



ພັນທະມິດເພື່ອປະຊາທິປະໄຕໃນລາວ

ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY IN LAOS Alliance pour la Démocratie au Laos

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1. End Poverty in All its Forms Everywhere.

Issue: Laos is in the Least Developed Countries group: about 75 percent of its residents live on less than \$ 2 a day, more than 25 percent on less than \$ 1. Each resident accounts for approximately US \$ 65 in foreign aid per year; a peak in international development cooperation. This has hardly affected the standard of living of its population. Widespread poverty is also blatantly opposed to the country's resource wealth, which includes coveted minerals and precious metals such as minerals. Copper features. Although much of its immense reserves of hydroelectric power is still unused, Laos already supplies large parts of Thailand with electricity. With an annual economic growth of eight percent, Laos is outbid only by China; while, for example, neighboring Vietnam, already traded as a new Asian tiger, did not even reach six percent last year. How is this contradiction between high economic growth and low living standards explained?



Distribution of food in the countryside



Agricultural work without machinery



Child poverty in Laos

The "Lao Revolutionary People's Party" sees itself as a Marxist-Leninist party, which - according to the constitution - has an absolute leadership monopoly. In fact, only in easily accessible areas is it able to exercise this claim to leadership. In many of the remote regions, political loyalties are characterized by ethnic or clan structures. The political system is barely able to develop a binding force because it does little: Public goods such as health care, education and training, secured land use rights and efficient administration are only inadequately provided. Patronage networks play a much greater role than the formal organizational structures of a Leninist party. Laos is ranked 135th out of a total of 178 countries in the Transparency International Corruption Index. (Source: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Gerhard Will)

<https://www.swp-berlin.org/kurz-gesagt/hohe-armutsquote-in-laos-trotz-ressourcenreichtums-und-wirtschaftswachstums/>

Dealing with corruption is evident so in the case of the Emergency Rations Fund in 2018. The fund is financed by the Asia Development Bank (ADB), the UN, the World Food Organization ONUAA and others. Should the fund be used to compensate for crop failures and it's to support agriculture. This is also documented in the accountability reports. However, the ADL has information according to which most of the money has been paid to private individuals. These are:

1. Mr. Sichantha Thammavong, he is the son of Mr. Thongsing Thammavong the former Prime Minister of Lao PDR currently working in the Ministry of Planning and Investment.

2. Khamphayxana company, contractors and other companies.
3. Bothong Inter company, construction company.
4. Mr. Khamboun, Former Provincial Head of Salavanh Province

As well as corruption, preventing the dispossession and forced relocation prevent people from participating in economic growth. Again and again public and private lands are expropriated and given to foreign investors. Time and again special economic zones are created. Although it is repeatedly stated that this serves the development of the country, this is not the case, as the investors bring the workers with them. There are only a few jobs for Lao people. The type of economic projects is questionable.

For example, in December 2017, Mahanathi Siphandone Special Area (4,000 islands area) was created, with a size of 39,000 hectares. However, officially speaking only 9,800 hectares. We have reports that meth amphetamines and counterfeit products are being produced in this zone but that money laundering and human trafficking are also being carried out. The investor behind everything is the Chinese Zen-To, who uses four companies from China, Taiwan, Malaysia and Laos as his straw men. The head of this project is currently Sonexay Siphandone (Deputy Prime Minister) and the responsible for this project is Mr. Sittisay Xayavong.

Recommendation: Laos needs deep reforms throughout the political system. The lack of democratic controls and the resulting lack of transparency lead to an increasingly drastic deterioration of the situation for the population. Development aid projects must be coordinated through consistent regional planning. However, this can only be successful if it is open and transparent for the population.

Likewise, corruption control must become public. The participation of the population in the awarding of projects seems unavoidable, because only so meaningful use is guaranteed.



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

Issue: Laos is completely without access to the sea, with Vietnam standing between the small country and the Gulf of Tonkin. As a result, road transport is an essential form of transport and the only way to improve the economic development of the infrastructure.

