also be affected by the impacts of climate change, which will cause increased intensity of storms and floods and rising sea levels.

Desired Impacts

The overall project goal is to ensure that poor local communities benefit both economically and ecologically from sustainable management and utilisation of coastal areas.

The protection and sustainable use of wetlands are sector targets of the Vietnamese Government. The rapid implementation of these targets in the Mekong Delta has particular relevance for the economy of the country, due to the economic importance of the region. The procedures for sustainable resource use developed by the project will be used within the framework of the National Wetlands Action Plan.

The project will provide pilot solutions to solve the conflict between economic development and sustainable management of natural resources. It will support capacity development for those in charge of the management of the coastal zone, develop sustainable financing tools and put in place strategies which can increase the viability of mangroves by enhancing their resilience to climate change.

Main Activities

The methodology is based on a multi-sectoral approach, which will improve the coordination and co-operation of the relevant authorities. Initially, a multi-partner structure will be established at the provincial level, including an inter-sectoral steering committee. An additional management structure will be responsible for implementation. Working groups will be set up in the three coastal districts - Vinh Chau, Long Phu and Cu Lao Dung.

The project is supporting the Forest Protection sub-department and the Soc Trang Provincial People's Committee with the development of models for the protection and the sustainable co-management of coastal areas, for effective management and rehabilitation of mangrove forests, as well as the set-up of a regulatory policy framework. This will be supported by the development of a participatory environmental impact monitoring system, and the development of concepts for the sustainable financing of ecosystems services provided by coastal wetlands.

The project will also train staff of relevant authorities, women's organisations and communes in sustainable management of coastal wetlands, raise awareness about environmental issues for local communities and authorities, and identify opportunities for partnerships with the private sector, to create income for local communities as part of aquatic value chains.

Main Impacts – What has been achieved so far

The project started in March 2007. The main emphasis during the first months was on the set up of an effective project infrastructure in the provincial capital (Soc Trang) and the three coastal districts, as well as the participatory development of a work plan for 2007.

Based on this plan the project has started with the collection of baseline information, namely the development of a detailed and up-to-date land cover map, and an in-depth study on natural resource use and livelihood in the coastal zone. Another focus during the initial phase of the project is on capacity development through thematic workshops, study tours and English language training.

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