

**CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS FOR THE
ENHANCEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT PLANNING CAPACITY
IN VIETNAM**

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ABSTRACT

Planning is an important kind of policies making. Meanwhile it is considered as activities which specify general development strategies of a nation, sector or even a specific field; it also is the basis for developing and implementing development projects (Huong, 2005). Therefore, it is essential to recognize the challenges, opportunities and solutions in enhancing the planning capacity. Vietnamese Fisheries managers and other stakeholders have been facing a number of challenges. Being an efficient fishery planner requires a broad-spectrum knowledge and skills which have been changing and updating quickly in the modern dynamic world. The second issue is why and how to cooperate in planning process. Other challenge is how to solve various conflicts (related to economics, social and environment value). Financial and other regulations are also major issues impacting on the quality of planning. Opportunities of innovations for planners, however, have been being more available and they need to be recognized and applied effectively. These opportunities occur since there has been development in Economy, Education, Technology, and the chances of joining the global market. To enhance the capacity of fisheries planning, a package of effective solutions should be considered. They mainly are of upgrading the regulation and awareness (related to supply of data, updating knowledge, evaluation and monitoring of planning process&); considering in more suitable way to organize, to develop and implement planning process. (Combination of top-down as well as bottom-top approach planning, corporation&); identify goals and strategies to educate or train planners at different levels.

Keywords:

VIFEP: Vietnam Institute for Fisheries Economics and Planning

RIA1: Research Institute for Aquaculture No I

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization

GIS: Global Information System

INTRODUCTION

Planning is an important type of policy making. Meanwhile it is considered as activities which specify general development strategies of a nation, sector or even a specific field; it also is the basis for developing and implementing development projects (Huong, 2005). According to FAO “A fisheries management plan is a formal or informal arrangement between a fishery management authority and interested parties which identifies the partners in the fishery and their respective roles, details the agreed objectives for the fishery and specifies the management rules and regulations which apply to it and provides other details about the fishery which are relevant to the task of the management authority.”

Fisheries planning related to a number of aspects: institutions/organizations, economic, socio, and environment. The fisheries planning process requires both practical and theoretical skills. This characteristic partly can explain the fact that there has been no school/university educating fisheries planning in Vietnam recently. Being aware about the complexity of planning, in this paper, author just mentions an introductory discussion on challenges, opportunities and effective solutions for the enhancement of sustainable fisheries development planning capacity in Vietnam. From this, a clearer view on a difficult but urgent issue, fisheries planning, that essential for sustainable fisheries development will be seen. The term “fisheries” in this paper will include aquaculture and fish capture and processing as well.

CHALLENGES

Broad-spectrum knowledge and skill requirement

Being an efficient fishery planner requires a broad-spectrum knowledge and skills which change and update quickly in the modern dynamic world. Since planning requires applying a number of knowledge in many fields related to science, social science, economics, business, policy, and other technical or critical skills, planner have to renew and update their knowledge continuously and effectively. As mention by Thong (2004), managers in general and fisheries planners particularly need to be ensured on laws of nature, of social-economics related to the development of fisheries sector. Planners should able to understand the on going situations and the future development trends. This is a huge challenge fore any researchers. It is not so complicated to see that there are so many things for planners to learn since we are living in a world of rapid knowledge change. Even having a certain limited of time, planners often have to deal with both theoretical issues as well as practical things. Planning works are not just focus only on calculating specific economics scenarios but also have to develop short run and long run strategies, and activities for each situations and context (Thong, 2004).

Especially each field has its own specific challenges that planners have to deal with. In many fields, planners and managers have to deal the issues of uncertainty (in biology or environment

for example). In other hand, in certain cases such as in business and marketing, planners may have to deal with emotion or recognition issues of which some time can not be explained by economic or social rules. Also uncertainty may occur since planners deal with market issues (national and international level). The globalization trend has put responsibilities on fisheries planners about market-economy transformation, and sustainable use the natural resources (Nielsen et al, 2004). They have to deal not only the market issues at national level but also have to consider the movements at the global level and understand the relationship between the national fisheries development with the global development trend.

