



# Protecting the Hon Yen coral reef population

**H**on Yen is in Phu Yen province, on the southern coast of Viet Nam. The island is famous for its beauty. The protection, conservation and development of Hon Yen coral reef (An Hoa Hai commune, Tuy An district) has received attention from the province and domestic and foreign environmental protection organizations, so the marine ecosystem in this area has many developments. Phu Yen is keeping investing and proposing the establishment of Hon Yen wetland conservation area.

## THE PROSPEROUS, DIVERSE, VALUABLE MARINE ECOSYSTEM

Hon Yen complex area has many outstanding features in geology, geomorphology, flora and fauna, creating a prosperous, diverse, valuable marine ecosystem in culture, history and potential for developing coastal tourism. This place has been recognized by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism as a National Scenic Relic since 2018.

Hon Yen coral reef is located in a cluster of coral reefs from An Hoa Hai commune to An Chan commune (Tuy An district). Hon Yen coral reef complex includes Hon Yen, Hon Dun, Ban Than, Ganh Yen, Hon Choi, Vung Choi with an area of about 30.2 hectares. In this area, soft coral groups dominate. Research results on coral reefs in this area have recorded 22 species belonging to 7 families. Seagrass plants are recorded with 3 species and seaweed with 7 species. Animals have been recorded with sea stars such as *Culcita novaeguineae*, *Echinasteridae* family starfish, *Acanthasterplanci* crown-of-thorns starfish; sea cucumbers, sea anemones, crinoids, sea urchins, bivalves, molluscs, crustaceans... Skeletal animals are mainly reef fishes (nearly 60 species belonging to 23 families). Some fish species that are easy to see at Hon Yen at water levels of 1-4m.

Recently, experts and scientists from the Vietnam - Russia Tropical Center at the request of the provincial People's Committee have conducted a preliminary survey of coral reefs at some places capable of developing marine ecotourism. 3 points selected include: Hon Lao Mai Nha, Hon Yen (Tuy An district) and Hon Nua sea area (Dong Hoa district).

The initial results show that the coral reefs here are relatively diverse in types, beautiful and multi-valued, including tourism development. The current situation also

show that the coral reefs here have been destroyed due to natural factors (seastorms break), but mostly caused by negative impacts from people (environmental pollution, exploitation of coral, trampling, hunting seafood...), in which the most serious is the coral reefs of Hon Yen area.

The local community in Hon Yen is exploring new ways for economic development and generating higher income. They have established four groups of agriculture, service, tradition, and conservation. The agriculture group consists of households and individuals who work on safe vegetables, fruit gardens, and paddy rice. The service group consists of households and individuals who work on bird nests, noodle making, food catering/restaurant, and homestay. The tradition group consists of those making fish nets, fish sauce, fishing, and aquaculture. The conservation group is responsible for coral reef conservation, ensuring tourists do not step on coral reefs, and patrolling to prevent night fishing in the coral reef. Four groups with different objectives but have one joint goal of ensuring sustainable livelihoods while preserving Hon Yen's beauty. Local people want their daily activities to contribute towards protecting and conserving the island.

Moreover, the profession of net-making plays a role in promoting a circular economy. By showcasing the principles of reduce - reuse - recycle, the net-makers contribute to a sustainable and environmentally friendly approach. This not only reduces waste but also highlights the importance of utilizing available resources responsibly. They involved in this profession which play a valuable role in showcasing the rich heritage, promoting sustainable practices, and offering unique experiences to visitors. Their commitment to preserving traditional craftsmanship and embracing the principles of circular economy demonstrates the potential for traditional industries to adapt and thrive in a changing world.

In particular, special attention is paid to coral reefs in Hon Yen area, because this is a national landscape that needs to be preserved under the Heritage Law. Moreover, this coral reef is suffering a lot of negative impacts from people, even tourists visiting and taking photos can trampled on corals, because when the tide comes out, this coral reef is exposed right below their feet



## JOINING HANDS TO CONSERVE HON YEN WETLANDS, CORALS

To protect and conserve Hon Yen, money is needed to fund such activities as awareness raising, patrolling, and coral planting. It is still a long way toward an independent and sustainable financing source for coral reef conservation in the island. Financial management training will be provided for the local communities to sustain their economic-conservation model. The local communities will better protect and conserve Hon Yen with all their heart and souls and in return, the beautiful island will cherish their life.