What is confirmed time and again is that the reasons for the poor development in food distribution are both: the lack of infrastructure and their planning, as well as the lack of environmental sustainability in the country.

Unfortunately the road infrastructure in Laos is limited, underdeveloped and particularly prone to extreme weather conditions. According to the World Bank, about 50 percent of the roads are in a good condition and only 56 percent of the rural population in Laos has access to a year-round road. In 2017, the World Bank and the Ministry of Finance of Laos signed a \$ 25 million agreement for the Second Road Sector Project in Laos, which was primarily designed to create a climate-resilient road infrastructure and improve the connectivity of roads in parts of Laos. who are vulnerable to natural disasters.

(Source: The Borgen Project -Danielle Poindex)

<https://borgenproject.org/category/laos/>

Nevertheless, the construction projects are slow to progress and often money and building material disappear on the previously unexplained cause. How the Alliance for Democracy in Laos was reported by locals and was used with homemade cell phone videos and photos, still the most important transport links in the rain in the mud. The crews usually work very slowly, as they are often not paid by the government. Some construction companies already had to register for bankruptcy because the monies that were destined for them had disappeared into corrupt channels.



Main street in Phakse (2017)



Provincial street in Laos (2012)

Pointless large-scale projects such as the construction of a high-speed train which no one can use, by Chinese investors or by the expansion of monocultures in connection with the uninhibited use of pesticides, aggravate the food supply of the population. In addition, there are also national robberies by foreign investors and corrupt officials and a lack of environmental protection in wastewater management and waste management.



Polluted environment: When growing bananas, a huge amount of plastic waste accumulates.

As previously described under SDG 1, the case of misuse of the Emergency Fund for Rice Cultivation also highlights the weaknesses of the current system. Particularly symptomatic of the situation is the state of the agricultural unit Nikom 23 in Phoukong in the city of Packxong and in the city of Thadeng, as well as in the village Beungkham and in the village Beungxai, province Saravang. Here it was until the early 1980s, a reeducation camp, which has now been converted. About 60,000 inhabitants lives here and have to do their work similar like slaves. They are not allowed to travel without permission to another province. The people work in the rice and vegetable fields, the profit from the production must be handed over to the government. For foreigners, this zone is prohibited. In the entire 17 provinces of Laos, nowadays are leased by the Lao / Vietnamese government, territories for 99 years. Mostly here are rubber plantations. So also in the area Lak Kao (Lak No. 9), in the city Phaske up to the province Sekong. Here are only rubber plantations of Chinese entrepreneurs. The workers were brought from China. Everywhere in the Lao border area to Burma and China in the region of the Mekong river on the Laotian side of the shores are mounds of rubber plantations and a dam on the Mekong. These are owned by Chinese entrepreneurs.

Vietnamese entrepreneurs also operate rubber plantations and dams and mines. These are the following: Atthapheu Province, Sekong Province, Saravang Province where large deforestations are being made. The workers from Vietnam come to Laos to manage them. In fact, they are members of the Vietnamese military who are supposed to safeguard Vietnam's interests in Laos.

Recommendation: A profound democratization of the institutions, a publication of all the funds used and the contracts with foreign investors will reduce the misuse and corruption. Sustainable environmental protection with the help of recognised NGOs such as Greenpeace will enable another. International and public controls are necessary to make a sustainable food and agricultural policy. The deforestation that endanger the ecosystem and thus the nutrition of the population have to stop immediately. Projects without the involvement of the local population are without benefits and sustainability here it requires an immediate reversal.



