

Country Technical Note on
Indigenous Peoples' Issues

Lao People's Democratic Republic



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LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BOL- Bank of Laos

CCM- Convention on Cluster Munitions

EORE-Explosive Ordnance Risk Education

ERW- Explosive Remnants of War

GDP-Gross Domestic Product

LDC- Least Developed Country

LECS- Lao PDR Expenditure and Consumption Survey

NRA- National Regulatory Authority

MRE- Mine Risk Education

NA- National Assembly

NSEDP- National Socio-Economic Development Plan

SDGs-Sustainable Development Goals

SERP-Socio-Economic Response Plan

SME-Small and Medium Enterprises

UDS- US Dollar

UNHCR- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNDP- United Nations Development Plan

UNDS-UN Development System

UXO- Unexploded Ordnance

VEDCs-Village Education Development Committees

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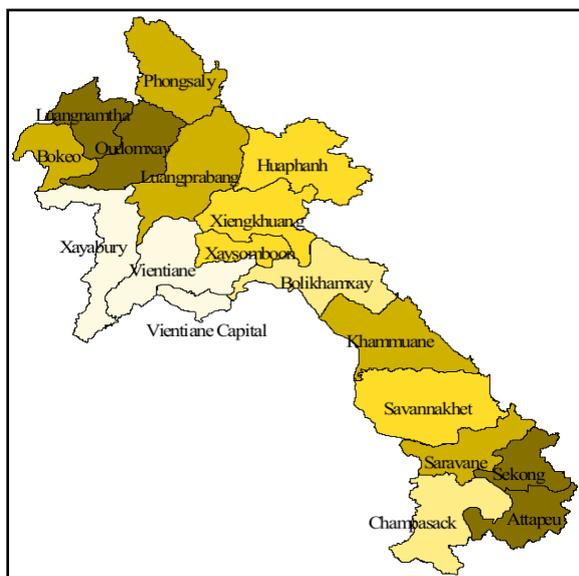
There are many International Organization Agencies in Lao PDR which work closely to both privates and public sectors in order to make the better lives and standard of living of Lao people in the whole country.

IFAD's Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples (2009) recommended that Country Technical Notes be prepared to provide country-specific information on indigenous peoples, as well as to contribute to the development of country programme strategies and project design. A number of them have been prepared by indigenous peoples' leaders with the support of indigenous peoples' organizations. The Notes are intended as living documents to support learning on indigenous peoples' issues. The concept of indigenous is problematic in Laos and the Government does not use this terminology but refers to Laos as a multi-ethnic society. The 2018 the 6th Ordinary Session of the 8th National Assembly recognized 50 ethnic groups, due to the Brou ethnic group was identified as one of the ethnic groups in Lao PDR with at least 260 subgroups. These groups can be roughly divided into four broader ethno-linguistic groupings: Lao-Tai, Mon-Khmer, Chinese -Tibetan and Hmong-Mien. The Lao-Tai dominate politically, culturally and economically and generally inhabit the river plains. The majority of the other ethnic groups inhabit the remote, mountainous and forested areas of Laos and practise more traditional ways of life with distinct sociocultural differences; they experience marginalization.

There is no specific legislation in Laos with regard to indigenous peoples. A national legislation relevant to indigenous peoples is the ethnic minority policy, which upholds the principle that all ethnic groups should have improved access to services and that all discrimination must be eradicated. According to this policy, the government of Laos will make more efforts to improve the living conditions of all ethnic groups. Thus, the indigenous peoples of Laos were encouraged to move down to lowland areas where there are more economic opportunities, productive agriculture and better access to government services. However, relocation presents a threat to the traditional lifestyles of the Lao indigenous peoples. Moreover, challenges to the implementation of the principles contained in this policy are budgetary constraints and the remoteness of many ethnic minority communities.

Key issues to address for future development initiatives in Laos are: access to education in Lao language and ethnic minority languages, access to health care, increased gender equality, political participation and representation, land rights, and ensuring that internal resettlement initiatives do not increase poverty and food insecurity and respect traditional cultural and social systems.

Figure 1: Map of Laos



Source:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Provinces_of_Laos

1. Main characteristics of indigenous peoples

Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is one of the countries with the largest number of different ethnic groups in the world. The history of these ethnic groups extends beyond human memory. They have experienced many upheavals, but they continue to develop, although some of them evolve less quickly than others. Ethnic groups are dispersed throughout Laos and they usually maintain friendly relations – there is a long tradition of mutual aid within the national community. They have a common economic and social basis and realize that no ethnic group can live in isolation. However, the level of economic, political, cultural and social knowledge differs from one group to another. Lao PDR with a population of just over 7 million has the most ethnically diverse population on mainland Southeast Asia. According to the National Assembly has officially adopted "Brou" as an ethnic group in the Lao PDR on December 5th 2018 at present government recognizes 160 ethnic sub-groups within 50 ethnic groups.¹ The Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism of Laos have promoted the use of an ethno-linguistic classification system to distinguish among various ethnic groups in the country.

The ethnic Lao-Tai, comprising around half of the population, dominate the country economically and culturally. There are, however, some provinces and districts where the number of Indigenous people exceeds that of the Lao and where their culture is prominent.

The Lao-Tai are the dominant ethnicity, mostly made up of Lao people, and they tend to live in the lowlands where the wetlands lend themselves to rice farming. They arrived in

¹ The National Assembly's official Agreement on the resolution of the National Assembly of the Lao PDR adopted "Brou" as an ethnic in Laos No. 108/NA of December 5, 2018

what is now called Laos in the first millennium, from the south of China. Today, they are the vast majority and control most of the Laotian government.

The Mon-Khmer are the indigenous people that moved into the area around 3000 years ago, from India. Originally, they were wet-rice farmers but were displaced and forced up the sides of the mountains by the migration of the Lao-Tai. They have the widest range of linguistic and cultural differences and have many different subgroups.

The Hmong-Mien and the Chinese-Tibetan arrived fairly recently in the 19th century from China and today these two ethnolinguistic groups live on the mountains in the northern provinces of Laos. Together they make up a group of peoples composed of several ethnic groups (Hmong, Mien/ Yao, Akha etc.). They mostly migrated down to Laos, forced to flee the many violent revolts happening in Southern China between 1850 and 1870.

Today, the Laos ethnic groups map still very much reflects the physical landscape of the country. The geographical divide between highlanders and lowlanders has had a big impact on the cultural make-up of Laos. In fact, these physical divisions of numerous mountain ranges, plains, plateaus, and rivers have been credited as one of the reasons Laos is so ethnically diverse, keeping tribes fairly separate, and preserving many of their traditional practices.

Officially Lao government is very concerned with the construction and maintenance of national unity. The National Assembly's official Agreement No 213 of 24 November 2008 recognized only one nationality all citizens are Lao - The concern is that concepts such as 'indigenous and ethnic minority' may encourage feelings of separateness or non-inclusion within the Lao state. It is these ethnic minority 'groups that are most often identified and defined as Laos' indigenous peoples. The term indigenous is problematic in Laos: due to the country's land-locked location, the peoples and tribes that inhabit the modern state of Lao PDR have originated and migrated from many lands including southern China, the Tibetan plateau, Burma, Cambodia, Thailand and Viet Nam. It is therefore very difficult to identify any one group that can claim to be indigenous. Although Laos' ethnic groups are nowadays linguistically grouped, this report will use the old geographical classification of Lao Loum (lowland Lao), Lao Theung (Upland Lao) and Lao Soung (Highland Lao).

Figure 2: Lao-people-and-ethnic-groups-of Laos

Lao



Akha



Lahou



Source: <https://www.rainforestcruises.com/guides/>

Photos taken by research team

There are four ethnolinguistic families in Laos. Lao-Tai language-speaking groups represent two-thirds of the population. The other third speaks languages belonging to the Mon-Khmer, Sino-Tibetan and Hmong-Ew-Hmien families and are considered to be the Indigenous Peoples of Laos.

Officially, all ethnic groups have equal status in Laos, and the concept of Indigenous Peoples is not recognized by the government, despite the fact that Laos voted in favour of adopting the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The Lao government uses the term ethnic group to refer to Indigenous people.² During the 2015-2019 period, the Lao PDR has submitted four national reports including the ICCPR.

1.1 General demographic characteristics

Laos is a landlocked the Lao government prefers to promote itself as 'land-linked' In early December 2021, Laos inaugurated the Boten-Vientiane railway, a 414-kilometer (km) electrified high-speed railway that runs between the capital Vientiane and the town of Boten on the Laos- China border.³ The new railway can transform Laos from a landlocked country that was the least industrialized in ASEAN into a land-linked hub that connects to the wider region. (The Lao-China Railway is part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). With the right reforms undertaken by the Lao government, the railway connecting Lao PDR (and later Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore) this project provides Lao PDR with a land link to global and regional supply chains, which could make the country more attractive to investors, create new jobs, and accelerate economic growth. Laos is officially known as the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR). The official national language is Lao, which is structurally similar to Thai. The terms 'Laotian' or 'Lao' are officially used to represent the nationality of all Lao people.

The population is over 7 million, with an estimated annual growth rate of 2.4 percent, Laos's population increased by 105 thousand (+1.5%) between January 2020 and January 2021. 49.8% of Laos's population is female, while 50.2% of its population is male (note: the United Nations not publish data for genders other than 'female' and 'male'). 36.6% of Laos's population lives in urban centres, while 63.4% lives in rural areas.⁴ Indigenous people lagged behind the majority Lao-Tai at all economic levels. They have more limited access to healthcare, lower rates of education and less access to clean water and sanitation. Indigenous people relying on unimproved or surface water ranged from between 20 to 32.5%, compared to just 8.5% of Lao-Tai, and while only 13.9% of Lao-Tai practice open defecation, that rises to between 30.3 to 46.3% among Indigenous people.

