

**Joint Submission to the UN Office of the High  
Commissioner for Human Rights**

**for the consideration of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Universal Periodic  
Review of the Lao People's Democratic Republic**

---



**Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization**

The UNPO is an international membership-based organization established to empower the voices of unrepresented and marginalized peoples worldwide and to protect their fundamental human rights. The peoples represented within the UNPO membership are all united by one shared condition: they are denied equal representation in the institutions of national or international governance. As a consequence, their opportunity to participate on the national or international stage is limited, and they struggle to fully realize their rights to civil and political participation and to control their economic, social and cultural development. In many cases, they are subject to the worst forms of violence and repression.

Contact Information:

Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO)  
[www.unpo.org](http://www.unpo.org); [unpo.brussels@unpo.org](mailto:unpo.brussels@unpo.org)  
Rue du Pépin 54  
1000 Bruxelles  
Belgium



**The Congress of World Hmong People**

The Congress of World Hmong People (CWHP) is a nonviolent organisation advocating for the political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Hmong people. Recognising that the violence and human rights violations against the Hmong in Laos form the roots of their marginalisation in Laotian society, the CWHP represents the Hmong people internationally.

Contact Information:

The Congress of World Hmong People (CWHP)  
[www.cwhp.net](http://www.cwhp.net)  
565 University Avenue  
55103 Saint Paul, Minnesota  
United States

## Table of Contents

|      |  |    |
|------|--|----|
| I.   | Summary  | 2  |
| II.  | Background to the Hmong                                      | 2  |
| III. | Human Rights Issues  | 3  |
|      | a. Military Violence against the ChaoFa Hmong                | 3  |
|      | b. Arbitrary Arrests, Detentions and Enforced Disappearances | 4  |
|      | c. Land Grabbing and Environmental Degradation               | 5  |
|      | d. Food Security, Standard of Living and Right to Health     | 6  |
|      | e. Recognition of Indigenous Status                          | 7  |
|      | f. Restriction of Religious Freedom                          | 8  |
|      | g. Women's Rights  | 9  |
| IV.  | Recommendations  | 10 |
| V.   | Appendix: Status of Human Rights Committee Recommendations   | 12 |

## **I. Summary**

1. This report, jointly submitted by the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) and the Congress of the World Hmong People (CWHP), on the occasion of the 35<sup>th</sup> session of the Universal Periodic Review, during which Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR) is under consideration, draws attention to the human rights violations against minority groups in the country. It specifically highlights the situation of the Hmong community in Laos.
2. The human rights situation of the Hmong in Laos is desperate. Extreme violence is used by the Laotian military against the ChaoFa Hmong, a Hmong community who have been forced into hiding in the jungle around Northern Laos, with repeated military attacks seeking to eliminate those living in the Phou Bia region. Members of the Hmong community, along with other ethnic minorities in Laos, suffer from extreme poverty and widespread, top-down, systematic discrimination. Their freedom of religion is also curtailed, with the Laotian government specifically targeted members of the Christian community, including the Catholic Hmong community, whose members have been victims of threats, forced eviction, arbitrary detention and ill-treatment by state authorities
3. Laos does not recognize the indigenous or minority status of the diverse ethnic groups of Laos. This leaves them without access to legal protection that would accompany such status, a critical consideration for peoples whose livelihoods and identities are largely dependent on access to land and its natural resources, and whose access to that land is increasingly restricted by recent economic policies.

## **II. Background to the Hmong**

4. The Hmong constitute an indigenous people who are originally from the ChaoFa region in Northern Laos. Because of their distinctive ethnicity, language, culture and religion, the Hmong distinguish themselves from the rest of the Laotian population. According to the latest national census, they constitute about 10 percent of Laotian society, which makes them the third largest minority.<sup>1</sup> Despite this, the Laotian government refuses to acknowledge the Hmong as an indigenous group.
5. During the Vietnam War, the Hmong were recruited by the American security forces in an attempt to counter the Vietnamese invasion of Northern Laos, thereby aiming to prevent the spread of Sino-Vietnamese influence in the region. In the immediate aftermath of the war the United States ceased their active support of the Hmong, after which the Pathet Lao Communist political movement assumed control over Laos. This proved to have serious consequences for the Hmong, who were branded as a dangerous anti-government group by the ruling Lao's People Revolutionary Party (LPRP). As a consequence, the Hmong have been victims of targeted discrimination and military violence since.