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

Issue: The average life expectancy is 67 years, the child mortality rate is officially 0.6%, but 44% of children are considered malnourished or underweight, so Laos still remains far behind the other countries in Asia. Infectious diseases, poverty and unequal distribution of resources between city and country are the main problems in Laos

(Source: WHO)

http://iris.wpro.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665.1/10448/9789290616481_eng.pdf

<http://www.who.int/countries/lao/en/>

Another serious problem in Laos is still the drugs problem. Still on June 27, 2017, the prime Minister of Laos Thongloun Sisoulith admitted that the illicit drug trafficking and the massive abuse of drugs in Laos still constituted a problem and asked for international support. For years, this problem has been downplayed by the government and the authorities, now the years of ignorance are avenged by the drug problems now weakening the economy in Laos, the crime is rising sharply and the associated costs exorbitantly Rise.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-06/27/c_136398991.htm

However, the actions taken to date by the Government of Laos have been unhelpful or empathetic. Drug addicts have been sent to so-called withdrawal camps where they have been locked up like criminals and subjected to cold deprivation. Again and again it was reported how brutal it is in these Kamps. Unfortunately, one must also mention at this point that these camps were also financed by foreign aid, such as Germany or the USA. Strikes and military drill were used to educate drug addicts. One may rightly start from the questionableness of this method. (Source: Worldpolicy)

<http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2011/10/11/us-funded-rehab-center-abuses-lao-drug-users>



Opium Cultivation in North Laos (Akha)



Re-education camp for drug addicts in Vientiane

Recommendation: In general, Laos lacks sustainable regional planning for public institutions. Development aid projects from Germany have tried to make a start here, but were not used by other institutions and also neglected by the authorities in Laos. Sensible regional planning under the assistance of international institutions under the supervision of the WHO would improve the long-term problem of general medical care.

The drugs problem, on the other hand, has mainly social reasons, here only active anti-corruption and democratic control of the authorities help. See also problem Objective 1.

The camps for drug addicts must be abolished and replaced by search clinics on an international model.



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

Issue: The economic growth over the past ten years has increased demand for workers of all skill levels. However, employers have difficulty finding the skilled workers they need. Following the creation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) at the end of 2015, Laos must ensure that the country's workforce is able to benefit from the new free movement of skilled labor. It is expected that skilled workers within the region will become increasingly mobile as private companies can now hire qualified staff from all ASEAN countries. It will be difficult for Laos to seize the benefits of the AEC if the country fails to adequately qualify its domestic workforce.



Pictures of schools in rural areas in Laos

In this respect, the country faces a number of challenges. In Laos, there are significant inequalities in access to education in the tertiary sector. Especially for disadvantaged groups, it is difficult to start and complete a full professional and vocational training. However, given the high level of early school leavers after primary education, it is very important for the country to integrate school dropouts and early school dropouts into vocational training. However, there are significant shortcomings in the quality and relevance of the content being taught, the training standard of the specialist and vocational school teachers and the participation of employers in the vocational training system. The country's technical and vocational education and training system still does not function in a demand-oriented way, i.e. the content is selected almost without taking into account the requirements of the labour market. (Source: GIZ)

<https://www.giz.de/de/weltweit/26261.html>

Another factor is the still large number of illiterate people in the amount of 32% of the population. Again, a large gap between city and country is noticeable. (Source: Atango)

<http://www.atango.com/laendervergleich-bildung-analphabetenrate--top--50--28/>

Other sources estimate the illiterate rate at about 40%.

As the Alliance for Democracy in Laos has been reported, more and more schools have been established in recent years to teach Vietnamese as the main foreign language, also Vietnamese culture and way of life. Students from Laos are increasingly sent to Vietnam, alienating their own

culture. We also have reports from the population in which students of these Vietnamese schools are preferred for later studies and vocational training.

Recommendation: Laos is a culturally diverse country with many ethnic groups, comparable to Germany. Greater influence of regional governments and parliaments is needed to protect and maintain the culture of Laos. The Vietnamization must be stopped immediately. English, Spanish and French are considered world-wide languages and must replace Vietnamese as the main foreign language. This is how the Lao students get along better with international standards. Similarly, the distribution of schools across the country, as with other problems, is lacking in sustainable regional planning. However, this can only be guaranteed if there are democratic control mechanisms. These in turn can only be guaranteed under the supervision of the United Nations.