Lao PDR has one of the youngest populations in the region. Nearly 60 percent of Lao PDR's population are estimated to be less than 25 years of age. Projections show a rapid

² United Nations Human Rights Office of the High "Statement by Professor Philip Alston, United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights on his visit to Lao PDR, 18-28 March 2019". Accessed 27 February 2020: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24417&LangID=E>

³ <https://www.aseanbriefing.com/news/the-completed-china-laos-railway/> Accessed on 1/3/2022

⁴ <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-laos> Accessed 28 January 2022

increase in working-age population and a falling dependency ratio. Thus, in the medium-term, Lao PDR is set to benefit from the “demographic dividend” to the economy. However, the full benefits of the demographic dividend will be realized only if new jobs are able to keep pace with the growth of the working age population and only if young women and young men are better equipped with the appropriate skills and knowledge. This issue will become all the more critical with the move towards regional integration.

Laos comprises approximately 68 ethnic groups with distinct differences in languages and culture.⁵ In 1970s the Lao Government formally began to categorize its many ethnic minorities into three broad groupings; Lao Loum (Lowland Lao), Lao Theung (Upland Lao), and Lao Soung (Highland Lao). The use of the three ethnic groupings is a means of emphasizing the commonality of all Lao people and a unified Lao nationality. Department of ethnic Lao Front for National Construction Center (LFNC) researched the naming of ethnic groups in Laos based on three criteria are: 1. Spoken language 2, History associated with names 3. Traditional-cultures and other Party attitudes and policies regard to ethnic group. In 2000 Lao PDR recognized 49 ethnic groups.⁶ And In 2000 Lao PDR recognized 50 ethnic groups.

Lao people comprise four main ethno-linguistic families: Lao-Tai (62.4 percent), Mon-Khmer (23.7 percent), Hmong-lu Mien (9.7 percent), and Chine-Tibetan (2.9 percent)⁷

Table 1: List of Ethnic Groups under Lao-Tai Linguistic Group

Lao-Tai consists of 8 ethnic subgroups			
1	Lao	4	Tai
2	Leu	5	Nhuane
3	Xaek	6	Tai neua
7	Phutai	8	Yang

Table 2: List of Ethnic Groups under Mon-Khmer Linguistic Group

Mon-Khmer consists of 33 ethnic subgroups			
1	Khmou	18	Oey
2	Pray	19	Kadang
3	Xingmoon	20	Lavy
4	Katang	21	Toum
5	Yru	22	Kree
6	Yae	23	Bid
7	Hahak	24	Lamed
8	Jeng	25	Samtao
9	Nhaheun	26	Taoey
10	Kmer	27	Katu

⁵ Institute for Ethnic and Religious Research, **Find a tribe in Laos**, state Printing 2009, p. 43.

⁶ Institute for Ethnic and Religious Research, **Find a tribe in Laos**, state Printing 2009, p. 52.

⁷ Lao Statistics Bureau, MPI “Results of Population and Housing Census 2015.” Accessed 26 Feb 2022.

11	Moy	28	Kriang
12	Phong	29	Suay
13	Thene	30	Pako
14	Eudou	31	Nguane
15	Makong	32	Tri
16	Triang	33	Brou * ⁸
17	Brao		

Table 3: List of Hmong-lumien Linguistic Group

Hmong-lumien consists of 2 ethnic subgroups			
1	Hmong	2	lumien

Table 4: List of Chinese-Tibetan Linguistic Group

Chinese-Tibetan consists of 7 ethnic subgroups.			
1	Akha or Ko	5	Lahou
2	Sila	6	Hayi
3	Hor	7	Lolo
4	Phounoy		

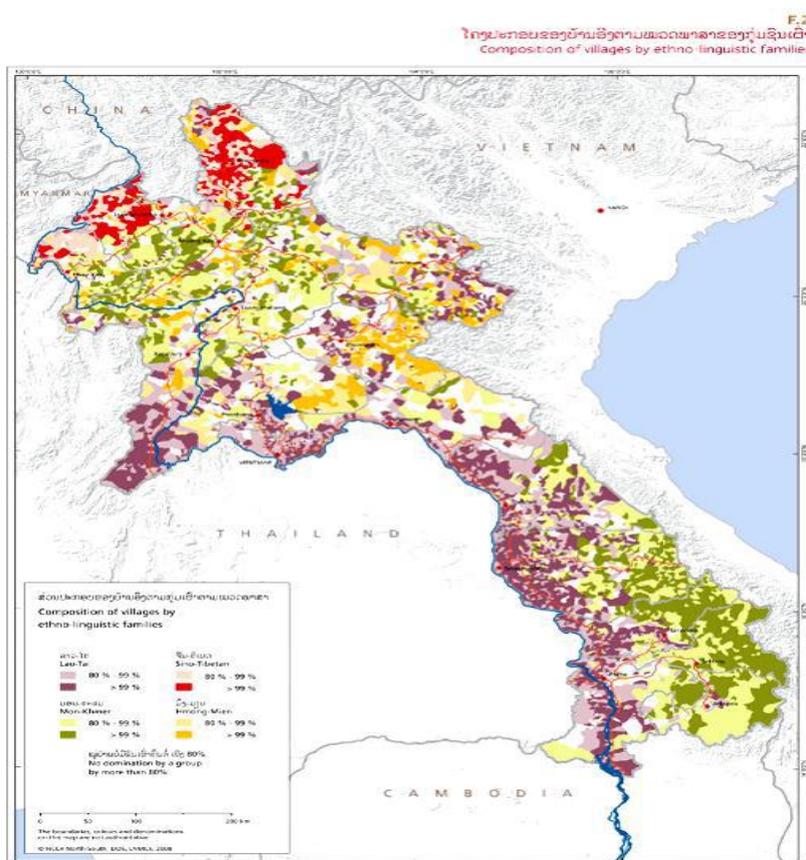
Source: Results of the 4th Population and Housing Census (PHC) 2015



Photos taken by the research team

⁸ According to the 6th Ordinary Session of the 8th National Assembly, the Brou ethnic group was recognized in the Mon-Khmer language group as one of the ethnic groups in Lao PDR and the number of ethnic groups in Lao PDR was increased from 49 ethnic groups to 50 ethnic groups Pursuant to the Resolution of the National Assembly No. 108 / NA, dated 05 December 2018

Figure 3: Composition of villages by ethno-linguistic families



Source: <http://www.laoatlas.net/Welcome.html>

2. Sociocultural status

Lao PDR is currently part of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Cultural industries, supported by the rapid improvement of soft infrastructures (e.g., fast development of the internet) are foreseen to be one of the potential tools to help the country graduate from his LDC status by 2020. At its 10th Congress held in February 2016, the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party declared the 2030 vision and strategy to move toward the developing country status with medium income under the direction of green and sustainable development. The main objective is to continue the protection, preservation, rehabilitation and enrichment of the tradition and national cultural heritage value towards the sustainable development; in addition, the vision aims to develop modern cultural industries in order to contribute to the socio-economical sustainability.

Lao PDR is among the Least Development Countries and over the last decades the government has spent great efforts to promote the country’s socio-economic growth and improve the livelihoods of an ethnically diverse population. Among the measures identified, culture is seen as an important way to achieve these goals, notably through tourism and the production of handicrafts, thanks to the country’s great cultural and natural assets. Recently, the country has seen an emerging sector of young artist and cultural practitioners, although still largely focused in the capital and some other bigger cities and the government has begun

to notice this vibrant sector and placed more emphasis on the encouragement of cultural products and services rather than purely focused on the traditional cultural values and heritage. This coincides with the ratification of the 2005 Convention and therefore awareness raising could be considered as one of the most obvious impacts of the Convention in the country. The policy impacts however will need to take more times as it often takes a long time for new policy to be introduced, developed and approved. The ethnic Lao, comprising around half of the population, dominate the country economically and culturally. There are, however, some provinces and districts where the number of Indigenous people exceeds that of the Lao and where their culture is prominent.⁹

The Lao People's Revolutionary Party declared the 2030 vision and strategy to move toward the developing country status with medium income under the direction of green and sustainable development. The main objective is to continue the protection, preservation, rehabilitation and enrichment of the tradition and national cultural heritage value towards the sustainable development; in addition, the vision aims to develop modern cultural industries in order to contribute to the socio-economical sustainability. Many development plans, including infrastructure, are not planned or implemented with ethnicity as the overriding variable. Consequently, development impacts can be marginalizing on the economies of isolated ethnic minority groups unless sufficient alleviation measures are adopted and the potential beneficiaries are consulted in project planning and implementation.

2.1. Religion

The Constitution stipulates that the religions and followers are in Article 43 (Amendment) Lao citizens have the freedom to believe or disbelieve in religion which is not against the law.¹⁰ Furthermore the Prime Ministerial Decree Signed on August 16, 2016 in order to Administration and Protection of Religious Activities in Lao PDR. Religious activity such as training should promote the unity of all ethnic groups, religious and social classes in society to contribute for protection and development of nation (section 3, Article 11)¹¹. As far as religion is concerned, Buddhism was the predominant faith practiced by the population. Two-in-three people (65 percent) was Buddhist, while Christians constituted nearly 2 percent. A large proportion of the population (31 percent) reported themselves as having no religion, including those who actually follow a belief system attuned to animism.¹² Most of the ethnic/indigenous communities currently practice a combination of animism and ancestor worship.

⁹ <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/node/16028> accessed 2/3/2022

¹⁰ Constitution of the Lao PDR (Revised 2015)

¹¹ Decree on Administration and Protection of Religious Activities in Lao PDR, No.315/gov, August 16, 2016.

