



# ພັນທະມິດເພື່ອປະຊາທິປະໄຕໃນລາວ

ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY IN LAOS  
Alliance pour la Démocratie au Laos

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## SDG Report for Laos by the Alliance for Democracy in Laos 2021



### 1. End *Poverty* in All its Forms Everywhere

If you follow the World Bank figures, Laos has achieved some success in combating poverty in recent years. However, these successes are in danger due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the still escalating corruption in Laos. Independent experts even report that poverty remains high and that the reports by the government of Laos are not true. The reports that we receive from our employees in Laos indicate this. An indication of the still great poverty in the country is the high youth unemployment. In the CIA Factbook this is estimated at 18.5%.

<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/laos/>



Typical Lao village in the Luang Phrabang province (2019)

But other sources also confirm the reports of our employees. Laos still ranks 137th in the HDI index. The causes of poverty are not just corruption, but also the lack of infrastructure in Laos and the underdeveloped economy. Another sure sign of extreme poverty is the fact that there are very many school dropouts in Laos. Many children are forced to leave school early and earn money.

<https://www.rfa.org/lao/daily/women-children/human-development-in-laos-short-of-target-12302020015923.html>

The government of the Laotian People's Republic currently puts annual economic growth at 4.6%. However, since development aid projects are also included in the figures for economic output, one must assume that real growth is more likely to be around 0%. Corruption and the unequal treatment of the government towards individual ethnic groups prevent the situation in the country from improving in the long term. There are still ethnic groups in Laos who are disadvantaged or even persecuted. One of these groups is the Lao Hmong, who have to live excluded from society and constantly on the run. They are denied access to prosperity and a normal life for life.



Lao- Hmong in the jungle of Laos (2018)

### Recommendations:

In order to fight poverty, Laos needs sustainable projects that are aimed directly at the population instead of the mega-projects that only serve foreign investors. All measures to combat poverty must be discussed publicly instead of being decided behind closed doors in the Politburo of the Communist Party without the consent of the people.



### **2. End *Hunger*, Achieve Food Security and Improved *Nutrition* and Promote Sustainable *Agriculture***

The sustainability of agriculture has been restricted more and more in recent years, due to more and more monocultures and interference in farms by investors and state authorities. The banana plantations operated by Chinese investors are a particular problem. The banana plantations pose a major threat to the ecosystem in Laos. Excessive use of pesticides not only poisons the environment, but also the workers on the plantations and the people in the surrounding area suffer serious diseases. Now there is even talk of several deaths in connection with the pesticides on the banana plantations. The government of Laos issued a ban on the establishment of further banana plantations in 2018. However, this ban was lifted again after the declining dam disasters and the flooding. According to the government, this was done to quickly rebuild the country. But since the profit goes

exclusively to the investors abroad and the people from Laos only receive very low wages and then also get sick from the work, no sustainable benefit can be seen.



Work with chemicals on a banana plantation      Sick workers of a banana plantation (2021)

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/banana-05242021142753.html>

<https://www.rfa.org/lao/daily/environment/banana-farm-worker-sick-05212021213325.html>

<https://www.rfa.org/lao/daily/environment/lao-worker-died-in-chinese-banana-farm-05062021194101.html>

Another threat to food in the country is the resettlement of major projects such as the dams. Large areas of agricultural land are being destroyed here. The forcibly resettled people are given new land, but the land can only be used to a limited extent or not at all for agriculture. The result is a series of disputes over land use in Laos, in which the population is clearly disadvantaged. In most of the cases where the population complains against the land grab, the complainant is put in jail, sometimes under inhumane conditions.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/land-04142021144544.html>

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/land-02032021154622.html>

Our members in Laos report increasing problems with feeding the population. Because the farmers are forced to farm on poor quality land, malnutrition and famine occur in a country that until a few years ago was not only able to provide itself with food, but also to export. Land law in Laos is based on the principle of communism. This means that the land belongs to the state, the population is only given the right to use the land. However, this right can be revoked at any time. If you consider that Laos is a country with a very high level of corruption, it is very easy to understand how corrupt civil servants tend to grant land rights to rich investors rather than to the much poorer population.



Poor family in Laos and their home (2021)

<https://www.facebook.com/Somchai2580/videos/209862270542905>



## Recommendations:

An agrarian and basic law reform in Laos is urgently required. This includes the promotion of traditional family businesses and the reintroduction of the ban on conventional banana plantations. In addition, the use of pesticides must be banned and ecological agriculture promoted. Sustainably produced organic food from Laos can thus become a successful brand label and ensure that people can provide for themselves and feed themselves. We know from experience that organic farming nowadays has to be subsidized less and also leads to better incomes for the farmers.



### 3. Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-Being for all at all ages.

Although Laos is a communist country, there is not enough medical care for the population. Anyone who has money or ties to the Communist Party can get medical treatment abroad, as the hospitals in Laos are generally in poor condition. The generally bad situation hits the rural population particularly hard. Our employees report on sick people who suffer without medical help. The sick depend on the help of their neighbors. Often these people die of starvation or succumb to their illnesses.



Starving ill Lao in the Nathat village, Outhomphone district, province of Savannakhet (2021)

<https://www.facebook.com/sivit.norr.3/videos/919761788870261>

We have not only learned of the poor condition of the hospitals from our members in Laos, but also of cases in which sick people are given insufficient or no medical help at all. The first question when admitting new patients is very often about the payment for the treatment of the patient. This is all the more surprising since Laos is said to be a country based on the communist model.

We note that even in the 46th year in which the Communist Party rules, it has not been able to keep its promises to the people.