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

Issue: On the legal level, equality between men and women has long been a reality in Laos. In fact, in Laos there are astonishingly many women in the world of work and at the lower levels of the state apparatus. However, women are strongly under-represented in the upper management levels. However, this is not a specific problem for the Lao People's Republic.

But there are some very specific problems in Laos. On the one hand there is the sharply rising divorce rate. Many men have several lovers and let their wives down. This aggravates social problems in society. Maintenance payments hardly take place. Unfortunately, the state welfare in Laos is extremely poor. In family law Laos still seems to have a lot of catching up to do. The society in Laos is dominated by men, still in many areas the word of the man is more valid than that of the woman.

Recommendation:

1. The rights for divorced women need to be strengthened. In particular, the maintenance rights must be improved.
2. Education for women for women and villagers needs to be strengthened. Some 300,000 students are still dropping out of school to take care of their families. Better education can reduce the risk of poverty and improve equal opportunities.
3. The new anti-trafficking laws impose heavy penalties but are usually not enforced. Again, there is a lot of catching up to do.
4. The problem of trafficking in human beings is very complex and needs to be tackled with a variety of measures. This includes on the one hand an effective fight against corruption, which can only work with democratic reforms and the associated public control mechanisms. On the other hand, Laos's authorities should be encouraged to work more closely with the authorities of neighboring countries. An integration program to rehabilitate those affected along with a major improvement of the school system is also needed.



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

All

Issue: The Lao-PDR has the most water resources in every Asian country per capita, but much of it is uncertain. Drinking water can be contaminated with harmful chemicals and human waste and cause a variety of health problems. UNICEF is working in Laos to ensure that children and families in homes and schools have access to clean water and sanitary facilities.



Public fountain in Huephen north of Luang Prabang

Many rural communities are not aware of suitable sanitary facilities and hygiene practices. Over a third of Laotians lack sanitary facilities, 'open defecation', and only 19% of children's feces practice safely disposed of.

(Source: UNICEF)

https://www.unicef.org/laos/activities_22351.html

Furthermore, the unrestrained construction of dams in the country endangers the food and drinking water supply in Laos. Unfortunately, these dams do not bring any benefit to the people of Laos. The electricity generated by the dams is mostly delivered to neighboring countries, while a large part of the population is still without electricity.

Recommendation: 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.

Issue: Laos is with its many dams along the Mekong one of the largest electricity producers in Asia. Nevertheless, a large part of the population is without electricity. According to official information, this affects about 25% of the population. (Source: Worldbank)

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.ELC.ACCS.ZS>

Development workers and independent NGOs expect at least 30%. This is all the more surprising given that Laos claims to produce 1.9 GWh with its hydroelectric power plants. (Source: Actualitix)



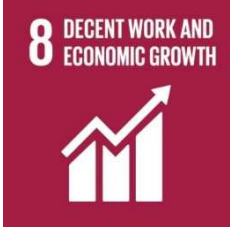
Map with the dams in Laos



Protest against dams in Laos

<https://en.actualitix.com/country/lao/laos-access-to-electricity.php>

Recommendation: 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.

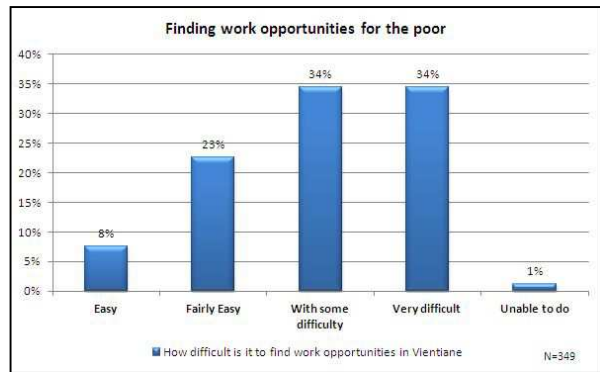


8. Promote Sustained, Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth, Full and Productive Employment and Decent Work for All.