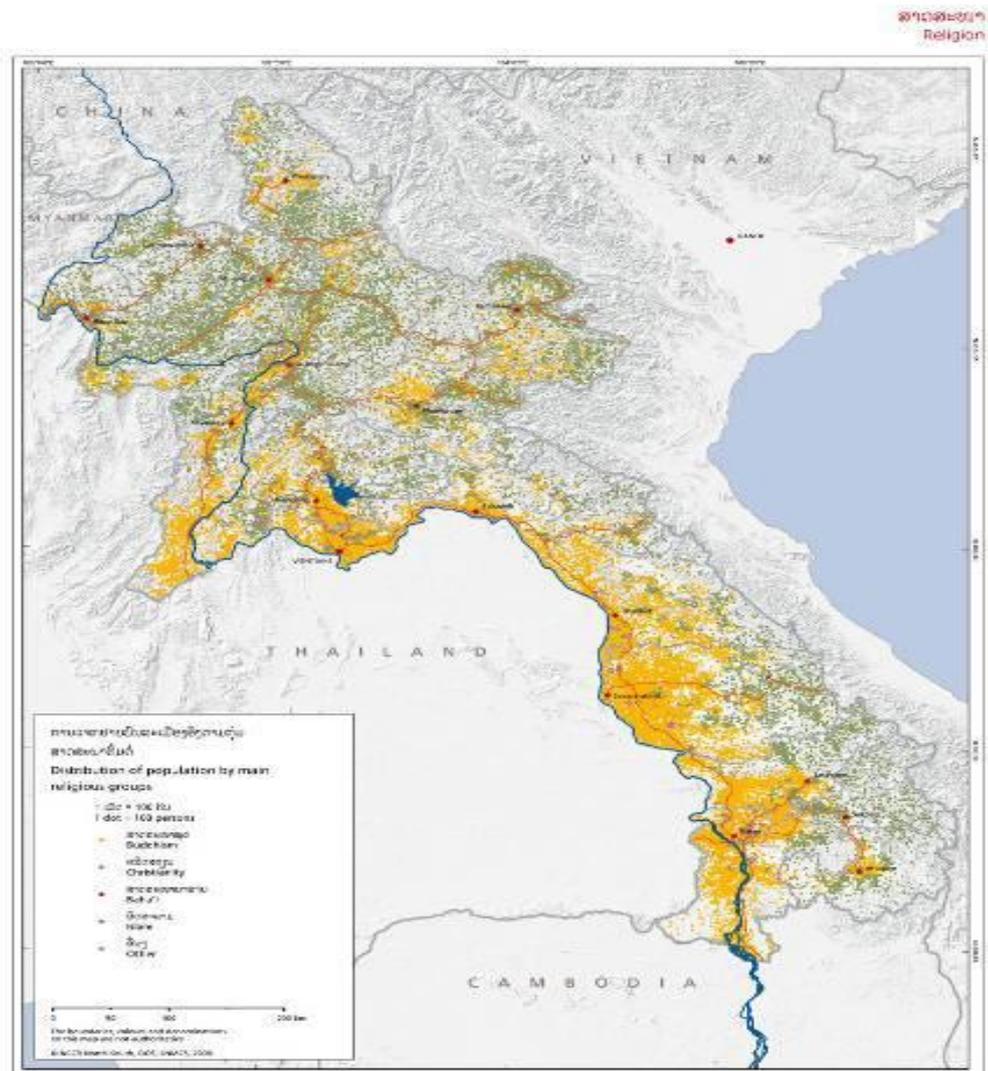
¹² Lao Statistics Bureau. 2016. "Results of Population and Housing Census 2015." P. 36.

Table 5: Population by Religion

	Population	% to total Population
Total	6,492,228	100.0
Buddhist	4,201,993	64.7
Christian	112,230	1.7
No religion	2,040,365	31.4
Others/not stated	137,640	2.1

Source: Results of Population and Housing Census 2015. P37.

Figure 4: Religion



Source: <http://www.laoatlas.net/Welcome.html>

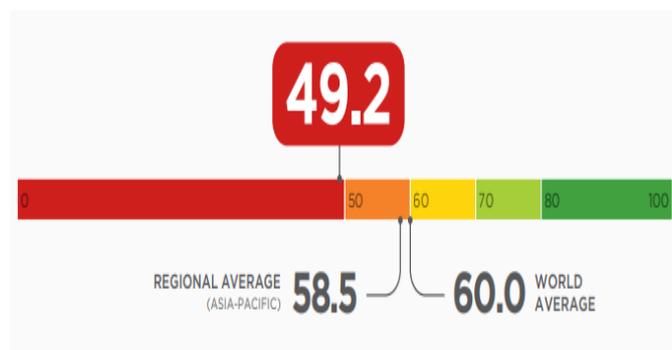
3. Economic Status and Poverty

The Lao economy is expected to register its slowest growth rate in three decades, with growth estimated to decline dramatically to -0.6 percent in 2020. The agricultural sector and industry overall are estimated to grow moderately but the services sector has been severely affected by the pandemic. Lao PDR has so far suffered less from the disease than many of its regional peers, and the lockdown has been relatively mild. This, in addition to the fact that the economy is less integrated with the rest of the world compared to some of its East Asian peers, means that Lao PDR has experienced a relatively milder slowdown than some of its neighbors.

It is estimated that Lao PDR's GDP growth will decline to -0.6 percent in 2020, as all sectors experience adverse effects of varying intensity. The service sector has been hardest hit, due to lockdown measures and the decline in travel and tourism. Supply chain disruptions have negatively affected industry, especially manufacturing, while the agriculture sector has stayed resilient despite COVID-19 related disruptions and is expected to grow by 2 percent in 2020, up from -0.9 percent in 2019, supported by forestry and wood pulp exports. Service sector output is expected to contract by 4.5 percent in 2020, down from an expansion of 6.7 percent in 2019, as precautionary behavior and travel bans negatively affect tourism-related services and transportation. Cautious spending patterns and weakened supply chains are slowing wholesale and retail growth but the information and communication sector has been less exposed to the direct effects of the pandemic. Industrial production growth is expected to decline to 2.9 percent in 2020, down from 4.7 percent in 2019, following contraction in mining and manufacturing activities.¹³

Laos's economic freedom score is 49.2, making its economy the 151st freest in the 2022 Index. Laos is ranked 33rd among 39 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, and its overall score is below the regional and world averages. The Laotian economy grew slowly over the past five years, with only a modest decline in 2020.

Figure 5: Economic Freedom Score



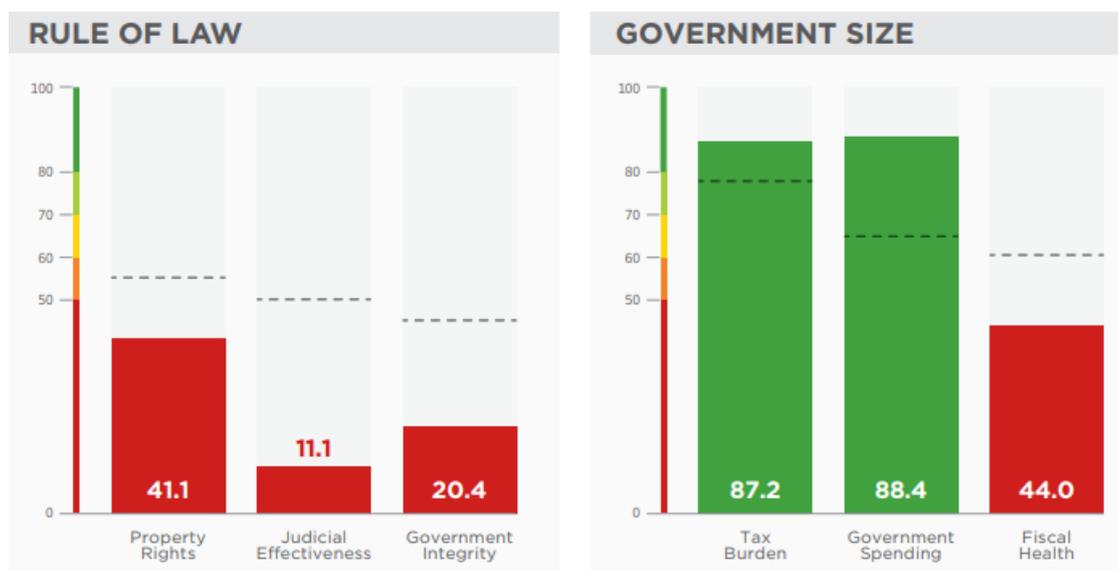
Source: <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/laos>

After an initial uptick, economic freedom has declined in the past half-decade. Driven lower by score decreases in fiscal health and rule of law, Laos has recorded a 4.8-point overall loss of economic freedom since 2017 and has fallen from the "Mostly Unfree" category to the "Repressed" category. An economy relatively unburdened by taxation and government

¹³ Lao PDR Economic Monitor

spending may be a bright spot, but judicial effectiveness and financial freedom in Laos are among the worst in the world.¹⁴

Figure 6: Economic Freedom of Laos



Source: <https://www.heritage.org/index/pdf/2022/countries/2022/IndexofEconomicFreedom-Laos.pdf>

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, has triggered a global crisis of unprecedented scale, and risks undoing decades of progress made by developing countries, including Lao PDR, towards reducing poverty and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) more broadly.