<sup>1</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, *Results of Population and Housing Census 2015*. Available at: [https://lao.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/PHC-ENG-FNAL-WEB\\_0.pdf](https://lao.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/PHC-ENG-FNAL-WEB_0.pdf).

6. For the Hmong still living in Laos, the situation has increasingly worsened over the past years. As many Hmong are suffering from widespread discrimination, persecution, arbitrary arrests and physical abuse, most are living in abject poverty. Moreover, due to large-scale extractive industries, who are supported by the Laotian government, many Hmong communities have been forcibly relocated from their lands or face extensive environmental problems.
7. Due to this systematic governmental campaign of discrimination and violence, thousands of Hmong have been forced into hiding in the jungle in the Phou Bia region of Northern Laos. This particular group has been referred to as the ChaoFa Hmong. Others from the Hmong community have attempted to seek refuge in neighbouring countries where many ended up in refugee camps. Even this has become increasingly dangerous as Vietnam and Thailand have standing collaboration efforts with the Laotian government to aid in the forceful repatriation of Hmong refugees.
8. The estimated 2000-4000 ChaoFa Hmong that are in hiding in the jungle have been targeted by the Laotian government by means of a violent military campaign that effectively seeks to eradicate these Hmong groups from the territory. Currently, this extreme case of deprivation of basic living conditions constitutes the gravest of examples of violation of the most basic human rights of many Hmong in Laos.

### iii. **Human Rights Issues**

#### a. **Military Violence against the ChaoFa Hmong**

9. Although the Hmong have suffered from violence at the hands of the Laotian government since the establishment of the LPDR, since April 2016 the government's military campaign, led by the Lao People's Army (LPA) and actively supported by Vietnam, has intensified significantly.<sup>2</sup> It has been reported that the LPA initiated a sustained incursion into jungle areas around the Phou Bia region in Northern Laos where the ChaoFa Hmong have fled to avoid persecution at the hands of the LPRP.<sup>3</sup> By the end of 2016, it was estimated that at least 4,000 military troops were stationed in newly built military bases in the area.
10. Following the intensification of the military campaign against the ChaoFa Hmong, the violence at the hands of the LPA has increased dramatically. The number of reports of disappearances, physical abuse and killings of Hmong people has grown rapidly since early 2017, as the LPA has specifically targeted areas where Hmong communities are thought to be hiding or looking for food. On October 2018, a group of 30 ChaoFa Hmong were attacked by the Lao military while looking for food. Since then, the situation has deteriorated significantly, developing into a situation of extreme suffering for the ChaoFa Hmong.
11. As the military has rapidly militarised the jungle areas of the Phou Bia region, the ChaoFa Hmong have been forced to change places continuously, which has left them

<sup>2</sup> UNPO and CWHP Submit Report to UNSR on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, available at: <https://unpo.org/article/21420> (report accessible at <https://unpo.org/downloads/2540.pdf> (contains disturbing images)).

<sup>3</sup> Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), 'Timeline, Hmong'. Available at: <https://unpo.org/article/19682>.

unable to grow crops on their territories. Accordingly, most ChaoFa Hmong have relied on wild food sources for their survival. Aware of this, the Laotian military has started to specifically target the Hmong's access to wild food sources by blocking pathways to these resources as well as chasing down Hmong people, including women and children, who are foraging for food.