Hospital in Laos (2020)

There is a somewhat contradicting picture of the course of the Corona crisis in Laos. Officially, the authorities in Laos reported very few cases of corona diseases. On the other hand, we have heard of corona deaths and illnesses from the population that have been concealed by the authorities. The dead were quickly buried without a funeral ceremony and without an autopsy. Relatives were forbidden to report about these deaths. It is also forbidden for people to report anything about the corona pandemic in Laos. Since April 2021 there has been a sudden increase in corona cases in Laos in Laos. We assume that this increase assumes that the Corona measures have not been implemented in the hotels and casinos operated by foreign investors. Reports from our staff that casinos and hotels were open despite the lockdown have been confirmed by Radio Free Asia.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/coronavirus-05172021193713.html>

[http://vhpd.rfa.org/20210524/1251/1\\_757yjn1\\_1\\_3megut3y\\_1.mp4](http://vhpd.rfa.org/20210524/1251/1_757yjn1_1_3megut3y_1.mp4)

Since according to official figures only about 9% of the population had been fully vaccinated by June 1st, 2021, herd immunity is not to be expected this year.

The government of Laos has failed not only in the COVID-19 pandemic, but also in other areas. People in Laos are still dying of HIV. A total of 14,460 people died of HIV between 1990 and 2020. It is estimated that there are currently around 10,117 people with HIV. In 2020 alone, at least 70 people died of the disease.

<https://www.rfa.org/lao/daily/health/laos-hiv-aids-cases-in-first-half-this-year-11302020212955.html>

### **Recommendations:**

In order to ensure better basic medical care for the population, comprehensive and transparent regional planning must be made. This regional planning must also be discussed publicly in order to optimize it. In addition, it is advisable to raise the training of rescue service employees to the level of paramedics, for example in England or the USA. The training of nurses also needs to be improved, similar to what is happening in Australia. In this way, a shortage of doctors can be better compensated for in the short term. Furthermore, the state must guarantee basic medical care. Health in Laos shouldn't be a question of income!



#### 4. Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All.

The human development index HDI in Laos developed only very slowly from 1990-2019 and rose from 0.405 to 0.613 or 51.4%. It ranks 137th out of 189 countries in the world. The reasons for this development are very complex. On the one hand, there are major shortcomings in the planning of educational policy. Despite the intensive efforts of some NGOs to instruct officials and local politicians in appropriate regional planning, these efforts seem to work only inadequately. <https://www.rfa.org/lao/daily/women-children/human-development-in-laos-short-of-target-12302020015923.html>

The Vietnamization of Laos, which has intensified in recent years, is also one of the reasons for the lag in Laos. Now Vietnamese becomes the most important foreign language in the Lao schools. Pupils who study Vietnamese instead of English or other language are absolutely preferred in some schools. Lao children are forced to learn Vietnamese in Lao schools all over the country.



Village school in Laos (2018)



Village school in Laos, 2020)

It is also known that many teachers, especially in rural areas, are not paid. some are forced to teach for free, other teachers simply "forget" to pay their salaries for several years. This leads to increasing corruption in the system. The teachers take fees from the students for services that are actually free to secure their income. In poor families who cannot afford these fees, this often leads to dropouts, girls are more likely to be affected than boys.

#### Recommendations:

The preference of the Vietnamese language over all other foreign languages must cease, as must the exchange and assimilation of the Lao culture by the Vietnamese culture. There is also an urgent need to stop corruption in the education system. The state must ensure that teachers are adequately paid right from the start.



## 5. Achieve Gender Equity and Empower all *Women* and Girls.

Equal rights for women in Laos have only been partially achieved. If women are still underrepresented in politics, they currently even have a small head start when it comes to land ownership. In 2019, the female representation in the national parliament in Laos consisted of 27.5 % of the available seats. This was a slight increase from 2015, by which females held just 25 % of the available seats in the nationwide parliament in Laos.

However, the retention and completion price for both genders is much lower. Girls in smaller villages especially aren't anticipated to finish main school. In many circumstances, unsafe situations for ladies and male choice have contributed to a better dropout rate for girls.



Lao woman in northern Laos (2019)

Additionally, girls from smaller ethnic communities have a higher poverty fee and are much less more likely to have the opportunity to attend faculty. A current report from the United Nations Population Fund revealed that whereas access to total health care in Laos has improved, many women nonetheless lack the mandatory details about reproductive health services. The report additionally disclosed that nearly 15% of married women want access to family planning companies but are unable to make use of standard contraception methods.

Violence against women is only partially recorded. In fact, 58% of women and 49% of men believe that violence in a marriage is perfectly normal. There are also reports of forced marriages or abductions of Laotian women abroad. Radio Free Asia had only reported another mysterious case in May 2021. But as in many other cases, the authorities in Laos seem to be very little able to solve the case.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/trafficked-05182021181449.html>

### Recommendations:



Gender equality is still a task for society as a whole. In order to guarantee equality, Laos needs a democratic process and an associated public discussion. Both are currently prohibited in Laos.



## **6. Ensure Availability and Sustainable Management of *Water and Sanitation* for All**

Laos is a nation with plentiful surface water and broad rivers, but outside of cities there is little infrastructure to make that water clean and accessible. Very little improvement has been made since the end of the Laotian Civil War in 1975, especially compared to peer nations such as Thailand. By 2015, 76% of Laotians nationwide were estimated to have access to “improved” water (water not taken directly from natural flows), while 71% were estimated to have access to “improved” sanitation (access to a sewage system more advanced than simple latrine).

Map of Mekong River—it covers a wide area of Laos and nearby region

The Mekong River provides an important source of water for rice production in Laos. Dams like the Theun Hinboun Dam Wall provide a renewable energy source for Laos, but it has a negatively impact the Mekong River ecosystem. The dams are increasingly endangering the groundwater level in the Mekong region and thus the drinking water supply.



Dried up Mekong river bed after dams were built (2020)

National-average numbers for sanitation obscure some important internal variation between city and rural. Most Laotians get their water from surface flows close to their dwellings, so infrastructure is minimal. Outside of the cities, women and small children are often tasked with carrying drinking water by hand from rural collection sites, which impacts educational attainment, economic growth, and rural quality of life.