The Government of Lao PDR was swift in enacting a nationwide lockdown early in the outbreak, meaning there have only been 23 recorded cases to date. Therefore, the impact of COVID-19 on Lao PDR has so far been largely socio-economic as domestic and regional supply chains collapsed, along with economies and with them household incomes and consumer demand. With a total population of 7.1 million², almost half a million people are estimated to have lost their jobs, and roughly 383,000 people are expected to fall back into poverty, further exacerbating pre-existing inequalities. Food security, already an issue, is becoming critical, with people in the northern provinces already lacking rice seven months ahead of the new harvest. 1.7 million children have had their education disrupted, which could lead to substantial learning losses in a country already facing a learning crisis. In short, COVID-19 puts at risk Lao PDR's hard-won development gains of the last decade and hinders its progress towards the SDGs and its ambitions for middle income status. In overcoming these challenges, it will be critical to ensure that no one is left behind, and that priority is placed in reaching those furthest behind first in our recovery efforts to avoid disproportionate humanitarian consequences and intensifying inequalities.

¹⁴ Index of economic freedom, <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/laos>, 2022

Figure7: Regulatory Efficiency and Open Markets



Source: https://www.heritage.org/index/pdf/2022/countries/2022_IndexofEconomicFreedom-Laos.pdf

This UN Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP) has been prepared by the United Nations Country Team in Lao PDR using its extensive experience of diverse development challenges globally and of the country context, as well as its strong partnership with government, development partners, civil society, and the private sector. It is built around four streams of work – based on the global UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 constituting which are considered to constituting an essential package of support offered by the UN Development System (UNDS) in Lao PDR over the next 18 months to contribute to Lao PDR’s recovery effort and to protect the needs and rights of people living under the duress of the pandemic, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable people and groups, who are at risk of being left behind.¹⁵

Laos is among the least developed and poorest countries in Asia, but significant economic growth in the past decade has benefited the country. Challenges remain, however, and the Lao economy remains dependent on external demand for its natural resources, particularly mining, hydropower and forestry.

Integration within the global economy will help generate sustainable trade and investment and create the conditions for improved access to economic opportunities and higher incomes for men and women from all areas of Lao society. Higher incomes are an essential piece of Laos' ultimate goal of achieving middle-income country status by 2020.¹⁶

Lao PDR is the upgraded from the lower in incomes to medium incomes country in the early of 2020 and has its plan to release from the LDC in the near future. Late of 2020, economic growth is impressed and recorded in the Laos history which is the first-time having railway linking to economic center of Vientiane capital and others districts in northern Laos and China. However, Laos also faces environment challenges which is being the obstacles on

¹⁵ UN Lao PDR Social-Economic Respond Plan to Covid-19

¹⁶ <https://www.usaid.gov/laos/economic-growth-and-trade>

business operation. Previously, economic growth is based on the national environment exploration which was not increased any job hiring and making incomes for young generations, economic status was not various, modern, and sustainable. To release from the list of LDC, negative effects will probably happen due to the cancellation of trade privileges, increase economic dependence with China and others neighboring countries. The study of WB indicated that national debt covers 65-68 percent of GDP and the budget deficit covers 8,8 percent of GDP.

Economic growth rate per person (GPD) of Lao PDR grew 7,2 percent per year during 2010-2019, and decreased from 8,5 percent in 2010 to 5 percent in 2019. The causes of economic growth decrease in 2019 was the agricultural sectors issues include pest, animal plague, natural deserter as well as COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.¹⁷

To accomplish the Business strategy of development in Laos between 2021-2025, there are six pillars as follow:

- Pillar 1. Contacting public sector-business to make the better business environment by emphasis on supporting and improving business environment.
- Pillar 2: Encouraging SME and SME service center
- Pillar 3: Promoting Lao products and marketing.
- Pillar 4: Connecting the regional economic and sustainable investment.
- Pillar 5: Development the business operation and employer activities.
- Pillar 6: Development the information, publicize and members.

After GDP growth faced some obstacles in the first half of last year, the economy seemingly remained downbeat in H2: High Covid-19 cases in early July forced authorities to extend social-distancing measures nationwide and tighten them in the capital, Vientiane. However, restrictions seemed to ease slightly towards the end of the year, with the lockdown in LuangPrabang city lifted on 1 November. Meanwhile, the China-Laos railway was opened in early December, promising deeper access to the Asian giant's economy. Moving on to this year, Covid-19 infection rates are on the rise with daily case numbers reaching four digits, boding ill for activity ahead. In other news, the IMF concluded its Article IV consultation on 22 December. It highlighted the impact of the health crisis on economic momentum, and pointed out emerging risks stemming from inflation and currency depreciation.

The economy should gain steam in 2022, with the China-Laos railway promising tourism from abroad and boding well for goods exports. Meanwhile, recovering global demand should further propel activity. However, a possible deterioration of the health crisis, rising inflation and currency depreciation pose key downside risks. Focus Economics Consensus Forecast panelists project GDP to expand 5.4% in 2022, which is unchanged from last month's forecast, and 5.4% in 2023.¹⁸

¹⁷ Business sector development strategy plan in Lao PDR 2021-2025, Lao National Chamber of commerce and industry.

¹⁸ Focus economics, economics forecast from the world's leading economists, <https://www.focus-economics.com/country-indicator/laos/gdp-per-capita-USD>

According to the report of PAXAXON newspaper on the amount of import-export of Laos in January 2022 has achieved of USD 1.156 million of which USD 598 million exported and USD 557 million imported with USD 41 million trade surplus (electricity exportation not included), the main exported products consist of mixed gold, gold bar, paper-paper productivities, copper, wood pulp, wasted paper, rubber, cassava-tapioca flour, banana, glass-glassware and others. And main imported products are land vehicles, petroleum, machine equipment and vehicle equipment (vehicle types, mirrors and chains are included), electric wires, cables, plastic productivities, gasoline, diesel, residues-waste of food industries products manufactured, chemical products and pharmaceutical products. Most of which Laos has exported are included of China with the total value of USD 217 million, Thailand USD 141 million, Vietnam USD 110 million, Australia UDS 42 million and Japan USD 12 million. Meanwhile, Laos has imported from Thailand with total value of USD 254 million, China USD 108 million, Switzerland USD 59 million, The United State of America UDS 41 million and Vietnam USD 27 million.¹⁹

The government expects to earn 2,000 billion kip in revenue from bitcoin mining - the first time such revenue would be earned from the mining and trade of the digital currency.

This new revenue source would contribute to the 28,963 billion kip in total domestic revenue projected for 2022, Minister of Finance Bounchom Ubongpaseuth told the second ordinary session of the National Assembly (NA)'s 9th legislature.

Presenting the 2022 draft budget plan to the session, the minister said the new source of revenue would increase the projected revenue for 2022 by 20 percent compared to the target for 2021.

The expected revenue from the digital currency comes after the government recently gave the green light to six companies to trial a program to mine and trade crypto currency in Laos, including Bitcoin. The six companies are Wap Data Technology Laos, Phongsubthavy Road & Bridge Construction Co., Ltd., Sisaket Construction Company Limited, Boupaha Road-Bridge Design Survey Co., Ltd., the Joint Development Bank, and the Phousy Group.

The Ministry of Technology and Telecommunications has been entrusted to work with the Ministry of Finance, Bank of the Lao PDR, Ministry of Planning and Investment, Ministry of Energy and Mines, Ministry of Public Security, and Electricity du Laos to draft legislation relating to the mining and trading of the crypto currency.

The projected increase in revenue of 3,754 billion kip (compared to 2021), including 2,000 billion kip earned from the mining of Bitcoin, would enable the government to spend more on priority programs. These include increasing supporting allowances to cover the living expenses of officials and security force personnel, expenditure on efforts to respond to the Covid-19 outbreak, and the payment of debts.

¹⁹ Paxaon newspaper online dated 16 Feb 2022

The minister told NA members that domestic revenue accounts for 15 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). In addition, the government expects to receive 2,460 billion kip in foreign grants, accounting for one percent of GDP. The government is projected to spend 34,595 billion kip in total over 2022, including 6,750 billion kip on projects financed by loans and grants. Total spending is forecast to increase by 3,011 billion kip compared to 2021 and account for 18.14 percent of GDP.²⁰

But before the mentioned above take place, the Bank of Laos (BOL) has issued a notice warning the public about the usage of unregulated crypto currencies, including Bitcoin, Ethereum, and Litecoin, which are not connected to actual currency reserves.

According to the notice, citizens of Laos are prohibited by law from purchasing or selling crypto currencies, and people must consider the risks associated with them before making any investment or purchasing such products. It states that crypto currencies are not real currency, and should not be used to pay off debts. This is due to the fact that crypto currencies do not satisfy the requirement for usage as money and are currently unregulated in Laos, according to the notice.

Despite the previous notice, some Lao businesses continue to accept crypto currencies as payment for products and services, as well as advertise investment or trading in digital currencies.

Authorities have warned Lao nationals against engaging in or trading in crypto currencies, citing the significant risks connected with them, such as their potential use in money laundering or the funding of terrorism.

According to the Lao PDR Expenditure and Consumption Survey (LECS) of 2012/13, the national poverty headcount rate has declined by about 50% since 1992/31 - 23.2% (from 33.5% in 1992/93) of the population still living under the federal poverty line, and as many as about 80 percent of the population still lives dangerously close to the poverty line (under USD 2.50 per day) with a 10% likelihood of falling back into poverty without a shock of the COVID-19 pandemic's magnitude.² Akin to trends elsewhere, poverty tends to be concentrated in rural areas, with specific ethnic dimensions. The poverty rate is the highest among the Mon-Khmer (42.3 percent) and Hmong-lu Mien (39.8 percent) ethnic groups.

In households where livelihoods are severely affected, the COVID-19 shock could enhance the intergenerational transmission of poverty in two ways. First, as a coping strategy, caregivers could be forced to reduce spending on children's education and health. Given the centrality of education for labor productivity and finding employment in the formal economy, these shocks could increase the number of children experiencing multidimensional poverty and reinforce poverty traps. Children who are born into poverty often face layers of suffering such as malnutrition, illness, and limited social capital. This makes upward social mobility extremely difficult, and in the absence of adequate social welfare nets, poverty tends to reproduce itself.