Issue: The official figures certainly speak well for the economic progress that Laos has made in recent years. Officially, the unemployment rate stands at 1.5%, with a rising trend and the proportion of the population below the poverty line is 22%, with a downward trend.



Farmer family in Phonethong near Vientiane



Job opportunities for the poor. Asian Trends Monitoring (2012)

In the Global Competitiveness Index, which measures the competitiveness of a country, Laos occupies place 93 of 138 countries (stand 2016-17), in the index of economic freedom occupies the country 2017 place 133 of 180 countries, in the Human Development Index Laos Place 138 of 183 (2017)

(Source: World Economic Forum, Wallstreet Journal, The Heritage, UNDP)

<http://reports.weforum.org/global-competitiveness-index-2017-2018/competitiveness-rankings/>
<http://www.heritage.org/index/ranking>

Thus, it is clear that the economic growth which Laos has for many years is unsustainable and the use of surpluses is apparently eaten up by corruption.

Likewise, the fact that the allocation of foreign investment projects does not pay attention to whether jobs are created for the population, that a large part of the population can not participate in economic matters. In many cases, investors immediately bring the workers from their countries of origin with them, so that no new jobs for Laotians arise.

Recommendation: Fighting corruption and sustainable regional planning are the underlying problems in almost all areas in Laos. But both can only be successful if there is public control. But this requires democratic reforms. The United Nations should assist Laos to change their system towards a sustainable democracy tailored to Laos.

Investment without job creation has to be stopped. The promotion of such projects must be withdrawn, as this only increases public debt without having any benefit.



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

Issue: Laos has 13,000 kilometers of road, but only about 1,700 are paved. There are mostly public buses between the cities, the previously used trucks with wooden seats are gradually scrapped. Otherwise, due to poor road conditions, small trucks with longitudinal benches on the loading area are more likely to be found (so-called Songthaews).

Generally, there are very few private automobiles in the country. Even long distances are laid on foot. Common practice is driving by hitchhiker, mostly on the loading area of pick-ups. Outside Vientiane and Luang Prabang are mostly four-wheel-driven cars, as the state of the roads is bad and waterways often have to be crossed by Fords. In larger towns, the people, if they can afford it, use mopeds or bicycles. (Source: Wikipedia)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laos>

<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laos>

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 your life or that of your child.



Bus traffic in Laos



Bridge destroyed by monsum

(Source: BMZ)

https://www.bmz.de/de/ministerium/ziele/2030_agenda/historie/MDGs_2015/unser_beitrag/laos_infrastruktur.html

This state inhibits the country in almost all areas. Large-scale projects such as the construction of a high-speed train are therefore useless, that there are far too few possibilities to reach the railway stations. (Source: RFA)

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/high-speed-rail-project-will-force-thousands-of-lao-families-to-relocate-11222017143941.html>

Often we also reported that public buildings are being built without thinking of the Accessibility. Also, the development of building plots is considered insufficient. On the other hand, public money is often abused to finance private construction projects of the Communist cadres.

Recommendation: Here too, 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

Issue: Laos still occupies one of the rear ranks in the HDI index of the United Nations with place 138. This is still behind its neighboring countries Vietnam (115), Thailand (87) and China (90), which are still the most influential countries in Laos. Nevertheless, there seems to be little interest in these neighboring countries to make Laos an equivalent and well-developed country. Laos obviously serves its neighboring countries only as a cheap supplier of raw materials, electricity or political power base to competing states.

With the construction of a high-speed train through Laos and the construction of special economic zones, China wants to expand its influence in the region. All of these projects are considered controversial and bring little benefit to the population in Laos (source: RFA)



Railroad construction site in Luang Namtha province (Northern Laos), 12th July 2017.