12. As the ChaoFa Hmong are isolated and unable to find food sources, many are suffering from severe starvation. Many of those who went to look for food have been killed by the military; on 18 October 2016, it was reported that groups of starving ChaoFa Hmong were lured into a killing site after food and supplies were offered to them by the Laotian military.
13. Since early 2017, an increasing number of reports indicated that the Laotian military is making use of tanks and heavy artillery, firing indiscriminately into Hmong territory, being fully aware of the presence of women and children. These heavy long-range artillery strikes – using 80-, 120- and 130-millimetre rounds – occur on a daily basis, mainly targeting locations where the Hmong are thought to be hiding or looking for food. As a result, many ChaoFa Hmong have faced severe physical injuries, which they have been unable to treat appropriately because of a lack of access to medicine and health care facilities.
14. In addition to heavy artillery, the Laotian military has reportedly been making use of chemical weapons against ChaoFa Hmong communities. During September and October 2016, several infants died of violent coughing following military attacks, who were likely making use of rockets allegedly loaded with a toxic gas. Similar cases continued to be reported throughout 2018 and the first half of 2019. Next to the deaths of infants, symptoms such as coughing, nausea, vomiting, headaches, diarrhea, chest congestion and weakness of legs and arms among many ChaoFa Hmong people suggest that the LPA has been making use of chemical weapons against Hmong communities.
15. The LPDR's military campaign against the ChaoFa Hmong – who are Laotian civilians by law – is in direct violation of several international human rights treaties that Laos is a signatory to, and can be seen as a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. First of all, the military campaign violates the right to life, which is a non-derogable right under ICCPR Article 6. Moreover, the LPA's alleged use of chemical weapons, if proven, would be in direct violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which Laos has signed and ratified. The use of heavy artillery also constitutes an intentional act to inflict severe pain and suffering on the ChaoFa Hmong, violating the latter's non-derogable rights under the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), which the LPDR has also signed and ratified.

**b. Arbitrary Arrests, Detentions and Enforced Disappearances**

16. Although the LPDR is a signatory of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) – Article 9 of which provides that no one shall be subject to arbitrary arrest or detention – government critics, human rights activists and ethnic and religious minorities are often detained without valid legal justifications. Moreover, there have been numerous cases of individuals who became victims of enforced disappearances after they had been arrested by the Laotian authorities. This is prohibited by the

International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which Laos signed in 2008 but has yet to ratify.

17. The most emblematic case is the abduction and subsequent disappearance of prominent civil society leader Sombath Somphone in 2012, which reportedly involved the presence of several police officers.<sup>4</sup> For the past seven years, the Laotian government has failed to provide any relevant information about investigations into Mr Somphone's fate or whereabouts.
18. The disappearance of Mr Somphone has not been an isolated case; in September 2016, two Hmong men were summoned by a Lao police officer in the village of Lat Houang, after which they disappeared without a trace. A few days later, their dead bodies were found. Their broken limbs suggest that they were beaten to death and tossed into a river.
19. In line with these consistent reports of enforced disappearances, in July 2018 the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) expressed its grave concern about the arbitrary detention and enforced appearances of a number of Hmong people, among others.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the OHCHR also condemned the practices of torture and ill-treatment in the places where these individuals were being held, as well as the lack of an independent judiciary and fair trials in the LPDR.

### **c. Land Grabbing and Environmental Degradation**

20. Although the LPDR has seen economic growth over the past years, religious and ethnic minorities have largely been excluded from its benefits. Instead, economic growth has mainly benefited a small but very wealthy elite. Subsequently, this top-down approach to economic growth has only further marginalised the minority groups that are amongst the poorest in Laotian society.
21. The clearest example of the negative impacts of Laos' economic strategy on poor Laotian communities has been the "Turning Land into Capital" policy. Under this policy, the Laotian government has granted large companies the right to build industrial plantations, hydropower projects, mines and other extractive industries on large tracts of land. This has been done without regard for existing land use and resulted in the mass displacement of rural communities, which has had devastating consequences for the poor.
22. It is estimated that two-thirds of the Laotian population live in rural areas, where approximately 80 percent practice subsistence farming.<sup>6</sup> As such, the majority of Laos' population depends on farmland and pasture as its sources of livelihood. The separation of poor people from the land they depended on as part of the "Turning Land into Capital" policy has therefore significantly aggravated their state of impoverishment as

<sup>4</sup> International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), 'Laos: Six years on, civil society worldwide demands answers to the enforced disappearance of Sombath Somphone' (14 December 2018). Available at: <https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/laos-six-years-on-civil-society-worldwide-demands-answers-to-the>.