In the capital, Vientiane, aging sewage systems work poorly and are overdue for infrastructural improvement. Moreover, there is an ongoing gap between rural and town dwellers, with 60% fewer rural people having access to sanitation, and 38% fewer having access to drinking water. An estimated 23% of Laotians nationwide still habitually defecate on open ground, allowing their waste to wash into rivers and canals. This persistent reality affects agriculture and natural ecosystems as well as human health. According to the World Bank data conducted in 2014, Laos has met the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets on water and sanitation regarding UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Program. However, as of today, there are approximately 1.9 million Lao population could not access to improved water supply and 2.4 million people without access to improved sanitation due to a large inequalities access between areas that are close to good roads and remote



inaccessible locations.

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/295731467999376153/pdf/100892-WSP-P131116-AUTHOR-Susanna-Smets-Box393244B-PUBLIC-WSP-SERIES-WSP-LaoPDR-WSS-Turning-Finance-into-Service-for-the-Future.pdf>

Poor sanitation can affect people's health and national economic development. Annually, poor sanitation and hygiene problem cause three million disease cases in Lao, 6.000 premature deaths and the children in rural areas suffer from poor sanitation is very high at 49 percent in 2011 making 193 million dollar national economic loss per year, equal to 5.6% of GDP.[5] In Laos, there are major incidences of dysentery and diarrhea caused partly by deficient sanitation, improper water supply, and the absence of adequate wastewater treatment facilities as a result of the rapid increase in urban population. Laos people who can get access to sanitation in rural areas account for only 36 percent in 2004. The government in Laos adopted the Millennium Development as prepared collaborative by the United Nations, World Bank and International Mutual Fund to promote water supply and sanitation for its people to access safe drinking and basic sanitation.[

#### **Recommendations:**

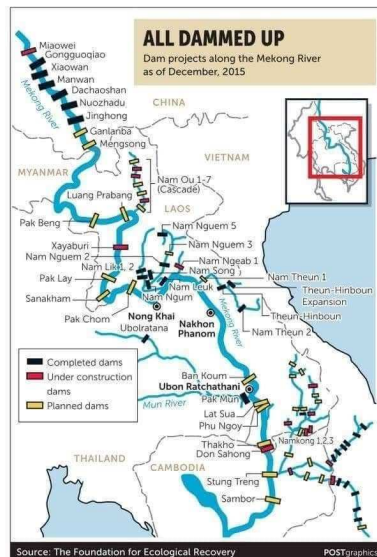
Dam construction must be stopped immediately and the networking of the population must be promoted. Consistent construction of waterworks and wastewater treatment plants must be given priority in infrastructure planning. Again, a regional planning is inevitable. Here too, openness and transparency are important so that public scrutiny can take place.



#### **7. Ensure Access to Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable and Modern Energy for All.**

The government is still sticking to its plans to supply the Mekong region with electricity from hydropower plants. Outwardly, the government of Laos propagates its green energy, but who sees behind the scenes noticed a very different picture. With the construction of dams, the government of Laos suggests they would supply the entire region with green electricity. But the lack of planning and recklessness towards humans and nature has led to the most devastating natural catastrophes in the history of Southeast Asia.

Although China has already put many dams into operation on the upper reaches of the Mekong, the Laotian PDR does not want to stop its projects despite the expected ecological damage. Currently 73 dams have been completed in Laos, and a total of 100 dams should be completed by the end of the year 2021. The total of all dams on the Mekong and its effluents should be 300 in the next few years.



Dam projects in the Mekong region



Chinese Nam Theune- 1 dam project in the Pakading region, Bolikamsay province

The dams are designed to supply the neighboring countries with electricity, while the power grid in their own country is completely unsuitable. The government of Laos states that 70% of the population is powered by electricity. However, during the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Prof. Phillip Alston, something completely curious came out. In many villages there was only one power connection, where just one lamp was connected. The government of Laos had actually declared these villages to be powered. With such ridiculous tricks and press censorship, the government of Laos tries again and again to deceive the world public.

But the consequences are even more serious. The primary damage that the dams cause is the disruption of fish migration in the rivers. The fish are no longer able to reach their spawning grounds and the fish population is decreasing steadily. Another secondary damage comes from a previously unthought-of of ecological planning. The dams create so-called stagnant waters that drastically increase the growth of bacteria. In conjunction with the tropical climate in Laos, these Bacteria's produce an unmeasurable amount of methane gas, a climate killer worse than CO2.

But let's get back to the consequences of these dam projects. Initially, residents in the affected regions were and are often forcibly relocated without appropriate compensation. The deforestation and the resulting damage to the ground is now irreparable. The government promises that the profits from the projects will be invested in the development of the country. But since the financing comes from abroad, the profits go to 100% for foreign investors for the next 20 years. The only people in Laos to benefit from the projects are corrupt officials and politicians who misappropriate some money or are bribed. In order to further finance the projects, foreign investors have been offered mining concessions. The resulting mines not only cause further damage to the corridor, but also provide an aquaculture of the groundwater and the waters.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/special/china-build-laos-dams/>

However, what should shock the world public in times of climate change are the huge natural catastrophes that have happened during the last years due to the construction of the dams. Since then, flood disasters and massive dehydration of the rivers alternate in a

constant rhythm, to an unprecedented extent. In the Mekong region alone, the livelihood of 50 million people is threatened.



Lao promise



Lao reality

The promises of the Lao government were once again not kept. The government (Ministry of Energy) has announced that the price of electricity will be reduced by 3% due to the Covid crisis. The government would incur 6 trillion kip in debt for this measure. Shortly afterwards, however, the government announced that it would increase the electricity price by 2%. In practice, the electricity price is now 50% more expensive for citizens than before.

This has caused great unrest among the population.

In the video which is linked below, a citizen of Laos complains about the electricity policy of the government of Laos.