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/plans-01022018152358.html>

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/high-speed-rail-project-will-force-thousands-of-lao-families-to-relocate-11222017143941.html>

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/airport-11082017152333.html>

Thailand's influence has apparently fallen since the military coup of 2006, yet Laos is a welcome electricity supplier whereas the population in Laos itself is still partially without electricity. (Source: CIA World Factbook)

https://theodora.com/wfbccurrent/laos/laos_energy.html

Almost daily, the *Alliance for Democracy in Laos* receives reports from locals about the growing influence of Vietnam in Laos. Massive deforestation and robbery are still coming. This is confirmed by international intelligence agencies and journalists. Another fact is the ongoing land grabs in Laos by foreign investors and Lao authorities. Many people have been relocated without a adequate compensation. We got reports from indigenous people, confirmed by international reporters.



Deforestation in southern Laos
(Source:RFA)



Protest of farmers against the robbery (Bokeo2014)

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/rosewood-01102018160410.html>

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/lao-officials-not-doing-enough-to-enforce-land-concession-regulations-05042017153447.html>

Recommendation: 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.

Issue: 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.



Urban development in Vientiane

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

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

Recommendation: 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.



12. Ensure Sustainable *Consumption and Production* Patterns.

Issue: The Democratic People's Republic of Laos is currently experiencing a rapid economic upswing with growth rates of around eight percent and a steady increase in per capita income. However, a quarter of the population lives below the national poverty line, making Laos one of the least developed countries. Agriculture, which is dominated by rice cultivation in lowland areas, accounts for around 20% of GDP and 73% of total employment. More recently, the country has been exposed to a persistent current account deficit, declining foreign exchange reserves and growing public debt, as the slow recovery of the global economy, especially China, has pushed down prices of its mineral exports.

Laos's economy is heavily dependent on capital-intensive commodity exports. The economy benefited from high profile foreign direct investment in Mekong hydroelectric power plants, copper and gold mining, logging and construction, although some projects in these industries were criticized for their environmental impact. Laos is about to introduce a VAT system. The government appears to have committed itself to improving the country's profile with foreign investors and has developed specific economic zones with generous tax incentives, but a limited labor pool, a small domestic market and corruption remain barriers to investment. Laos also has persistent problems with the business environment, including burdensome registration requirements, a gap between legislation and implementation, and unclear or conflicting regulations.

(Sources: GIZ, CIA Factbook)

<https://www.giz.de/de/weltweit/371.html>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/la.html>

Recommendation: The unsuccessful fight against corruption and the lack of implementation of laws are consequences of the lack of democratic structures in the country. There is no need for a major revolution or a sudden transformation of the system in Laos, but of a continuous reform process that is changing Laos into a democracy with a real separation of powers.



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

Issue: The economic growth in Laos is mainly due to the massive yield of natural resources such as wood and the expansion of dams, which have made Laos the largest electricity supplier in the region. However, this has some disastrous consequences for the environment. Forest cover in the country decreased from 49.10% in the year 1982 to 40.34% in the year 2010. This is less than 70% of forest cover several decades ago. In conjunction with further industrial activity, the decline in forest cover has transformed the country 1990 from a net CO₂ Sequester into a net issuer in the year 2000 [UNDP, 2013]. The main causes of the decline in forests are the relocation of rice cultivation in the northern part of Laos and the unsustainable use of forests in the past to cover the economic equilibrium.



Truck column with wood from Laos at the border (Vientianetimes)



Smog in a village in northern Laos (tourist photo)

The unsustainable forest use is mainly caused by companies from Vietnam. Forests are cleared in Laos and shipped to Vietnam for the construction of furniture, from where these products are then exported with the label "Made in Vietnam". It is difficult for consumers to trace the true origin of the wood.

Partially illegal every day whole truck colonies walk full with wood to Vietnam. Regularly in the social media pictures and videos of these processes are posted.