<sup>5</sup> Human Rights Committee, 'Concluding Observations on the initial report of Lao People's Democratic Republic' (26 July 2018), CCPR/C/LAO/CO/1.

<sup>6</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 'FAO in Laos'. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/laos/fao-in-laos/laos-at-a-glance/en/>.

it resulted in the direct loss of livelihood, food and water insecurity and often inadequate or no compensation for land that was lost.

23. Several areas in Northern Laos, where most Hmong live, have been selected by the Laotian government for the development of large-scale industrial projects in order to boost foreign investment. These areas, called “special economic zones” or “specific economic zones”, have been regulated without any provision to protect its local inhabitants. Moreover, the allocation of land has involved land-grabbing practices that have forced many Hmong communities to relocate and deprived them of their subsistence means.
24. The attraction and development of large-scale industrial and extractive industries has also had detrimental consequences for the environment. In 2018, the collapse of a hydroelectric dam saw the Attapeu region flooded, killing at least 35 and displacing more than 7,000. Despite this disaster, hundreds more dams are planned to be built in the coming years on the Mekong river, which traverses Laos.<sup>7</sup>
25. As the current dams are already disturbing the natural flow of the Mekong, overloading the river with dams is likely to severely damage its entire ecosystem. As millions of people are dependent on the Mekong basin and its natural resources, this will have a destructive social impact on adjacent communities. These consequences will be particularly severe for ethnic minority groups such as the Hmong as it further exacerbates their already marginalised position.

#### **d. Food Security, Standard of Living and Right to Health**

26. Following the intensive military campaign of the Laotian military, the food security and health standards of the targeted ChaoFa Hmong communities in Northern Laos have worsened dramatically. Next to the aforementioned situation of widespread starvation, they also have little to no access to safe drinking water. As a result, many members of these Hmong communities, including children, suffer from undernutrition.
27. These Hmong groups also lack proper access to health care and basic sanitation services and facilities, which are of crucial importance in the context of violent encounters with the Laotian military. As they also lack reproductive healthcare facilities, there has been an increased rate of maternal and child mortality among Hmong communities.
28. The problems the Hmong are facing are exacerbating the already significant health care problems of ethnic minorities in Laos.<sup>8</sup> Access to health care remains extremely uneven in Laos, with ethnic minorities – who already represent the poorest section in Laotian society – having the least access to health care. Ultimately, ethnic minority groups lag behind the Lao-Tai ethnic majority at all levels of welfare.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Katy Scott, ‘Is Laos Facing a Dam Disaster?’, *CNN* (14 December 2018). Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/12/14/asia/laos-hydropower-dams/index.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Asia Pacific Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, ‘Lao People’s Democratic Republic Health System Review’, *Health Systems in Transition* 4 (2014) 1, p.3-4.

<sup>9</sup> World Bank Group, *Lao Poverty Policy Brief: Why Are Ethnic Minorities Poor?* (2018). Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/501721505813643980/pdf/119793-WP-PovertyReport-PUBLIC-ENGLISH-and-LAO-ENGLAOFinal.pdf>.

29. As the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights noted during his visit to Laos, there exist persistent structural barriers that prevent the full realisation of human rights by people in poverty, particularly by ethnic minorities.<sup>10</sup> Poverty, food and water insecurity and lack of health care among Hmong communities present a violation of the Hmong's rights to an adequate standard of living, to adequate food and to be free from hunger, as well as their right to health, all of which are protected under ICESCR Articles 11 and 12, which the LPDR has signed and ratified.