<https://www.facebook.com/som.vang.946/videos/115016524097497>

More information's you'll find here:

[http://www.chaokhongchai.xyz/7089/?fbclid=IwAR12G\\_zaEAPsgghg6kcCwTHhLINjAUgZp4cvvtFe33PrwAGVzDIF9MrN2fIA](http://www.chaokhongchai.xyz/7089/?fbclid=IwAR12G_zaEAPsgghg6kcCwTHhLINjAUgZp4cvvtFe33PrwAGVzDIF9MrN2fIA)

### Recommendations:

Laos must consistently use the revenue generated from the export of electricity for the expansion of its own electricity network instead of the expansion towards foreign countries. However, since the massive construction of dams is also of ecological concern, it must also be tested under the help of international specialists for environmental protection. Moreover, the economic data of the Laotian electricity industry must be disclosed in order to be able to be controlled by Parliament.



### 8. Promote Sustained, Inclusive and Sustainable *Economic Growth*, Full and Productive *Employment* and Decent Work for All.

The Chinese dominance in Laos is becoming more and more evident. In economic terms, Chinese investors try to oust competitors from other countries and thus always gain control over the country. The One Belt One Road projects in Lao PDR started with the High Speed Railway of \$US6.8 billion project put the country into debt which international communities saw no benefit for the projects



due to the country lack of export merchandise. Special economic zones, Casino Boten in northern province of Luang NamTha, including many big hotels built in 2002 ; were ordered to shut down in 2011 by China due bad management which Indicated the lack of transparency and accountability. Human impact on the environment with exploitation of national resources for economic growth sometimes gives negative connotation. Sustainable development Models such as building the casino like the Boten casino provides negative effects on society for losing lands of acquisition, and the livelihood of all impacted local communities for losing everything and nothing gained, except for the long term social crises and crimes.

The Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone in the Ton Pheung District of Bokeo Province of an area of some 3000 hectares were created in 2007 dominated by Chinese-owned the Kings Romans casino. A black list hot spot for illegal activities in money laundering, drugs, human and animal trafficking is openly in operation under the Communist Lao Government, Lao PDR. Our employees in Laos confirm that due to the many economic projects in Laos, more and more Chinese are being settled in Laos. The jobs created by the projects will not be created for the Laotians but for the Chinese. An example of this is the Siphandon project in southern Laos, which is said to amount to around U \$ 9 billion.



Siphandon Project South Laos about U\$ 9Billion.

Recently announced of the acquisition of 5000 hectares of land in the city of Snam Xai in southern province of Attapeu to China for agriculture and renewable forestry plantations improvement is another cover up for transparency and accountability of the communist Lao regime. Again nothing served the Lao nation in national sustainability development program.



Building settlements northern Laos for the Chinese (2021)



Chinese road sign in Laos (2021)

Whether they were land acquisition for foreign investment plantations or the project of construction of dams to their hundreds, most of these projects were mostly invested by China and Vietnam. The aggression isles of making Lao PDR the Battery for Asia violated the livelihood of tens of thousands of villagers in displaced and lack of proper reimbursement deals and most importantly violated the natural ecosystems in land and in water.

Turning Socialist Economic System into Modern Capitalism, China's President Xi Jinping's dream for world power made deals with the Lao PRP's puppets of these projects only benefit the Powerful and corruptive, and nothing for the benefit of innocent Lao citizens. Power and aggression, corruption and fame in the hands of the animated puppets in total control of the country oppressed those under the authoritarian regime inflicted Inequalities deviation in resolutions unjust.

Whether they were land acquisitions deal, special economic zones deals, mining projects deals, dam projects deals, these projects deals only service towards the national culture of corruption and nothing towards the national sustainability program set up for all countries to follow and develop. But after more than forty six years of the communist regime rule, we only see a country in deteriorating economically leaving Lao PDR still the least developed country in the world.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/debt-05102021112817.html>

The culture of corruption in Lao PDR government to put the country among those developing countries at:

Ranking number 138/188 HDI index

134/180 Transparency International CPI index

With population 7,447,396(2020 est.)

GDP \$19.127 billion (nominal, 2019 est.)

\$58.091 billion (PPP,2019 est.)

GDP rank 112th (nominal,2019) 103rd(PPP,2019)

Corruption of 14.42=\$2,758.113 million or \$3 billion

Together with investments deals of turning natural resources into budget as mentioned in SDG 10, Lao PDR needs to reform itself to become a democracy with many political parties in government and accountable constitution which can serve the whole population equality to reduce corruption and crimes against humanity and really looks forward to joining hand in hand with the world communities how to make Sustainable Development Goals work for the benefit of the national

### **Recommendations:**

Large-scale projects based on the Soviet model are only beneficial to a limited extent. For this reason, local companies must be promoted with local projects, especially in the small business sector. Only then can a healthy middle class develop in Laos and thus more prosperity for everyone. In projects for all foreign investors, it must be guaranteed that all workers that are needed come from Laos, with a few exceptions, for example, highly specialized skilled workers who cannot be found on the domestic labor market.



**9. Build Resilient *Infrastructure*; Promote Inclusive and Sustainable Industrialization and Foster *Innovation*.**

Laos currently has 21,716 kilometers (13,494 miles) of pavement, of which 9,673.5 kilometers (6,010.8 miles) are paved and 12,042.5 kilometers (7,482.9 miles) are unpaved. The ADL repeatedly receives reports from members in Laos that funds that were planned for the construction of roads have been misappropriated for other projects.



Bridge near Vang Vieng (2021)



Main street in Laos (2020)

During the monsoon season, when the rain falls from May to October, these paths become impassable. Vehicles are no longer coming up the mountains, slipping down the steep slopes, or sticking up to the axles in the mud. The remaining trucks sometimes block the road for days until they are excavated with a hoe and shovel and the sun has dried the lane. Fords are rushing to torrents after a heavy rain and can no longer be crossed; the floods are also tipping over a bus. During the rainy season, for almost half a year, farmers have difficulty getting to the next market or administrative center. The economy is almost paralyzed. Children often cannot go to school; Women who would rather release in the hospital must give birth to their child at home and take the risk of losing the life of the children.