Other two aspects that related to the challenges for fisheries planners are the issues of knowledge dependence and the integrated management. Firstly, planner themselves are users who apply research result from others field such as in biology, natural resource. The more success in other research in other sectors, the more advantage planners will have. Therefore planners can not decide and influence independently the quality of a fisheries plan. Secondly, since there has been the different in development strategies between different areas, or in various sectors, to have appropriate plans, fisheries planners must keep an eye on all related sector and all sub-areas including in the plan. They have to consider the development of different zones at the same time meanwhile the fisheries development strategies of the plan still must follow the general national development strategies (Tuyen, 2004). These things also related to the conflict issues that will be discuss later.

Even though some researchers argue that “all necessary skills and knowledge cannot exist in one manager” and managing needs a corporation (Sylvia, 2003), a planner need to have a certain broad level of knowledge. The reason of this is that to cooperate effectively with other experts, the planners need at least understand the basic knowledge that are required for planning, so they can have ability to corporate and negotiate with other experts in order to carry out appropriate final development decision makings. However, the required level of knowledge that the planner need to have will varies in different situations and in different level of planning. In reality, since there has been a lack of understanding essentially related knowledge as environment, economic, law, and social, it will be very difficult for the fisheries planners to gather scientists and encourage them to participate in to the planning process. In most cases in planning development process, fisheries planners could be seen as leaders who need much help form other experts in other fields. Therefore, understanding a broad knowledge could be seen as obliged requirement to fisheries planners.

Corporation issues in planning process

As mention above, fisheries planners have to be depended on results of other relative researches in other fields such as in biology, environment, economics and social. So cooperation is so important to have a good fisheries plan.

The level of corporation in fisheries planning preprocess has not been strong enough. Corporation between local authorities (departments), between sectors were quite low in some areas (Hoi, 2004). One of the causes of this is the limitation in awareness on why and how

corporation is important in fisheries planning. Planning requires corporation in many levels of management systems: users, stakeholders, experts, local authorities, national or international organizations. However, there has been weakness in defining the rights and responsibilities in cooperation in the different level of the management system. Planners need more the legal enforcement from the government to issue specific regulation supporting planning. It is not enough for just encouraging participation in planning process.

The traditional fisheries management has been last for long time before modern management approaches are applied these days such as community based management, co-management. The management changing process especially in fisheries management requires long period of time, and the new approach has been not always successful at local areas (Van, 2007). This result in the ineffectiveness of developing and implementing fisheries plans at the local areas.

Further more the co-management has been considered as a multifunctional tool in management, but it needs certain flexible efforts to be applied effectively. With co-management, it can be implemented by top-down approach or bottom-up approach, or dual approach. So, what are the appropriate approaches in different situations? Even for fisheries planning, can co-management be applied thoroughly or the planners have to adjust to fit with their jobs? There question need to be investigated more in near future.

Solving various conflicts

Since each manager often has their own point of views about management, so it is not easy to negotiate to have final agreement on fisheries planning process. As the potential resources used to develop fisheries sectors are also used for other sectors such as agriculture, forest, environment etc; and so the most difficult task for planners is to solve conflicts occurring in planning process. These conflicts are some time very complex and require an opened negotiation. For example, in aquaculture planning, the planners have to ensure three main objectives at once that are: reducing poverty, food safety, and increasing export revenue (Nielsen, 2004). It is clearly that these objectives are not absolutely simple to get. In conclusion, the success of solving the conflicts is not always been reached and it requires wide stakeholder involvement.

Financial and regulation issues

In recent years, the Vietnamese government has paid attention in supporting finance for fisheries planning. However, it seems that the planning itself still need more than such supporting from the government. In certain planning projects there is a shortcoming of finance for developing and implementing the fisheries planning. On the other hand, in many cases, finance distribution and provision during planning process are quite late compared with the scheduled planning frameworks. In these cases, the effectiveness of planed activities will be impacted negatively. It also should be noted that according to recent regulations on fisheries planning, environmental impact assessment and monitoring the planning must be included in planning process. This

means that a huge extra work would be done compared with original ones and it requires a certain relative added number of money that should be provided for these jobs. If extra works are required but the respectively added provided money is not provided reasonable, it will be a huge challenge to planners.

There still has been a requirement of regulation improvement for effective development and implementation of fisheries planning. Based on the author's surveys during the period periods 2002-2005, it was found that one natural resource can be managed by many sector, or many local authorities. This is not a problem. However, one issue can happen that a local authority may generate a regulation that overlap or conflict the management function of another local agency. In 2007, The Vietnamese government decided to merge the fisheries sector in to the agriculture. Therefore these issues hopefully will be soon solved.