**e. Recognition of Indigenous Status**

30. Although estimates put the number of ethnic groups at more than 200, the Laotian government officially recognises only 49 ethnic groups, but does not recognise them as indigenous peoples.<sup>11</sup> For the ethnic groups that have been recognised, Article 8 of the Lao Constitution provides that they have the right to protect, preserve and promote their distinctive customs and cultures.<sup>12</sup>
31. Despite this mention of the rights of ethnic minorities in the Lao Constitution, ethnic minority groups remain disproportionately disadvantaged, which the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights has attributed to real government policies that disfavour minorities.<sup>13</sup> As such, there is a real discrepancy between the Laotian constitution and government practices, which are geared towards the assimilation of ethnically diverse minorities into Lao-Tai culture.
32. In the case of the Hmong, their marginalised position in Laos is compounded by the fact that the LPDR refuses to accord indigenous status to them. This prevents the Hmong from any form of (additional) legal protection under international law. Indeed, Laos voted in favour of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007. Although its provisions are not legally binding, this would still prove an important legal instrument by which uncompensated land confiscation, forced displacement and the denial of cultural and religious rights of the Hmong could be addressed.
33. In line with the refusal of the Laotian government to accord minority or indigenous status is the disregard for minority languages and their education. In the LPDR, Lao is the only official language of instruction, which puts children from ethnic minorities at an early disadvantage in Laotian society. For the Hmong, who do not have access to education in their own language, this means they continue to be underrepresented in all areas of public life, including political institutions.
34. The Laotian government has shut down and avoided any discussion related to claims of indigenous status. Instead, it continues to argue that there are no indigenous – or even minority – groups in the LPDR, contending that all groups are equal and part of a unified Laotian people. As such, the LPRP has systematically failed to acknowledge

<sup>10</sup> Human Rights Council, 'Visit to the Lao People's Democratic Republic: Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights' (20 June 2019), A/HRC/41/39/Add.2.

<sup>11</sup> Minority Rights Group, 'Laos'. Available at: <https://minorityrights.org/country/laos/>.

<sup>12</sup> LPDR, *Constitution*.

<sup>13</sup> Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR), *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*, p.10.

the very real disparities between ethnic groups and their marginalised position in Laotian society.

#### **f. Restriction of Religious Freedom**

35. The Lao constitution states that its citizens have ‘the right and freedom to believe or not to believe in religions’.<sup>14</sup> Discordantly, however, the constitution has allowed for various decrees that allow the LPDR to regulate and observe religious activities in Laos. Accordingly, religious organisations are required to follow a complex approval process for nearly all religious activities. As such, the Laotian government has been able to restrict religious practices it deems ‘harmful to the country and its people’.
36. Although there is no official state religion and the Lao government officially acknowledges Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and the Baha’i faith, there are strong indicators that Buddhism is often linked with Laotian nationalism. Given the LPDR’s strong emphasis on social harmony and national unity, religion is often regarded as a controversial issue as it is seen as dividing people’s loyalty, even though the Special Rapporteur on the freedom of religion or belief during her last mission to the LPDR noted that the Laotian population is generally very tolerant regarding religious matters.<sup>15</sup> Especially Christianity is commonly treated with suspicion by government authorities.
37. Christians who do not conform to the three recognised denominations face persecution and discrimination. In the context of tight government control of religious activities, many Christians, who often belong to ethnic minorities, have been arrested for holding worship services without official approval. Accordingly, members of religious minorities are increasingly being isolated as they have little or no access to higher education, limiting their access to public life.
38. In December 2018, the Laotian authorities arrested seven Christians, stating their church service to be illegal.<sup>16</sup> Threats towards Christian families, both by Laotian officials and fellow community members, have also been increasingly common. These Christian families are often given the choice to either renounce their faith, be evicted from their lands or villages or to face jail sentences. In November 2018, 20 Christian families were given an ultimatum by their regional governor in Northern Laos to leave their villages within one month or face imprisonment.<sup>17</sup>
39. Next to the persecution of Christian minority groups, religious activities of the Hmong people have also been severely restricted. For the Hmong, who are mainly traditional animist believers but have also partly taken up Christianity, religious persecution and restriction often goes together with the wider violence and discrimination they are facing. Besides intimidation strategies to press the Hmong to renounce their faith by threats of eviction and denials for the construction of religious buildings, this also involves the cutting of running water and poisoning of cattle.