Village street in Laos after the rain

In the past few years, several railroad construction contracts have been made between the Lao government and Chinese investors. Several Bah projects failed because of the planning, because of lack of money or because of corruption. In October 2010, plans were announced for a 530-kilometer standard-gauge railway to connect Vientiane with Xishuangbanna in the Chinese province of Yunnan. Construction should start in 2011 and be completed in 2014. There were plans to extend this line from Vientiane south to Bangkok. However, in April 2011 it was reported that construction of the



railroad was being postponed indefinitely while Chinese Railways Minister Liu Zhijun was arrested on corruption charges

Since there was a lack of the necessary funds in Laos, the Chinese railway companies were given generous land concessions. In October 2012, a new 7 billion dollar project was launched to build a railway line from China via Vientiane to Bangkok. The cost has now risen to over \$ 20 billion. While proponents have touted the railway's economic benefits, the project has drawn major international criticisms over its environmental and social impacts. Laos is a one-party state known for its strict repression and intolerance of dissent. The opinions of local communities along the route were simply not part of the conversation as governments and developers drew up plans for the railway.

<https://www.aseantoday.com/2021/02/as-china-laos-railway-nears-completion-infrastructure-poised-to-transform-lao-economy/>

There are reports that the project has pushed people off of their land without compensation, contaminated water sources and damaged farmland. The Lao government has requisitioned nearly 4,000 acres of land for the project and construction is estimated to displace over 4,400 families. Some people who moved to make way for the railway have said the government hasn't compensated them fairly for their land and property. Completion of these railroad is scheduled for December 2021.

### **Recommendations:**

Infrastructure projects must also serve the common good and not major investors, as in the case of railway construction. Land concessions in return for infrastructure projects have only resulted in further depreciation of Laos and not a better economy. A comprehensive regional planning is needed. The United Nations can help by taking the construction projects into its own hands as long as the corruption in the country is not under control. It would also be worth considering if you cannot privatize a part of the streets to relieve the public coffers. Business representatives tend to have a greater interest in good transport links.



### **10. Reduce *Inequality* within and among Countries**

After the seizure of power by The Lao People's Revolutionary Party ( Lao PRP ) on the 2nd of December 1975 over the Royal Lao government , Laos was left with very few government officials to govern the country for most of the government officials from the Lao Royal Government were captured and put in concentration camps in their tens of thousands at the time. They included the King and Queen of Laos; King Sri Savang Vatthana , Queen Khamboui, and many members of their families, and until now , after forty six years, the faith of these people is left unknown of what had happened to them. The Lao-Vietnamese Treaty Of Friendship on 18th July 1977 of 25 years with continuations of the same Treaty of further ten years were one sided affair to Vietnam. The so-called bilateral Vietnamese-Lao Cooperation since 1980, put Vietnam in total control of Laos for being total dependency on the army and government officials and expertise.



Ho Chi Minh memorial as can be seen in many cities in Laos (2021)



Road signs in Vietnamese and Lao (2020)

The Laotian culture was gradually replaced or assimilated by the Vietnamese culture. This happened in many ways, for example, through the communist parties in Vietnam and Laos, marriages between Laotians and Vietnamese were arranged in return for a career. Another unequal treatment is the fact that students in Laos are disadvantaged if they want to study in their mother tongue or if they choose English as their first foreign language instead of Vietnamese. The students are not only alienated from their own culture, they are also kept away from the claim to the international standard of education. Laotians are being kept out of important leadership positions in the country and replaced by Vietnamese. Sustainable development is not possible for the people of Laos, but colonization by Vietnam, yes.

Similarly to Vietnam in control of the Lao PDR, the bilateral Lao-Chinese Cooperation for investment deals in the country only benefited the Chinese investors, hence China, for the formation of the socialist economic systems of communism in partnerships. The world communities were all put on an alert about China with: First The One Belt One Road, or Debt Trapped diplomacy of China. And in 2019 came the CCP-VIRUS, or WOHAN-VIRUS or The COVID-19 Virus Pandemic, which put the whole world on recession, frozen in all activities, killing more than three million people and still spreading after two years.

### Recommendations:

Both for neighboring countries and for Laos itself, it is necessary to see that the benefits for a well-developed Laos are far higher than a poorly developed country. As was correctly recognized by the Allied Western powers after the Second World War and implemented in the Marshall Plan at that time, the countries devastated by war were systematically rebuilt economically and are today indispensable economic partners in the world from everyone involved. The same also applies to Laos. A well-developed country will be able to stabilize the region and will also be a good economic partner in the long term. The massive depletion of raw materials is only of limited time of economic benefit and harms the environment massively on a global scale. In addition, the countries must promote a ban on the acceptance of non-sustainably produced true goods from Laos by ringing and sustainably producing products with lower import duties.



**11. Make *Cities* and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable.**

The lack of infrastructure and the misplanning still hinders many communities in Laos. As described in SDG 9, only 1,700 km from 13,000 km of road are paved. Urbanization is an emerging issue in Laos. Urban areas are experiencing higher population growth rates than in the national average. Urban areas also have a number of problems, such as migrant workers, child protection, HIV, malnutrition of children among urban families, diseases, pollution and poor sanitary conditions. The proportion of urban population in Laos is expected to rise more than a third of the total population over the next few years. This is still below the global average of 54 percent. The urban population growth rate was 4.5 percent in the period 2005-2015. Obviously, most migratory flows go from city to town, mainly to the capital Vientiane. A very different problem has grown over the past ten years. With the displacement of local products, which mostly got by without a lot of outer packaging, and the establishment of products from abroad, as well as the settlement of millions of Chinese in Laos, the amount of waste also increased dramatically. But since almost nothing has changed in the garbage management in Laos, this is now leading to increasing littering of the landscape.