²⁰ <https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContent>

The World Bank estimates that as many as 88 percent of children in Lao PDR experience some form of deprivation and over 16.5 percent are undernourished. Poverty trends have been exacerbated due to a cycle of floods and droughts in 2018 and 2019 which adversely affected either people directly (e.g., farming communities losing fallow land and agriculture infrastructure) or indirectly (e.g., non-farm communities seeing higher food prices).

Lao PDR, loss of remittances alone is estimated to affect around 9 percent of households who receive remittances from abroad for whom remittances constitute 60 percent of their household income. Poverty is estimated to increase by 1.4 to 3.1 percentage points in 2020 and is expected to persist in the medium term, per World Bank estimates.

4. Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)

Unexploded ordnance, or UXO, are explosive weapons that failed to detonate when they were fired, dropped, launched or projected, and still pose the risk of exploding. UXO contamination in the Lao PDR consists of large bombs, rockets, grenades, artillery munitions, mortars, landmines, cluster munitions and sub-munitions. A cluster munition is a conventional weapon that consists of an outer canister that is designed to disperse or release smaller bombs (sub-munitions or bomblets) that weigh less than 20 kilograms each. These sub-munitions are known throughout the Lao PDR as 'bombies'. The cluster munition is dropped from a plane or launched from the ground into the air, where it ejects the bombies over a wide area. Bombies that were dropped on the Lao PDR had a high failure rate, leaving an estimated 30 percent unexploded and scattered across vast areas of land. When disturbed, even decades later, bombies and other UXO can explode, injuring and killing civilians as they carry out their daily activities. The Lao PDR today is one of the most heavily UXO and cluster munitions affected countries in the world, with up to 25 percent of the country's villages contaminated by the presence of these remnants of war. More than 270 million bombies were dropped over the Lao PDR during the nine years of conflict (1964- 1973) and an estimated 80 million failed to detonate, remaining live and scattered throughout the country. In addition, over four million large bombs were dropped and extensive ground battles in predominantly the Northern provinces left behind substantial amounts of other unexploded ordnances.²¹

Lao PDR is the most heavily bombed country per capita in history, 25% of the poor villages in Laos are contaminated with UXO, 17 provinces and 1 capital city suffer UXO contamination, more than 2 million tons of ordnance were dropped on Laos between 1964 and 1973, 580,000 bombing missions were flown over Laos, cluster sub-munitions or 'bombies' are the most common form of UXO found in the country, more than 270 million bombies were dropped on Laos, up to 30% failed to detonate, approximately 80 million unexploded bombies remained in Laos after the war, over 50,000 people have been killed or injured since 1964, during the 10-year period, a total of 359 injuries have been reported (77

²¹ Cluster munitions monitor 2021

percent) and 106 deaths (23 percent), in the last decade (2011-2020), 54 percent of all casualties were children (under 18) and accidents caused by bombs increased to 30 percent of all Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) casualties in the last decade.²²

As we already know, Lao PDR is one of the countries that has been affected by COVID-19, which has a direct impact on socio-economic development, people's livelihoods and other activities. In addition, it has had a direct impact on the UXO works in Lao PDR, especially the operations in the field have been temporarily suspended. Although COVID-19 has affected all operations this year, the sector has responded well and has still made good progress. COVID messages have been integrated into UXO/Mine Risk Education (MRE) activities, UXO radio programs and UXO village volunteers. The mandate of the NRA at both central and local level has also been improved, the 10-years UXO National Strategic Plan "Safe Path Forward II" was evaluated, draft legislation to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) in Lao PDR has been developed successfully, and a draft UXO/Mine Victim Assistance Framework 2021-2025 was also created. At the same time, the NRA created UXO provincial committees to understand and incorporate UXO-certified areas into each province's socio-economic development plan and ensured that memorandums of cooperation with UXO operators for UXO clearance are in accordance with actual local requirements. Capacity strengthening support has also been given to government agencies on addressing UXO issues, particularly on MRE, clearance, as well as pilot projects improving the lives of UXO victims and their families. In the area of victim assistance, we continued to provide physical and psychological rehabilitation to UXO survivors, and vocational training to help them develop their livelihoods and support their families with income. We are also aware that UXO/Mine Risk Education is a key tool for highlighting the dangers of UXO and for informing Lao ethnic groups of the actions that they should take to avoid UXO.

To this end, we have integrated UXO awareness into primary school curricula and raised awareness through UXO radio programs and UXO village volunteers, and developed MRE materials such as posters and UXO writing books. In parallel, UXO operators have also conducted these activities, which has resulted in the number of reported casualties being reduced to 33 people this year.

Despite this, there is a continued need to support and expand UXO/Mine Risk Education activities. In the area of UXO survey and clearance, we continued to undertake the new evidence-based clearance methodology and encouraged UXO operators to implement this new approach. Since the adoption of this approach, operations have been conducted more efficiently and more UXOs have been destroyed. As a result, there are 18,068 hectares (ha) of Confirmed Hazardous Areas identified for 2020 and registered in the Information Management System for Mine Action database. At the same time, we have cleared 5,392 ha of land based on our current capacities, even though the demand for clearance is 10,000 ha per year.

²² Cluster munitions monitor 2021

The number of UXO casualties increased to 33 persons in 2020, compared to 24 casualties in 2018 and 25 casualties in 2019. Of the 23 UXO accidents in 2020, there were seven deaths, including two children, and 26 injuries, 12 of which were children. While the number of UXO casualties has decreased over recent years, this sector still requires strong support to ensure no further harm or deaths are caused by UXO. The inclusion of UXO as an independent output (Output 6 under Outcome 3) in the new 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) for 2021-2025 demonstrates the Lao PDR's commitment to removing UXO as a barrier to development. The new NSEDP aims to clear an average of 10,000 hectares of land per year for socio-economic development purposes. This ambitious goal doubles the achievements of 2020 when implementers cleared 5,392 hectares of land.

The UXO survey which began in 2015, this year they have strengthened the clearance capacity of humanitarian operators and are beginning to see a dramatic impact on the scope and efficiency of UXO removal. The Government of Lao PDR emphasized the importance of clearing high priority hazardous areas throughout the country to implement the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, the magnitude of the problem outstrips available resources and current capacities. Accelerating the Lao PDR's socio-economic development requires strong support and continuous cooperation. For this reason, the new UXO Sector National Strategic Plan (Safe Path Forward III) should include a prioritization plan involving both commercial and humanitarian operators. In accordance with Article 9 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) requiring all State Parties to take all "appropriate legal, administrative and other measures" to implement the convention, the Lao PDR took positive steps in initiating the legislation-drafting process in 2019 and continued its efforts in 2020. They fully support this work, and they are looking forward to completion of the draft legislation in 2021. In 2021, the government of Lao PDR will finalize its new 10-year sector strategy and review the implementation of national SDGs through the Voluntary National Review process. This is an opportunity for all of us to reflect and discuss how they can all work together to move further into a decade of action, to maximize available resources, and to achieve the SDGs, particularly SDG 18: "Lives safe from UXO."

Coordination with UNDP to draft the new UXO National Strategic Plan, "Safe Path Forward III" (2021-2030) has taken place since 2020. The strategy will form the basis on which the 5-Year UXO Sector Action Plan is developed and we must ensure that UXO is mainstreamed across all sectors through the nationally endorsed SDG-18, 'Lives Safe from UXO'. The UXO contamination in Lao PDR is a cross-cutting issue that can delay the achievement of multiple SDGs, impact the poorest communities and hinder development initiatives.

In 2021, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sports, we have reached an important milestone with the completion of the primary school component, the fact that UXO Risk Education curriculum has been integrated into the Science and Environment textbooks for Grades 1 to 5. It enables the sustainability of these risk education activities but it also allows to reach more girls and boys in the Lao PDR.

The UXO Sector will continue the good work with secondary schools, and also trying to reach more young people through non-formal education centers, Village Education Development Committees (VEDCs) and youth volunteers.

820 hats were produced and distributed to 5 provincial radio stations (Vientiane Capital, Khammouane, Sekong, Salavan and Champasack) to be distributed during the Q&A games of the UXO radio broadcast.

500 sets of 6 different UXO/EORE posters were printed and distributed to NRA provincial offices and village volunteers in Borlikhamxay and Salavan provinces for their MRE activities.

In addition, 1,193 MRE visits were carried out in 435 villages, benefitting 123,993 people, of which 61,754 were women.

There is a focus on survey for the period of this extension (2020-2025), with the survey in six first provinces to be completed to the greatest extent possible and other provinces will also have to be surveyed to get a National Cluster Munitions Survey to quantify the actual extent of the remaining Cluster Munitions contamination. In parallel, area clearance should take place hand in hand with the survey activity to ensure safety of the Lao people. At current level of 24 clearance capacity, the country will not be able to clear the identified Confirmed Hazardous Areas in the next five years period (2020-2025). To deal with the UXO/Cluster Munitions issue in a reasonable timeframe, we will have to scale-up the clearance capacity in the coming years. To do so we need more international support to the UXO Sector, including to the national operators.