<sup>14</sup> Lao People’s Democratic Republic (LPDR), *Constitution of 1991 with Amendments through 2003*. Available at: [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Laos\\_2003.pdf?lang=en](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Laos_2003.pdf?lang=en).

<sup>15</sup> Human Rights Council, ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir’, (27 January 2010), A/HRC/13/40/add.4.

<sup>16</sup> United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), *2019 Annual Report*, p.207.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

40. The tight restrictions and control of religious life in Laos are violating the rights of Laotians to have or adopt a religion or believe of their choice, as provided by ICCPR Article 18. Moreover, the various tactics that government officials use to threaten or coerce religious minority groups to renounce their faith is also directly violating this provision.

**g. Women's Rights**

41. In spite of government commitments, enforcement of policies to address gender inequality are lacking. As a result, substantial gender disparities remain, especially in rural areas and amongst ethnic groups such as the Hmong. With regards to the ChaoFa Hmong women who live in the jungles of the Phou Bia region to escape persecution from the LPDR, the situation is particularly precarious.
42. Sexual violence against women is another serious problem. While many women in Laos are victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence, ChaoFa Hmong women face the additional risk of human trafficking and sexual enslavement. A large number of testimonies from ChaoFa Hmong refugees included cases of rape by the LPA; moreover, they described situations where women who surrendered to the military were held in slavery-like conditions, suffering from sexual abuse and torture.
43. Educational gaps persist as it is estimated that only 0.622 percent of girls completed secondary school in 2013. Numbers for ethnic minorities are probably even lower, as minority women often do not speak Lao, the only official language of instruction. Accordingly, as many women face exclusion from public life, this exacerbates the already marginalized position of (minority) women in Laotian society.
44. Improvements in the health care system in order to tackle to dramatically high levels of maternal and child mortality in the LPDR have been inaccessible to women from minority groups. While Minority Rights Group International has stated that maternal mortality rates are generally higher for women from minority groups, ethnic minority women in Laos particularly suffer from this issue as they account for some of the highest maternal and child mortality rates in the world.
45. Ultimately, women – in particular those belonging to ethnic minority groups – remain one of the most marginalized groups in the LPDR, having to cope with a number of structural disadvantages on a daily basis. The situation for Hmong women continues to be alarming as they remain extremely vulnerable to the LPDR's discriminatory policies. Of greatest concern is the dire situation of ChaoFa Hmong women, who face a large risk of falling victim to rape, sexual enslavement or human trafficking.

**IV. Recommendations**

In light of the above observations, the CWHP and UNPO urgently call on the Lao People's Democratic Republic to:

1. *Put an immediate end to the military violence against the Hmong ChaoFa communities who have been forced into hiding in the jungle of Northern Laos, and in particular cease using heavy artillery and chemical weapons; provide and allow humanitarian aid to be delivered in the region;*
2. *Eliminate, in law as well as in practice, all forms of discrimination, persecution and other human rights violations against persons belonging to ethnic, religious or other minority groups;*
3. *Take measures to end to the arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, torture and ill-treatment of political opponents, human rights defenders and other civil society representatives, respecting their rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association;*
4. *Act upon the commitment to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; furthermore, accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court to end the impunity for the ongoing crimes against humanity in the Phou Bia region.*
5. *Recognise the indigenous status of the Hmong ChaoFa in Laos, subsequently developing the necessary legal frameworks to protect indigenous peoples in Laos; the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should serve as a guiding framework for this;*
6. *Develop a legal framework to protect ethnic minorities from land grabbing practices and forced relocations as a consequence of economic activities that deprive them from their own means of subsistence; provide already relocated communities with fair compensation for their losses;*
7. *Re-evaluate policies with regards to natural resource-related and other large industries, as well as hydroelectric dams; conduct assessments into their environmental, socio-economic and human rights impact, taking into specific consideration the dependency of ethnic minorities to land and other natural resources;*
8. *Address the significant disparities in health and living standards between ethnic minority and majority groups; this includes providing the necessary assistance to remote geographical areas with high rates of child and maternal mortality, as well as expanding the education system to include education in minority languages;*
9. *Conduct independent and transparent investigations into persons who have been victims of enforced disappearances.*
10. *Ensure the inclusion of women in decision-making processes as well as legislative and governmental roles through affirmative action policies; address the existing structural barriers that prevent women from minority groups from accessing such policies;*