In 2007 The Vietnamese government has emerged aquaculture into agriculture. This event lead to many opportunities for improving fisheries management (will be discussed later) but it could also result in certain challenges for fisheries planners. For example, in this situation, fisheries have to consider more on issues related to agriculture as well as other sectors.

Concerning the planning procedure, in Vietnam, general fisheries plans are often developed by national fisheries management organizations such as VIFEP, RIA1. These general plans should be developed further and need to be clarified to be appropriate with different areas. At provincial and districts level, normally the local authorities often have responsibilities to plan the fisheries sector development in the local area (these local plans are based on the development frameworks of the national general development plans). Unfortunately the implementation of planning at local level is not always effective (due to financial or policies issues). This in turn will lead to the insufficiency of fisheries planning.

The dynamic characteristics of socio-economic trends and the adaptation to law can result challenges to fisheries planners. Since the national law system has to adapt to the changes of social-economic trends, fisheries planners, who have to follow with the system, also have to deal with the problem of outdated national policy system. And therefore planning activities also is effected in unexpected way.

Related to fisheries planning, recent proposed approach includes three phases: preparation, Planning, and planning implementation (Hoi, 2004). These three phases have very close relationship each other. In fact there has been a requirement for specific regulation for the third phase.

The issues of unsystematic statistic system for fisheries sector

As pointed out at the workshop "fisheries strategies and planning innovation" by Thong (2004), the Vietnam fisheries statistic system is not systematic. The fisheries data and information are not sufficient in term quantity and quality. While fisheries planning require an appropriate historical data to carry out the common trends, this situations cause also challenges to planners since collecting data often quite costly and time consuming.

OPPORTUNITIES

The opportunities of innovations for planners, however, have been being more available and they need to be recognized and applied effectively. Opportunities occur since there have been development/changes in:

Institutions and Organizations: The event of merging the Fisheries into agriculture can result in certain opportunities to fisheries planners: having more chances to cooperate with agriculture managers; reducing conflict and overlapping in management between fisheries/aquaculture and agriculture, reducing resource user conflict. Related to Aquaculture development, in 2007 Vietnamese government has developed a guideline for fresh aquaculture and brackish aquaculture. Basic requirement for Aquaculture planning have mentioned in these guidelines. This will be useful tools for fisheries planners.

Economy: The Vietnamese economy has been improved much recently. Therefore, the government also considers and supports more to fisheries planning activities.

Education/training: It can not be denied that the awareness of citizens has been improving significantly. Planners now have a lot of opportunity to upgrade the knowledge. Also since there have been many projects that provided by national and international donors to Vietnam Fisheries, Planners have more chances to approach successful modern fisheries management in the world. In fact many approaches and Models have been being applied helping planning process. (Co-management, integrated management; comparative analysis, Multi-Criteria Analysis, GIS, On Balance model, Right Choice model).

Technology: Since the technologies has been rapidly developed. Planners also can apply a number of technologies into their job such as GIS, biology technology, social sciences.... By using computer, internet, telephone, planners can calculate models, perform reports, looking for and check information more effective compare with the last time.

A PACKAGE OF EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED TO ENHANCE THE CAPACITY OF FISHERIES PLANNING

- To improve statistic system used for fisheries management. This data and information must be updated fitting management requirements.
- To consider more on research basis that are essential for fisheries planning such as: natural resource in different areas, technology on aquaculture and fisheries, research on environment, research on social economics development of different areas in country.
- Establish more sub-regulations to enforce implementation of fisheries plans and fisheries related laws. Avoid the overlapping and conflicts in the regulation systems.
- To analyze and apply appropriate ways to organize, develop and implement planning process. (Co-management, integrated management...). Increasing the level of participation of stakeholders in developing adjusting plans. Give more chance for local users to give feedback. Also clarify clearly the responsibilities of different stakeholders in planning

process. Final decisions in fisheries planning process should base on science basis rather than voluntarism opinions.

- Identify goals and strategies to educate/train planners at different levels. There should be programs identifying the basic require for a fisheries planer in different management levels. Giving chances studying abroad as well as increasing educate/train planners through working.
- Improve awareness of related stakeholders on corporation in fisheries planning process.
- Focus more on evaluation and monitoring planning implementation. Consider planning as process that could be revised if it is necessary.
- Government provide in time and sufficient finance for planning activities. Money should be provided sufficient for developing, implementing and monitoring fisheries plans. The given finance for planning should depend on reality of planning activities rather than just base on a fix framework.

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