As in previous years, Lao PDR cleared the most land 54.32 km² in 2020 representing 86 percent of the overall total. This included 42.04 km² of agricultural land and 12.28 km² of land intended to be used for development.¹⁴¹ In total, 71, cluster munitions remnants were destroyed.¹⁴² More than four-fifths (85 percent, 46.01km²) of clearance in Lao PDR in 2020 was undertaken in the nine most heavily contaminated provinces.¹⁴³ However, 18 percent of the total cleared amounting to 9.61km² of land cleared by commercial operators for development purposes did not contain any cluster munitions remnants. Some of these areas contained other types of ERW.²³

Table 6: Estimated cluster munition remnants contamination in states and other areas

<i>More than 1,000km²</i>	<i>100-1,000 km²</i>	<i>10-99 km²</i>	<i>Last than 10 km²</i>	<i>Residual contamination/Unknown</i>
Lao PDR	Cambodia	Afghanistan	Bosnia and	Angola
<i>Viet Nam</i>	Iraq	Azerbaijan	Herzegovina	Armenia
		Chile	Chad	Dem. Rep. Congo
		<i>Kosovo</i>	Georgia	
		<i>Libya</i>	Germany	
		Mauritania	Iran	

²³ Cluster munitions monitor 2021

<i>Nagorno-Karabakh</i>	Lebanon
<i>Syria</i>	Serbia
Ukraine	Somalia
Yemen	South Sudan
	Sudan
	Tajikistan
	<i>Western Sahara</i>

Source: Cluster Munition Monitor 2021

Table 7: Cluster munition remnants clearance in 2019–2020

State Party	2019		2020	
	Clearance (km ²)	CMR destroyed	Clearance (km ²)	CMR destroyed
Afghanistan	2.72	86	0	276
BiH	0.72	85	0.34	162
Chad	4.33	18	0.41	9
Chile	0	0	0	0
Croatia	0.04	186	0.03	11
Germany	1.21	1,814	1.08	971
Iraq	6.29	9,996	5.67	6,146
Lao PDR	64.95	80,247	54.32	71,235
Lebanon	1.26	4,037	1.28	2,098
Mauritania	0	0	0	0
Montenegro	0.78	64	0.25	15
Somalia	0	0	0	2
Total	82.3	96,533	63.38	80,925

Source: Cluster Munition Monitor 2021

Table 8: 2020 Achievements: The Numbers

UXO Accidents and Casualties in Lao PDR by Provinces										
Province	Accident	Injured				Death				Total Victim
		Boy	Girl	Men	Women	Boy	Girl	Men	Women	
Champassak	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Huaphan	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Khammouane	4	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	5
Phongsaly	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
Salavan	3	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3
Savannaketh	7	4	2	2	0	1	0	3	0	12
Xaisomboun	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Xiengkhouang	5	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	6
Total	23	10	2	2	2	2	0	5	0	33

Source: Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) Sector Annual Report 2020

Table 9: 2020 Clearance Operators

Non-Technical Survey

Organization	No. Village	No. Task	Evident Point	Cluster Munitions	Beneficiary
Unit 58	45	47	111	349	7,391
HALO	123	123	44	243	9,374
HI	10	10	3	22	2,952
MAG	55	55	283	1,084	2,000
NPA	322	322	454	924	21,327
UXO Lao	103	104	2,622	1,694	65,281
Total					

Technical Survey (TS) to establish the Confirmed Hazardous Areas (CHAs)

Organi- zation	No. village	No. Task		Area by square meter		Unexploded ordnance (UXO)				
		TS	CHA	TS	CHA	B o m b	Cluster Munitio ns	mine	Other UXO	Total
Unit 58	8	16	8	1,492,200	312,742	-	47	-	5	52
HALO	178	930	405	47,492,500	10,477,157	3	3,158	-	896	4,057
HI	9	18	16	1,252,500	603,164	-	215	1	5	221
MAG	39	144	144	108,954,622	104,910,952		8,305	-	39	8,344
NPA	173	504	361	51,549,500	20,339,085	2	2,204	-	104	2,310
UXO Lao	162	370	331	67,909,500	44,037,691	-	5,89	-	1,126	6,315
Total	569	1,982	1,265	278,650,822	180,680,791	5	19,118	1	2,175	21,299

Source: Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) Sector Annual Report 2020

Table 10: Roving Task

Organi- zation	No. village	No. Task	Beneficiary	Unexploded ordnance (UXO)				
				Bomb	Cluster Munitions	mine	Other UXO	Total
Unit 58	29	37	51,268	7	180	-	106	293
HALO	270	1,346	9,661	33	5,758	-	1,815	7,606
HI	33	122	54,288	-	225	10	707	942
MAG	158	2,327	19,591	4	11,687	1	2,149	13,841
Milsearch	2	2	-	-	-	-	3	3
NPA	371	606	84	35	4,896	12	2,416	7,359
UXO Lao	495	1,076	123,000	42	8,435	5	3,113	11,595
Total	1,358	5,516	257,892	121	31,181	28	10,309	41,639

Source: Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) sector Annual Report 2020

Table 11: Area Clearance (AC) (square meter)

Organi- zation	No. Task	Area by square meter			Unexploded ordnance (UXO)				
		Agriculture	Development	Total	Bomb	Cluster Munitions	mine	Other UXO	Total
Unit 58	22	212,265	187,596	399,861	1	438	1	893	1,333
HALO	93	2,852,170	43,721	2,895,891	1	2,592	-	1,154	3,747
HI	31	489,109	57,261	546,370	-	835	1	447	1,283
L&B	36	-	9,205,503	9,205,503	-	-	-	-	-
MAG	153	8,575,905	497,240	9,073,154	12	6,195	-	548	6,755
MMG	9	-	458,851	458,851	-	41	-	40	81
Milearch	41	-	296,940	296,940	-	8	-	83	91
NPA	72	4,021,540	198,729	4,200,269	4	4,132	-	313	4,449
OUMMA	1	-	939,482	939,482	-	19	-	3	22

UXO Lao	812	25,598,821	287,978	25,886,799	5	24,670	2	7000	31,677
Total	1,270	41,749,810	12,173,302	53923,111	23	38,930	4	10,481	49,438

Source: Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) Sector Annual Report 2020

Table 12: Grand Total (AC And RT)

Orignization	Area by square meter			Unexploded ordnance (UXO)				
	Agriculture	Development	Total	Bomb	Cluster Munitions	mine	Other UXO	Total
Unit 58	212,265	187,596	399,861	8	618	1	999	1,626
HALO	2,852,170	43,721	2,895,891	34	8,350	-	2,969	11,353
HI	489,109	57,261	546,370	-	1,060	11	1,154	2,225
L&B		9,205,503	9,205,503	-	-	-	-	-
MAG	8,575,905	497,240	9,073,154	16	17,882	1	2,697	20,596
MMG	-	458,851	458,851	-	41	-	40	81
Milearch	-	387,710	387,710	-	8	-	184	192
NPA	4,270,055	198,729	4,468,784	39	10,152	12	2,729	12,932
OUMMA	-	939,482	939,482	-	19	-	3	22
UXO Lao	25,598,821	287,978	25,886,799	47	33,105	7	10,113	43,272
Total	41,998,325	12,264,071	54,263,396	144	71,235	32	20,888	92,299

Source: Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) Sector Annual Report 2020

Table 13: Unexploded Ordnance Risk Education/Community Awareness Operations

Orignization	No. village	No. Task	Audience		
			Male	Female	Total
Unit 58	4	7	619	726	1,345
HALO	186	592	14,225	13,671	27,896
HI	25	48	5,957	5,927	11,884
MAG	38	164	2,108	2,300	4,408
UXO Lao	323	1,109	85,503	84,809	170,312
WE	179	211	19,496	21,734	41,230
Total	755	2,131	127,908	129,167	257,075

Source: Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) Sector Annual Report 2020

Table 14: UXO Operators' Personnel in UXO Sector in Lao PDR 2020

Orignization	Office Support				Operations				Total
	National		international		National		international		
	Men	Women	Man	Woman	Men	Women	Man	Woman	
NRA	27	9	1	2	7	3	0	0	49
UXO Lao	119	71	7	1	1,003	274	2	0	1,477
NPA	32	10	2	2	217	79	4	0	346
MAG	73	55	1	2	506	280	5	0	922
HALO	37	30	0	1	334	343	5	0	750
HI	6	2			44	22	3	0	77
Unit 58	0	0	0	0	86	10	0	0	96
WE	2	4			11	8	1	3	29
COPE	2	3	0	0	0	2	2	0	9
Lao BSL	3	3	0	0	110	4	0	0	120

Silavan	2	0	0	0	8	3	0	0	13
OUMMA	4	0	0	0	24	0	0	2	30
Phanvila	30	3	0	0	30	3	0	0	66
Auslao	2	3	1	0	25	0	0	0	31
Total	339	193	12	8	2,405	1,031	22	5	4,015

Source: Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) Sector Annual Report, 2020

Table 15: Humanitarian clearance operators - UXO Found and Destroyed through Area Clearance, 2011-2020

Year	Area Cleared (Ha)	bomb	CM Bomblets	Landmines	Other UXO	Total UXO	CM per Hectare
2011	3,692	22	19,088	96	19,683	38,889	5.2
2012	3,823	60	26,011	18	17,318	43,407	6.8
2013	3,288	28	22,847	48	20,626	43,549	6.9
2014	3,662	36	26,566	78	17,697	44,377	7.3
2015	2,961	55	49,497	108	13,162	62,822	16.7
2016	3,315	43	61,144	1	15,503	76,691	18.4
2017	3,852	20	64,241	16	16,462	80,739	16.7
2018	3,670	35	45,441	5	11,740	57,221	12.4
2019	4,577	30	42,085	4	11,081	53,200	9.2
2020	4,302	23	38,862	4	10,355	49,244	9.03

Source: Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) Sector Annual Report, 2020

Table 16: UXO Accidents and Casualties in Lao PDR by year, 2011-2020

Year	accidents	injuries				Deaths				Total casualties
		Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	
2011	64	32	9	34	4	6	0	14	0	99
2012	36	17	11	11	2	6	1	6	2	56
2013	18	9	2	12	5	5	0	7	1	41
2014	22	8	5	9	7	4	0	12	0	45
2015	27	15	1	16	1	6	1	2	0	59
2016	35	17	3	24	5	2	0	8	0	59
2017	19	12	8	11	6	3	0	0	1	41
2018	17	4	8	4	5	2	1	0	0	24
2019	20	5	2	4	5	8	0	1	0	25
2020	23	12	2	10	2	5	0	2	0	33