Local communities in An Hoa Commune, Tuy An District of the southern province of Phú Yên have been making changes to conserve the Hon Yen wetlands while still improving their livelihoods through sustainable economic development. People are empowered to manage and protect the environment, and protect the Hon Yen coral ecosystem.

From August 2020 to September 2022, the Global Environment Fund-Small Grants Programme in Vietnam under the United Nations Development Program (GEFSGP/UNDP) supported Phu Yen province in strengthening the capacity of local communities to conserve the Hon Yen wetlands. The project's total funding is nearly 3.2 billion VND, of which nearly 1.1 billion VND came from GEF SGP/UNDP, 900 million VND from the Vietnam - Russia Tropical Centre under the Ministry of National Defence and about 1.2 billion VND from Phu Yen Province's own budget. The project's goal is to improve community awareness and capacity in managing and exploiting marine resources and protecting ecosystems.

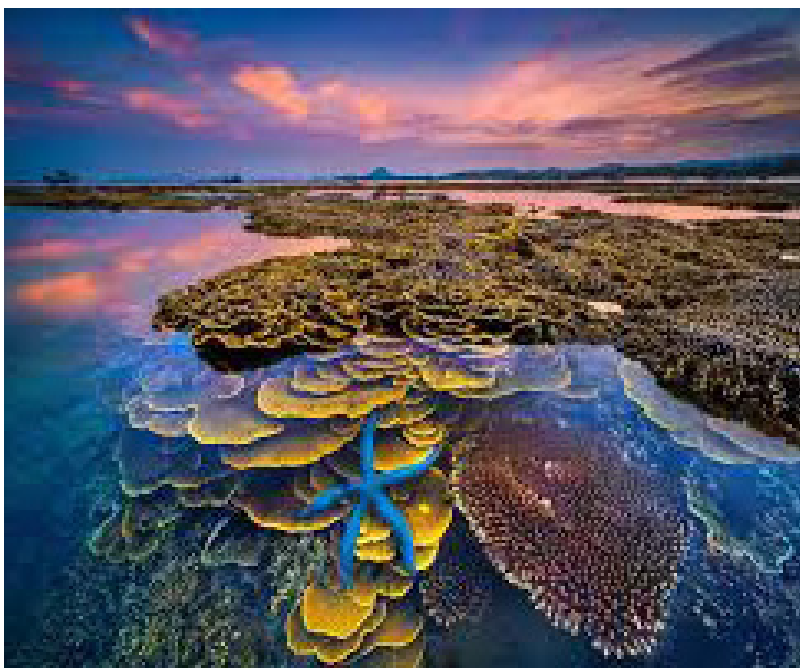
According to the People's Committee of An Hoa Hai commune, in order to protect the Hon Yen coral reef population, in addition to the provincial and district authorities, the locality has established a cooperative group to manage, protect and preserve coral reefs, and organize a community tour to contribute to creating sustainable livelihoods for local people.

The project of Strengthening Community Capacity in Conservation of Hon Yen Coral Reef Population initially formed a policy and mechanism framework, providing capacity for the local community to protect local natural resources. The project has assigned the right to manage and protect Hon Yen coral and develop regulations to coordinate the implementation of a co-management mechanism between the cooperative group and relevant organizations and individuals.

In April 2023, the Provincial People's Committee issued a decision regulating the management, protection and conservation of Hon Yen coral reef. The plan to protect and preserve the Hon Yen coral ecosystem has established 4 functional areas. Accordingly, the core area (A0) has a reef area of nearly 17.7 hectares, currently has a coral reef foundation, seagrass beds, and distributed seaweed. This area is strictly protected to minimize impact on the coral ecosystem. The buffer zone (B1) with

an area of about 22.5 hectares, is established as a subdivision linking tourism and geological research, a potential area capable of developing ecotourism. The buffer zone (B2) has an area of about 20 hectares, a subdivision for lobster farming and nursery development to ensure the main source of income for the community living here. In the long term, it will develop towards a tourism service model and a scientific tour model. Buffer zone (B3) with an area of about 8.35 hectares, the fisheries logistics service sub-zone is a concentrated area for anchoring fishing boats and fishing logistics services during stable weather times of the year. Limiting the concentration of too many boats during the rainy season and high tides ■

**NGUYỄN THẮNG**



▲ Coral reefs are quite rich in types and beautiful in Hon Yen Area