11. *Halt the widespread abuses of the Laotian military such as rape, sexual enslavement and human trafficking of ChaoFa Hmong women in the Phou Bia region; take effectively legal action by prosecuting the individuals who have committed these crimes.*

**Appendix  
Status of Human Rights Committee Recommendations**

| <b>Issuer</b> | <b>Month and Year</b> | <b>Recommendation</b> | <b>Developments Following Recommendation</b> |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|

|  |               |   |   |
|--|---------------|---|---|
| Human Rights Committee (CCPR/C/LAO/CO/1) | November 2018 | Cease the persecution of members of the Hmong ethnic minority, including their arbitrary arrest, detention and enforced disappearance, and effectively investigate such acts, bring perpetrators to justice, and provide full reparation to victims or their families; and take robust measures to ensure effective access for members of the Hmong community to adequate food and health care, without discrimination. | Since October 2018, ChaoFa Hmong communities who are hiding in the jungle around the Phou Bia region have suffered from increased persecution and extreme violence at the hands of the Lao People's Army. As of July 2019, the ChaoFa Hmong continue to suffer extremely as the military continues to make indiscriminate use of tanks, heavy artillery and chemical weapons. |
| Human Rights Committee (CCPR/C/LAO/CO/1) | November 2018 | Step up efforts to conduct a thorough, credible, impartial and transparent investigation into cases of alleged enforced disappearances.   |   |
| Human Rights Committee (CCPR/C/LAO/CO/1) | November 2018 | Take vigorous measures to eradicate torture and ill-treatment.  |   |
| Human Rights Committee (CCPR/C/LAO/CO/1) | November 2018 | Guarantee the effective exercise of freedom of religion in practice, ensuring, inter alia, the protection of Christians against any form of persecution or discrimination based on their religion, and sanction any such conduct.   | Cases of mistreatment and persecution of religious minorities – especially Christian groups – are frequently reported. The LPDR continues to strictly monitor religious practices, limiting the exercise of religious freedom.  |
| Human Rights Committee (CCPR/C/LAO/CO/1) | November 2018 | Act upon its commitment to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance  |   |
| Human Rights Committee (CCPR/C/LAO/CO/1) | November 2018 | Ensure that communities participate in any process concerning their relocation, that such relocation is carried out in accordance with relevant international standards, in particular the principle of non-discrimination, the rights to be informed and consulted, to an  | The Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights noted in June 2019 that the LPRD's minority groups continue to face extreme challenges related to loss of land and resettlement as a result of the "Turning Land into Capital" policy.   |

|   |           |  |  |
|---|-----------|--|--|
|   |           | effective remedy and to the provision of adequate relocation sites that take due account of their traditional lifestyle and, where applicable, their right to ancestral land; and provide adequate compensation when relocation is not possible. |  |
| Viet Nam at the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/29/7/Add.1) | June 2015 | Continue its efforts to eliminate poverty, especially in remote regions.   | The Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights noted in June 2019 that there continue to exist persistent structural barriers that prevent the full realisation of human rights by people in poverty, particularly by ethnic minorities in remote regions. |