Urban development in Vientiane



Trash on the roadside in Vientiane

<https://www.rfa.org/lao/daily/environment/Trash-removal-more-challenging-in-Vientiane-capital-07012020214822.html>

There is also a significant movement across the border to Thailand, which has a similar language and culture. However, reliable statistics are rare. Urban sanitation is generally poor. Vientiane Capital suffers from the lack of adequate drainage and sewer systems and the poor design of existing sanitation and septic tanks.

Unpurified industrial wastewater additionally endangers drinking water. According to World Bank plans, Laos needs to invest \$ 19 million annually for water and \$ 12 million annually for water sanitation by 2020.

(Sources: UNO Labitat, Jane Lindsay)

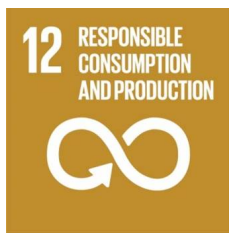
[http://www.fukuoka.unhabitat.org/kcap/activities/egm/2012/pdf/egm30\\_en.pdf](http://www.fukuoka.unhabitat.org/kcap/activities/egm/2012/pdf/egm30_en.pdf)

<https://prezi.com/sqcdarta8msn/urbanization-in-laos/>

### Recommendations:

As described in the previous section, as with most other problems, comprehensive regional planning and public control of projects and investments are essential. A longer-term arrangement of the World Food Authority and some already involved development aid organisations will be needed further. An immediate reorganization of the garbage management in Laos is required. This reorganization must go hand in hand with transparent regional planning that is monitored by the public.





## 12. Ensure Sustainable *Consumption and Production* Patterns.

The domestic market in Laos is increasingly flooded with products from China and Vietnam. Local products are mainly present in the agricultural sector. Megaprojects and special economic zones, especially for investors from China, did not provide any benefit for the population. In these mega-projects, the local residents are forcibly relocated and replaced by Sielder from China. The jobs created by the mega-projects are mostly only for the new settlers from China.



Pictures from a forced relocation in Northern Laos, made for a dam project (2021)

We have to assume that about 30% of the land area of Laos belongs to foreign investors. This is land that the Laotians are no longer allowed to use. The land that is offered to the Laotians as compensation is mostly of inferior quality. The population is finding it increasingly difficult to manufacture their own products and to ensure their own economic independence.

### Recommendations:

The forced relocations in Laos must stop immediately. Just like the generous land allocation to foreign investors, which do not provide any benefit to the population. Instead, one should promote organic agriculture and develop the infrastructure in the rural areas, this result in a much longer-term and more sustainable benefit for the people in Laos than the large-scale projects of foreign investors.



### **13. Take Urgent Action to Combat *Climate Change* and its Impacts.**

In the past few years international NGOs have repeatedly reported about illegal logging in Laos. The rainforest in Laos is disappearing at an alarming rate. The breathtaking beauty of nature is in great danger today. Independent experts fear that there will soon be no more rainforest in Laos.

Not only EIA but also Global Witness has been investigative in recent years. It was particularly noticeable in the investigation that almost exclusively Vietnamese companies are involved in the deforestation, which is concentrated in the area in the south of Laos and the north of Cambodia. The evidence of the deforestation can be easily followed from satellite images. The companies of the Vietnamese HAGL Group are primarily responsible for the overexploitation. The Vietnamese were given generous land concessions on the grounds that Vietnam had given Laos arms aid in the fight against the French and the USA and that Laos was now obliged to pay something back to Vietnam. With a large number of subsidiaries, the HAGL Group digs tropical timber in large quantities and replaces the rainforest in part with rubber and banana plantations. Wherever the rainforest is not being replaced by monocultures, the HAGL Group operates mining or destroys the environment with large dams. One of the most important donors of the projects is Deutsche Bank in Germany.



Deforested area in Laos

The wood is not only transported to Vietnam by land, but also by river. The whole thing is supported by the Vietnamese military, which cordoned off the areas so that nobody can see what is really going on in the areas. While the local population is responsible for cutting down trees, the Vietnamese deforestation commandos are allowed to use the area without controls. In the end, the population is faced with a destroyed nature that they can no longer use.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/convoy-of-lao-trucks-transport-logs-to-vietnam-despite-ban-on-timber-exports-12302015130649.html>



Lao trucks loaded with logs wait at the Lao Bao-Dansavanh international border checkpoint in Savannakhet province en route to Vietnam,

In Laos, the deforestation of the rainforest is severely restricted by law and there is also an agreement with the EU about the sustainable use of the rainforest, but this is repeatedly circumvented. While the civilian population in Laos is severely punished if they use wood from the rainforest for their own needs, the companies that clear the rainforest in large quantities are not punished.

#### **Recommendations:**

The countries where mainly products from the depletion of Laos are distributed are encouraged to control the distribution more stringently. The import of such products must be banned in the countries of acceptance (EU, USA and ASEAN countries). The afforestation programmes need to be strengthened urgently. As a consultant for sustainable timber management and environmental protection, international NGOs are able to access environmental protection such as Greenpeace, Robin Wood and others.



#### **14. Conserve and Sustainably Use the *Oceans*, Seas, and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development**

The Mekong River plays an important role in the economy of Laos. The Mekong River basin covers nearly 90 per cent of Laos country and drains toward Vietnam. The capacity of Mekong River's basin to sustain food security and water availability in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) is largely hindered by competing economic, ecological, and political interests. In Laos, the government encourages hydro-power investment, which increases pressure on water and sea animal threats. The development of electricity in Laos and export to neighbouring countries are essential for government revenues to reduce poverty. Although hydro-power does not pollute water or air directly, hydro-



power reservoir and dam can impact the change in environment, land use, and natural habitats. There are potential environmental consequences of damming water, creating gigantic reservoirs, flooding the entire area, blocking the natural course of the river and constructing power lines. For example, the structure of dam and reservoir interfere fishing migration and alter water temperature and river's flow; as a result. It may injure the life of sea animals and animals on land.