Source: Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) Sector Annual Report, 2020

Table 17: Causes of Accidents by year, 2015-2020

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Agriculture excavation	4	6	2	2	3	2
Lighting a fire (for cooking and slash-and-burn agriculture)	16	11	10	3	8	10

Attempting to destroy or dismantle UXO items	5	3	1	2	7	1
Playing with UXO items	2	12	3	5	1	3
Cutting grass and wood	0	1	1	1	1	5
Unintentional disturbance of UXOs	0	2	2	4	0	2
Total Accidents	27	35	19	17	20	23

Source: Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) Sector Annual Report, 2020

Table 18: Area Clearance Activities by Province, 1997-2020

Province	Total Area Cleared (m2)	Agriculture	%	Development	%	Total Beneficiaries
Attapeu	62,174,420	42,693,532	69%	19,480,888	31%	737,047
Bokeo	800,0600	0	0%	800,000	100%	584
Borlikhamxay	30,577,965	6,592,760	22%	23,985,205	78%	135,837
Champasak	57,009,955	39,988,366	70%	17,011,589	30%	613,780
Huaphanh	38,424,689	33,762,243	88%	4,662,446	12%	810,527
Khammouane	85,415,622	70,115,921	82%	15,299,701	18%	528,107
Luangnamtha	554,662	0	0%	554,662	100%	0
Luangprabang	40,601,491	30,041,740	74%	10,559,750	26%	388,609
Oudomxay	8,660,108	720,964	8%	7,939,144	92%	4,963
Phongsaly	0	0	0%	0	0%	2,117
Salavan	64,982,449	54,741,527	84%	10,240,922	16%	736,108
Savannakhet	111,856,612	92,677,055	83%	19,179,557	17%	1,462,371
Vientiane	2,623,165	0	0%	2,623,165	100%	8,669
Vientiane Capital	1,383,931	0	0%	1,383,931	100%	4,144
Xaisomboun	18,001,674	5,709,929	32%	12,291,745	68%	51,189
Xekong	44,670,553	32,003,673	72%	12,66,880	28%	176,207
Xiengkhouang	141,486,721	123,153,093	87%	18,333,627	13%	2,108,078
Grand Total	709,224,016	532,210,606	75%	177,013,210	21%	7,768,337

Source: Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) Sector Annual Report, 2020

5. Involuntary repatriation of Hmong refugees

The Hmong are the third largest ethnic minority in Laos; today, the estimated 450,000 Hmong in Laos constitute about eight percent of its population.

Centuries ago, Hmong migrated from China to various countries in Southeast Asia, including Laos.¹³ Lao-Hmong, those Hmong whose ancestors settled in Laos, are represented in all levels of the Lao administration, though in very limited numbers. Thus, not all Hmong are being persecuted, for many supported the Communist forces during the Laotian Civil War and continue to support the government today. The Hmong referred to throughout this comment are individuals who were associated with the Secret Army and their relatives, and are concentrated mostly in Lao jungles and makeshift refugee camps in Thailand.²⁴

²⁴ L. Catherine Currie, North Carolina Journal of International Law, The Vanishing Hmong: Forced Repatriation to an Uncertain Future, <https://scholarship.law.unc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1866&context=ncilj>

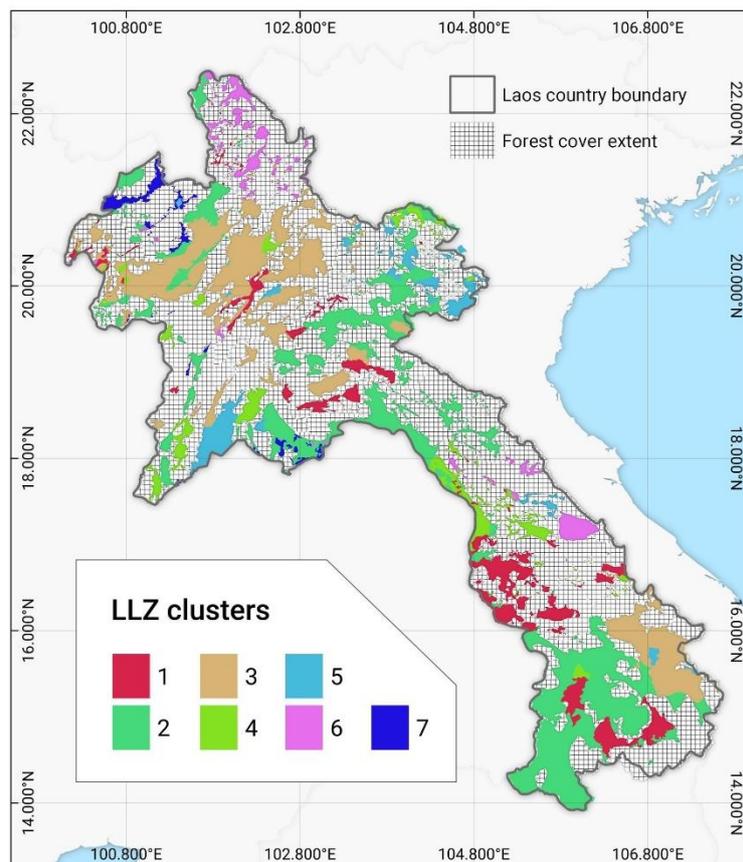
GENEVA, December 29 (UNHCR) - The United Nations refugee agency on Tuesday formally approached the government of Laos seeking access to Lao Hmong deported from Thailand a day earlier. Among those sent back were people recognized by UNHCR as being in need of international protection.

UNHCR also called on the government of Thailand to provide details of assurances provided to it by Laos, under a bilateral agreement between the two governments, concerning the treatment of the returned Hmong.

The refugee agency has asked to be informed of steps taken by Thailand to ensure that commitments made under this framework are effectively honoured.

Thailand has a long history as a country of asylum in the South-east Asian region. However, on Monday it deported some 4,000 Lao Hmong from two camps, one in the northern province of Petchabun and another in Nong Khai, which is located across the Mekong River from Laos in the country's north-east.

UNHCR was given no access to people in the first camp, while those in Nong Khai were all recognized refugees who had been in detention for almost three years. UNHCR has no formal presence in Laos.²⁵



Source: SAMIS/FAO, 2021

²⁵ UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR seeking access to returned Lao Hmong

Figure 8: Each cluster describes a group of landscape unit that shares the same socio-economic and institutional attributes. A subset of information on adaptive capacity can be used to analyze based system using the livelihood zones.

6. Political status and national legislation specific for indigenous peoples

Lao PDR adheres to the principle of multilateral cooperation and expands its cooperation among ethnic group. The main strategy of Lao PDR is to keep its people at the core and ensure that the people of all ethnic groups can exercise their rights under the leadership of the party by following the national law and putting forth socialist ideology such as the country's slogan: "*Lao People's Democratic Republic Peace Independence Democracy Unity Prosperity.*" As we are all aware, the criterion for peaceful coexistence, mutual respect and unity of the land are: equality, unity, justice, and mutual learning, cooperation for mutual benefit and development. It ensures unity and harmony of the people at its core as they prepare to adapt, seize potential opportunities, and increase internal solidarity, and continue to strengthen locality and regional cooperation.

Lao is the republic of people democratic, thus the government sector concentrates on economic development related to the social progress. So that all peoples of different ethnic groups can together develop and earn the benefits of equitable development. Therefore, government sector is ready to improve the development from its current state. This can create more opportunities for jobs and moving from subsistence basis livelihood commercial by improving lives. This can help improve the benefits, equalities, ensure political stability, build a peaceful, orderly, harmonious, democratic, social rights, and civilization. This can outline the trend of development to achieve a balance between economy, society, and environment.

Regarding the Indigenous Peoples, is used in a generic sense to refer to a distinct, vulnerable, social and cultural group possessing the following in varying degrees: (i) self-identification as members of a distinct indigenous cultural group and recognition of this identity by others; (ii) collective attachment to geographically distinct habitats or ancestral territories in the project area and to the natural resources in these habitats and territories; (iii) customary cultural, economic, social, or political institutions that are separate from those of the dominant society and culture; and (iv) a distinct language, often different from the official language of the country or region.

However, until today Laos doesn't have a clear regulatory framework or law regarding Indigenous Peoples. To fill the gap, the Decree on Ethnic Affairs was drafted by the Department of Ethnic Affairs (DoEA) under the Ministry of Home Affairs and is currently being revised by the government. The decree, based on a similar document promulgated by the Committee for Ethnic Minorities Affairs (CEMA) in Vietnam, aims to provide a legal basis to

deal with Indigenous Peoples issues. It prescribes the principles, regulations and measures for management, monitoring and assessment of ethnic affairs in order to support the effective implementation, to make ethnic groups have unity, equality, respect, and help each other; to ensure the participation from all ethnic groups to contribute to the national protection and development, protect their legitimate rights and benefit according to the constitution and laws of Lao PDR.

Unfortunately, some provisions of the decree, if adopted in their current form, may worsen the already difficult economic and social situation of Indigenous communities. For example, Article 10.2 advises to “resettle ethnic groups that live in the hardship and undeveloped areas, risky livelihoods areas, development project-affected areas, and special areas to areas that can be developed and create appropriate permanent jobs and employment”.

This provision not only allows authorities to forcefully evict Indigenous communities from their lands, but also is in direct conflict with Article 40 of the 2015 Constitution which guarantees Lao citizens the freedom of settlement and movement. Article 10.7 of the decree directly condemns shifting cultivators and aims at replacing the “old production process” with a new one, which uses science and technology to increase productivity and moves from subsistence and forest-based livelihoods toward agricultural expansion and market-oriented production. This, in turn, conflicts with Article 39 of the 2015 Constitution according to which “Lao citizens have the right to work and engage in occupations which are not contrary to the laws”.