(Source: European Union)

http://www.scpclearinghouse.org/sites/default/files/8_scp_in_lao_pdr.pdf

Recommendation: 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

Issue: Laos is a landlocked country without access to the sea. Nevertheless, this topic also affects Laos. The most important river in Southeast Asia is the Mekong, which flows from China into Vietnam. The river is important for Laos as a shipping route, food source (fisheries), electricity supplier (dams) and as a source of water for agriculture. Unfortunately, one has to realize that still many wastewater is uncleaned in the river. China is also increasingly using the river to transport oil and chemicals. With the construction of dams, many environmental experts see not only a threat to the ecosystem, but also to shipping. In the event of an accident, the Mekong Delta and thus the sea is in danger.

The ADL has received alarming reports of water pollution in recent times.

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

Recommendation: 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

Issue: As already described under SDG 13, the forest stock in Laos shrinks considerably. Officially, the illegal logging of forest in Laos is prohibited, yet it still takes place. Again and again it is reported how officials are bribed by foreign investors to allow for the depletion.



Dam on the Mekong



Fish dying on the Mekong

The sustainable use of drinking water is also in danger, due to a lack of sanitation and the uninhibited expansion of the dams. Another danger is the expansion of the monocultures in the country. In recent years, banana plantations, rubber plantations and other monocultures have increasingly supplanted the natural forest and have severely affected the ecosystems in the country.

Recommendation:

1. Laos must stop the depletion of the forests immediately. The lack of control in the country is primarily due to the unbridled corruption. In order to address this, the country urgently needs Democratic Control Mechanisms and the related reforms.
2. The expansion of wastewater treatment plants must be continued.
3. An agricultural land use plan is needed. Land areas need to be better distributed, and ecosystems better protected. So that this land use plan is not abused by corrupt officials this must be adopted by the state parliaments in public meetings. Transparency for the public with freedom of expression is essential.



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.

Issue: Laos has the problem that many laws are not put into action. Often, laws adopted by the National Parliament are simply not implemented by the regional governments. Furthermore, many laws are bypassed by corrupt officials on a grand scale.



Imprisoned bloggers on Laotian television (04.06.2016)



Kidnapping of Sombath Somphone (15.12.2012).

Another problem is that many laws cancel each other out. For example, speech and press freedom are guaranteed by the constitution. However, the decree number 327 of September 16 2014 repeals this right. Normally one could now file a lawsuit against this decree before the Constitutional Court, but since the courts are directly controlled by the government, this is almost impossible. Also, the disappearance of civil society activists, such as Sombath Somphone is another example of the denial

of justice in Laos and the political ban on police investigation. The lack of proportionality in the application of laws is to be desired. Then, critics of the regime be allocated with penalties of up to 20 years, while traffickers or smuggling with fines of. Also, the penalties for corruption are often very mild; usually there is only a displacement of affected officials, often in connection with a transport operation. What is equally remarkable is that there is no equal treatment in a Communist system like Laos before the law. So, members of the Communist Party or of the State apparatus are intensities clearly before the courts and authorities.

Recommendation: Laos needs a constitutional reform in which the three powers of the judiciary, the executive and the legislature are clearly separated from each other and independent. Only then will it be possible to guarantee the rule of law for the citizens of Laos. A democratization process must also be initiated to monitor this independence. This does not mean a revolution; it is the transition to a new system that forces all political forces to make more for the people of Laos for sustainable development.

The introduction of new laws to improve the situation brings little benefit so far, as long as the existing laws are carried out only arbitrarily. With the proportionality of the punishment imposition must penetrate be improved



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

Issue: 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.



Communist Party Congress from Laos and Vietnam (2011)



New border agreement between Laos and Vietnam (2016)

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 can not act here.

Recommendation: A sustainable partnership between countries places more on equality. The overreaching division of Laos must change and the Laotians must be more respected. China and Vietnam will have far more benefit from Laos if they would build instead of exploiting the country more. As a raw material supplier, trading partner and even as a strategic ally, Laos would benefit its neighboring countries as well as itself much more long-term than is currently the case. The Vietnamese-Lao Friendship Treaty must be ended and replaced by new, less one-sided agreements. Laos must be on an equal footing with others in international deals.



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