Mekong River and the lives of people

People use Mekong River stream directly for drinking, cooking, bathing and washing. However, as the population increases, watercourses that are used simultaneously for water disposal and water supply cause health issues like diarrhea and typhoid. Meanwhile, locals stated that before the upstream dams were built, they could safely drink the Mekong River water. However, after the Xayaburi Dam in Laos was built, the water quality became contaminated. The water quality in Laos become even worse when a new dam was built in Don Sahong, less than 2 kilometers from the town, causing the population get diarrhoea and inhale with bad air quality. Besides, fisheries contribute about 13 percent of Laos national GDP per year. Most population live near the Mekong river found dead fish floating in polluted water in the area between the Don Sahong Dam and Preah Rumkel (Cambodia) which made their only source of water for drinking, cooking, fishing and everyday chores as disaster.



Images of dead fish on the Mekong (2021)

<https://www.eastwestcenter.org/news-center/east-west-wire/%E2%80%98water-grabbing%E2%80%99-the-mekong>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjNgM6X8qmk>

In addition to the mostly illegal deforestation that reduces the groundwater and the ecologic damage caused by the partially haphazard dam projects, there are still the problems with the contamination by chemicals. ADL keeps getting reports on foreign companies in Laos, which cap the chemical waste untreated into nature.

Here are a few examples: In the early morning of 10/05/2018 it was observed that the company Sanpaper in the village of Ban Sephon, in the province of Savanaghet, has capped poison in the creek Koaki, which flows into the river Sebanhieng. As a result, there was a massive dying of fish and land animals.



Pictures of poisoned and dead animals on the river Sebanhieng

On May 11, 2018, residents of Thangone District, Xaythany Province reported that Vietnam's garbage disposal factories were dumping wastewater into the Nam Ngum River, resulting in fish mortality. But when the authorities came to see this, the population was forbidden to publish it. The company concerned operates gold mines, among others, which are declared as development projects. The proceeds and profits are not taxed, but compensation is paid to private individuals who work for the authorities. The gold from this company is transported to Laobao (Vietnam).



Fish kills in the Nam Ngum River

### Recommendations:

The construction of sewage treatment plants needs to be promoted, an international supervisory authority for the Mekong must be created. The construction of dams must be stopped for the time being, until an international group of experts has investigated the effects on nature. Higher safety standards must be created for the transport of oil and chemicals, and this also requires cross-national cooperation. The operation of factories, which take raw sewage into the rivers, must be set immediately. New licenses should be subject to strictly monitored environmental controls. The owners of the factories have to pay for the damage. The officials affected by the corruption are to dismiss and punish.



### 15. Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss

Laos has historically been considered the land of millions of elephants and a land of vast natural resources. Unfortunately, this is very much in danger today. When the Communists came to power in 1975 over 70% of the country was still covered with rainforest, in 2019 it is only around 38%. There are many reasons for this deforestation, the main ones being illegal logging and the dam construction that is not only destroying the rainforest and causing forced relocation but also some disasters, which my speakers will say more about.

Timber logging legally and illegally since 1975 to nearly bear strip of the whole forestry of Laos benefits nothing to the country of Laos due to National Legal System unjust and corruptive which promoted nothing to the national sustainability development. Mining projects in their billions of US dollars benefit nothing to the Lao people due to the culture of corruption and very little improvisation for sustainability projects. Dam projects in their hundreds put more stress and poverty to Lao people but nothing gained from projects for these projects are owned by foreign companies and resettlement deals for those ordinary citizens were minimal due to their big losses of their livelihoods and their families' future lives. The 23 July 2018 collapsed of the Xe Pian Xe NamNoi dam led to widespread destruction and homelessness among the local population in neighboring Attapeu

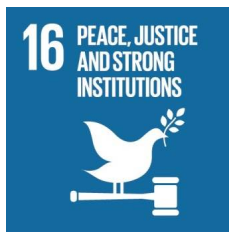
Province. As of the consequences of these mega projects resulted in resettlement of villagers in their hundreds of thousands with inappropriate resettlement deals. The collapsed of the Sepian Se- Nam Noi in 2018 killed hundreds of people and left hundreds of thousands without homes and still waiting for permanent resettlement. Relief funds for these unfortunate man-made floods victims could not be fulfilled due to corruption. Corruptions are booming for the rich and powerful puppets of the Lao PRP for The Lao PDR is best known to have 'The Culture of Corruption'. International Aid to invest in Lao PDR to improve the country's development under the model of SDG failed dramatically due to the reasons mentioned above.

The land grab in Laos continues. Further cases have been reported to us by our members in Laos, so also in the next case. The Construction company Luang Nam Tha received okay from the mayor of the city to continue the company's contracts. one owner of the land complained, saying that this company has absolute power to overwrite any previous ownership certificate. She is the owner of the property with proper proof of ownership. She argues with the local officials, saying it is an invasive act, but the officials say the property is owned by the government and not her. The communist regime claims that the communist government owns all land and property in the country; this is the abolition of real estate and the use of all mortgages for public purposes.

<https://www.facebook.com/110646436971304/videos/740205086610186>

#### **Recommendations:**

To achieve this goal, the laws that already exist must be enforced. Since these laws are circumvented because of corruption, only fighting corruption with public control can lead to success. In addition, foreign business partners from the USA or Europe, for example, should refrain from doing business that would result in the overexploitation of nature in Laos.



#### **16. Promote Peaceful and Inclusive Societies for Sustainable Development, Provide Access to *Justice* for all and Build Effective, Accountable and Inclusive Institutions at all Levels.**

The rule of law in Laos is ruled solely by the Lao People's Revolutionary Party. There is no separation of powers in Laos and therefore no independent judiciary. People who are accused of any crimes do not have the opportunity to get a lawyer, as is the international standard. Political crimes are particularly severely punished in Laos. Since it is forbidden in Laos to criticize the party or the state and its government, any expression of opinion that the party leadership does not like is in fact a criminal offense. The case of the three internet bloggers Lod Thammavong, Somphone Phimmasone, and Soukane Chaitad in 2016 was particularly exemplary here. Somphone was sentenced to a 20-year term and was fined 210 million kip (U.S. \$26,000), while Soukane was sentenced to 16 years and was fined 106 million kip (U.S. \$13,000). Lod was handed a 12-year sentence and was fined 110 million kip (U.S. \$14,000).