Law on Resettlement and Vocation

In 2019 the government started working on the implementation of the Law on Resettlement and Vocation promulgated in 2018. The law provides a relatively clear structure and set of steps to be taken in relation to resettlement and vocational training of the resettled population. It aims at providing guidance and consistency around the country and, as the law envisions some form of supervision of the activities, it should increase transparency around the resettlement. The provisions on violations show an improvement over previous laws, with a range of sensible responses to violations listed, such as counseling, fines and civil options, rather than just a statement to the effect that violations will be punished.

The major concern for Indigenous Peoples of Laos is that this law gives a seal of approval to the powers of the government to resettle or expropriate Indigenous Peoples’ land. Moreover, it goes as far as to suggest that the government knows better what people need and gives it authority to move populations to where the government thinks they will have better job prospects or where their labour is required.

Decree 192/PM (November 2005) on compensation and resettlement specified requirements of taking in to account the local culture and practices in project’s planning and operation as well as to mitigate the negative impacts and improve socioeconomic conditions of ethnic communities. Article 11 of the Decree stipulates that during planning, construction

and operation periods, project owners shall consider local cultural and religious properties, practices and beliefs.

In Lao PDR, the all issues that related to ethnic groups governed by four key legislative bases, including (i) the Constitution (1991, amended 2003); (ii) the 1992 Resolution on " Ethnic Affairs in the New Era"; (iii) Decree 192/PM on Compensation and Resettlement of Development Projects - together with its Regulation on Implementation (November 2005) and Technical Guidelines (as updated in March 2010) on resettlement planning, containing some provisions for ethnic groups related issues; and (iv) the Decree 112/PM on Environmental Assessment, 2010. 20. The Constitution highlights the cultural rights of different ethnic groups, and the right of ethnic groups to protect, preserve and promote their customs and heritage. The Constitution also prohibits acts of division and discrimination between ethnic groups.

Table 18: Articles in the Constitution where ethnic groups are specifically mentioned are as follows:

Article 1	Laos is a nation unified and indivisible of all ethnic groups;
Article 2:	all power is of people, by people, and for the use of the multi-ethnic people;
Article 3:	the right of a multi-ethnic people to be owners of the nation is exercised and guaranteed by the political system;
Article 7:	mass organizations are the focal point for the solidarity and mobilization for citizens of all backgrounds and ethnicity as participating members in the safeguarding and edification of their rights and interests;
Article 8:	the State will carry out a policy of unity and equality among the various ethnic groups. All ethnic groups have the right to preserve and improve their own traditions and culture and those of the nation. Discrimination between ethnic groups is forbidden. The state will carry out every means in order to continue to improve and raise the economic and social level of all ethnic groups;
Article 13:	the economic system is for the purpose of improving the standard of living, materially and spiritually, of a multi-ethnic people;
Article 19:	the State and the people will collaborate to build schools of all levels in order that a complete education system will be available to all, especially areas inhabited by ethnic groups; and
Article 22:	all Lao citizens, regardless of their sex, social position, education, beliefs or ethnicity, are equal in the law.

Source: ADB, 2016

8. National sectoral policies and indigenous peoples

According to Decree No. 207 on Ethnic Group Affairs (2020) Lao, this decree sets out the principles, regulations and measures on the management and monitoring of ethnic affairs

so that such activities can be implemented effectively, bring about the unity of all ethnic groups, equality, respect for each other, and mutual benefit of the nation and the people.

Due to Article 2 Ethnic Affairs, an ethnic group is a group of people who are unique in their language, history, and common name, customs, traditions, and culture, which have undergone a long process of development and are firmly bound to become an inseparable Lao national entity.

Ethnic affairs are the activities of governing the state on ethnic groups, such as setting policies, legislation, creating various conditions to protect and develop ethnic groups to be stable and grow in the land of Lao PDR with unity, equality, mutual respect and mutual assistance to move forward together.

Government Policy of Lao PDR

The Lao Government sector is highly committed to the promotion of quality between men and women (Gender equality) and social participation the country goals and priorities in the 8th National Social and Economic Development Plan (NSEDP). The Government of Lao PDR is a party to the International Convention on Human Rights, this also the effective participation of mankind is the essential for the country to achieve the goals of reducing poverty and improving living standards.

Article 4 Government Policy on Ethnic Affairs (Decree No. 207 on Ethnic Group Affairs, 2020). The Government sector encourages and encourages individuals, legal entities and organizations of all parties, including the public and private sectors, to participate in the implementation of ethnic affairs by enhancing the heritage of ethnic unity, and exercising equality between ethnic groups in accordance with the law.

Article 9. Ethnic Affairs Policy, the ethnic affairs policies are as follows: 1. Economic-financial policy; 2. Investment policy and potential utilization; 3. Education and sports policies; 4. Health policy; 5. Culture and tourism policy; 6. Policy on protection of natural resources and the environment; 7. National defense-security policy; 8. Information policy; 9. Access to laws and the judicial process; 10. Policy on the training of staff and civil servants; 11. Labor, welfare and social policies; 12. Policy on Qualifications.

Constitution of the Lao PDR (1991 and 2003):

All Lao citizens of all ethnic groups have equal rights in society, politics, economy and law. Article 8 “All ethnic groups have the right to preserve their own traditions and culture, and that of the nation. Discrimination between ethnic groups is prohibited. (Illegal).

Table 19: The Lao Constitution states the basic rights of the Lao people as follows:

Article 21	Lao citizens are Lao nationals as defined by law.
Article 22	Lao citizens regardless of gender, social status, education, beliefs And all tribes are equal before the law.

Article 23	Lao citizens over the age of 18 have the right to vote and to stand for election at any time 21 years and older, excluding unconscious persons and persons deprived of the right to vote and the right to vote Electoral vote.
Article 24	Lao citizens of both sexes have equal rights in politics, economy and culture Morally and socially and within the family.
Article 25	Lao citizens have the right to education.
Article 26.	Lao citizens have the right to work and have a non-illegal occupation. Workers have the right to rest entitled to medical treatment when ill, including disabled and Disability, the elderly, and other cases as required by law.
Article 27	Lao citizens are free to settle and relocate in accordance with the law.
Article 28	Lao citizens have the right to complain and sue and propose ideas to the organization. Organize the relevant state in the case of issues concerning the rights and interests of communal and individual lands. Citizens' complaints, petitions and ideas must be considered for resolution as required by law.
Article 29	The rights of Lao citizens to their bodies and property are in violation Not at all. Lao citizens cannot be arrested or detained without parole Certified or approved by the relevant organization, except as provided by law.
Article 30	Lao citizens have the right and freedom to believe or not to believe in any religion.
Article 31	Lao citizens have the right and freedom to speak, to communicate and to integrate together; And the right to form associations and to organize protests that are not against the law.
Article 32	Lao citizens have the right and freedom to study, research and apply Science; Leading techniques and technologies; And to create art and literature Conduct and carry out non-violent cultural activities.
Article 33	The State protects the legal rights and interests of Lao citizens living abroad.
Article 34	Lao citizens have the obligation to respect the Constitution and the law, and in Work discipline, rules of society and rules And domestic regulations.
Article 35	Lao citizens have the obligation to pay taxes and duties in accordance with the law.
Article 36	Lao citizens have the obligation to defend and protect the peace of the people And perform military obligations as required by law.

9. Ratification of international treaties and their implementation

Table 20: Laos: International treaties and conventions

No.	Name of Convention	Date of Signature	Date of Ratification\Accession
1	International Covenant on Civil and Politic Rights	7 December 200	29 September
2	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	-	-
3	International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	-	-
4	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	-	-
5	Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	-	-
6	Convention on the Right of the Child	-	-
7	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination again women	-	-
8	International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	-	-
9	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forums of Racial Discrimination	-	-
10	UN convention against Corruption	-	-

Update

1	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)	Vote at the UN General Assembly	2007
2	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	Sign the ratification	2008
3	Protection of all enforced disappearances	Sign	2008
4	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;	Sign the ratification	2012
5	ASEAN Declaration		
6	Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the ASEAN Region	Co-signed	2012

7	ASEAN Human Rights Declaration	Co-signed	2012
8	Vientiane Declaration on Raising Gender Attitudes and ASEAN Women's Cooperation for Environmental Sustainability	Co-signed	2012
9	Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Elimination of Violence against Children in ASEAN	Co-signed	2012
10	ASEAN Declaration on Enhancing Social Protection	Co-signed	2012
11	8th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan	Co-signed	2016-2020
12	Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention		1999
13	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women		1979

12. Key issues for future development initiatives

1. Increase poor rural people's productive capacities.
2. Increase poor rural people's benefits from market participation.
3. Strengthen the environmental sustainability and climate resilience of poor rural people's economic activities.²⁶
4. Enhanced productivity, profitability, resilience, and diversification of poor rural people's economic activities.
5. Strengthened institutions of and for poor rural people.
6. Access to education, healthcare, gender equality in Lao and ethnic minority languages.
7. Improving community-based access to and management of land and natural resources.
8. Building capacities of government, beneficiaries and service providers.
9. Engaging with women as key partners in all production and marketing systems.²⁷

13. IFAD projects and operations in Lao PDR

IFAD projects:

<https://www.ifad.org/en/web/operations/w/country/laos>

IPAF projects:

https://www.ifad.org/documents/38711624/41839851/ipaf_asia_e.pdf/b5122e37-c7ba-3648-47e3-e3592ba19b42

²⁶ IFAD Strategic Framework 2016-2025, p. 15-26.

²⁷ The 9th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2021-2025) p. 44.

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