

-Humanitarian Law RULES!

Center for the Study of Humanitarian Law

Newsletter

How the Flood Resulted from Dam Collapsed Affected Right to Adequate Standard of Living: *Lesson Learnt from Laos*

At 8 pm, July 23, 2018, the Xe-pain Xe-namnoy Dam, located in Attapeu province, Laos, collapsed, after the huge amount of water overflowed this construction site. This collapse, sent 5 billion cubic meters of water down to tributary of Mekong River, causing a flash flood over eight villages downstream. It has caused severe impacts on housing property, and livelihood. This incident not only affected Laos, but also those countries located downstream Mekong River like Vietnam and Cambodia.

It is known that the Dam is part of a billion-dollar hydropower project that the Laotian government approved to boost its economic development despite the threat of the risks to local and fisheries.¹ Minister of Energy and Mines of Laos insisted that the Xe-pain Xe-namnoy Power Company (the Company) cannot denied the responsibility for massive destruction to livelihood and victim of this flood.² Meanwhile, the flood is widely believed to be resulted from the Dam collapse; however, the company said in a statement that unusually heavy rain in the area might have caused the water to over flow from the Dam.³

Under Art. 11 of the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Right, everyone is entitled to an adequate standard of living including, adequate food, clothing, and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living condition. States parties will take appropriate steps to ensure realization of this right. Laos ratified this covenant on 13 Feb 2007. Therefore, Laos shall comply with its obligations by ensuring that its citizen progressively has a better living standard.

With this recent incident, however, those who are effected have had it difficult to access to adequate food, clothing, and housing. As of August 17, 2018, at least 35 people were dead and 100 people are missing⁴ while more than 13,000 residents are affected across 13 villages in the area.⁵ More flooding has caused a crucial bridge to collapse, leaving more than 3,700 people stranded in severe condition at camps.⁶ The flood has also caused more destruction, leaving families isolated in camps without enough supplies, sanitation, support, even harder to evacuees.⁷ The government has ordered all 150 local rescue team from Laos and Thailand to the affected area.⁸

¹ <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20180725000686>

² <http://englishnews.thaipbs.or.th/company-must-responsible-dam-collapse-laos-minister/>

³ <https://archive.is/DNy7Z#selection-765.0-765.186>

⁴ <https://reliefweb.int/report/lao-peoples-democratic-republic/dam-collapse-survivors-stranded-monsoon-rains-worsen>

⁵ <https://reliefweb.int/report/lao-peoples-democratic-republic/thousands-lao-villagers-displaced-dam-collapse-appeal-food>

⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/lao-peoples-democratic-republic/dam-collapse-survivors-stranded-monsoon-rains-worsen>

⁷ Id.

⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/21/laos-dam-collapse-work-continues-on-huge-projects-despite-promised-halt>

LIBRARY HOURS

August 2018

Mon to Fri: 8.45am –
5.30pm

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