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/prison-04192021171613.html>



Jailed Lao human rights defenders Lod Thammavong, Somphone Phimmasone, and Soukane Chaitad are shown, left to right. However, other human rights activists have also been arrested in recent years for criticizing the government or the authorities. Another well-known case in Laos is that of Ms. Houayheuang Xayabouly, better known by her nickname Mouay. She was arrested in 2019 for a video she posted critical of the government.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/mouay-03082021181941.html>

In general, Laos is known for the fact that the fundamental rights of its citizens are increasingly restricted. This is particularly evident in the limitations of the media and the Internet.

In the case of crimes such as drug crimes, corruption, illegal logging, forced prostitution in Laos, mostly only petty criminals are brought to justice. Criminal networks or leaders of large gangs are rarely punished. The general impression is that there is no interest in solving the great crimes. However, a lot of energy is consumed in the persecution of those who think differently from politics.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/media-06012021161730.html>

What RFA does not know, however, is that this task force itself spreads false information and even carries out smear campaigns against Laotians living in exile. Again and again members of the ADL and also of friendly organizations were exposed to such smear campaigns.

### Recommendations:

Laos urgently needs a separation of powers. The judiciary, executive and legislative branches must be able to act independently of one another. For this reason, the sole claim to power of the People's Revolutionary Party of Laos must also be deleted. Only a fundamental democratic reform can save the catastrophic state of the Lao nation.



### 17. Strengthen the Means of Implementation and Revitalize the *Global Partnership for Sustainable Development*

Laos has taken two correct steps in the right direction with its entry into the ASEAN Alliance and its accession to the WTO. Likewise, the liberalization of the economy since 1987 has been an important milestone for a more sustainable development. However, corruption and lack of implementation of international standards and also its own laws inhibit the development in the country massively.

Laos has been able to compete in international competition, relying heavily on the help of Vietnam and China. This has led to an ever-increasing dependence. International observers see that the



People's Republic of Laos is politically managed by Vietnam and economically by China. Our observers even go so far as to make the locals feel no longer to be lord in their own country. However, a major obstacle to such a partnership is the Vietnamese-Lao Friendship Treaty of 18.07.1977. This secures Vietnam's control over Laos and prevents other states from coming to a better and more intensive partnership. Without the consent of Hanoi, the government of Laos cannot act here.

Even now, Vietnam is still trying to take over Laos in many ways and forms. At every important level of the government of the Lao PDR there are Vietnamese technical advisors who are closely monitoring and tightly directing the activities of Lao officials. Vietnamese troops in and out of uniforms are stationed at the provinces and localities to intimidate Lao people from speaking up and from governing themselves.

Vietnam has blatantly lifted our valuable natural resources for destination in Vietnam. Massive amounts of timber have been cut and transported from southern Laos to Vietnam for commerce under the supervision of the Vietnamese military while Lao citizens are forbidden from cutting timber just to build a home. The same thing is happening with the valuable minerals that are being taken freely to Vietnam day and night.

Lao PDR government needs to be independent Democratic State free from dependency of Vietnam political power domination and free from China economic projects deals domination and looking forward to a successful sustainable development agenda between government, the private sector and civil society. These inclusive partnerships built upon principles and values, a shared vision, and shared goals that place people and the planet at the center, are needed at the global, regional, national and local level.

In the last years the influence of China grows up. China got a lot of special economy zones, dam projects and more land concessions after they have been awarded the contract to build a fast train through Laos. The institutions in Laos are against the principle and spirit of the Convention on Political Rights. According to the Laos Constitution in Art.3, the Lao Revolutionary People's Party has the core leadership across the country. Thus, it is impossible for other organizations to work and exist; the same applies to other thinkers. It can be observed that the arrests of politically different thinking over long periods of time are unchanged.

Thanks to the large deposits of raw materials exploited by China and the geographical location, China uses the country for its power interests. Laos has meanwhile become one of the most important pillars of Chinese power politics, without the public being aware of it.

The consequences for the people of Laos are dramatic. More and more people are losing their country to investors from China and Vietnam; the human rights that are respected in the United States do not apply in Laos. China has secured sovereignty in important parts of Laos through the establishment of special economic zones and the transfer of land rights for major projects such as the construction of a railway line or the construction of dams.

The sustainable Development Goals are a collection of 17 global goals set by the United Nations to be implemented by the year 2030. In the case of Lao PDR SDG 18 UXO is added to cover problems of unexploded ordnance. SDG 17 targets long term investments to empower sectors and companies in need, more adoptable in developmental countries. Its main aim reaches improving the following aspects of a country that include energy, infrastructure, transportation systems, IT infrastructure to different communications technologies channels. The framework of development covers evaluating and following up with rules and regulations, the sector's structure to attract more investment projects to the country and thus improving its economical standards. This partnership is translated

through full assistance of all regional, local and international communities to increase the economic and social growth rates for Lao PDR.

### Recommendations:

The establishment of a National SDG Number 18 is just a pure distraction from the problems of Laos. Nevertheless, Laos must break away from its dependence on Vietnam and China and find the way to an equal partnership with China and Vietnam. Therefore, the friendship treaty between Laos and Vietnam must be changed to a genuine partnership agreement that is not interdependent. Many countries in the region were careful to take advantage of each other in the past because European colonial rulers showed them how to do it in the 19th century. But these former colonial powers have learned, namely that helping and building up each other brings more benefits for everyone. Despite many problems, the European Union is the most successful union of nation states today. It is precisely this spirit that Southeast Asia needs. The ASEAN community needs to be more focused on developing and promoting common values. It is also important that ASEAN not only focus on the economic interests of large corporations, but above all on small businesses. The states in Southeast Asia need much more partnership and equal action with one another and not against each other.



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