



## Climate justice in Lao PDR: How ethnic groups treated

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### Abstract

The paper highlights climate justice in Lao PDR, reflected in many policies and laws such as the Constitution of Lao PDR, the Law on Environmental Protection, the Law on Forestry, the Climate Change Strategy, and the Prime Minister's Decree on Climate Change. At the same time, the government of Lao PDR also establishes institutions to deal with climate change issues at both the central and local levels. The paper emphasizes that climate change impacts are more frequent and severe, such as warmer, longer dry seasons, shorter rainy seasons, and colder temperatures during the winter season, while agricultural pests such as grasshoppers, rats, and insects that damage the slash and burn cultivation and paddy land are more severe. Access to public policy and the treatment system of the government regarding climate change as the core of climate justice in Lao PDR is differentiated by the location of the village, access to information, knowledge of the information receiver, regularity of information dissemination, interest in information, and role or duty.

**Keywords:** Climate justice, treating, ethnic groups

### Introduction

The government of the Lao PDR has made great efforts to deal with climate change to reduce the impact of climate change on the lives of the Lao people. The efforts of the government of Lao PDR are expressed by setting policies, promulgating laws, and creating organizations responsible for climate change work. The Lao PDR government's policy on climate change has been defined in many documents, such as the 5-year national economic-social development plan IX (2021-2025). However, there are still many academic arguments that the policies and laws that the government has approved or promulgated and the work of government agencies responsible for such work have not yet been widely implemented, especially for Lao people and ethnic groups living in remote areas such as Thoumthong Vongvisouk and the team pointed out the challenges of Lao PDR in the implementation of activities in the forestry sector that are defined in the national plan to contribute to the solution of climate change. There is still a lack of accurate and reliable information, and there is still no proper arrangement for sustainable forest management or the participation of local people in sustainable forest management. At the same time, there is still a lack of budget for the implementation of activities in the forestry sector that have been identified in the national plan to contribute to solving the climate change problem. While the United Nations Development Organization for Lao PDR is of the view that the dry season in Lao PDR is prolonged, the rainy season is decreasing, directly affecting drought, floods, erosion, and soil erosion, and affecting the way of life of people who depend on natural resources. Therefore, this paper would like to examine access to the policies, laws, and implementation of the government for the people of Lao ethnic groups, and the attention of the public sector to the adaptation to climate change of the ethnic groups has not been studied before—for example, the Hmong, Khmu, Phong, and Xingmoun tribes in Huaphan province.

### Methodology

This study used survey research that collected qualitative data and used doctrinal legal research and interview methods. A document study focuses on the study of policies, content of laws, and regulations related to the protection and adaptation to climate change of the ethnic groups of the Lao PDR. As part of the survey study, in-depth interviews were conducted with the Hmong, Khmu, Phong, and Xingmoun tribes in Huaphan province with 60 informants.

### Results

The result of the study highlighted that access to climate justice relevant to the location of the village, level of awareness of information, interest in the information, and roles and responsibilities (village chief, deputy chief, or various units of the village).

### Location of the village

The location of the village plays an important role in accessing the Lao PDR government's policy on climate change through various channels, such as the official state media, online social media, the dissemination of relevant district government organizations and programs, and general discussions. The village that is located near the city center will have a good chance to access climate justice programs that are operated by the state or development partner, as well as access to public policy and institutional. At the research site, a village that is located not more than 50 km from the city will make it easier to access public offices and information generated by government organizations.

### Level of awareness of information

The level of understanding of access to information (level of education) is fundamental for access to policies on climate change because, according to the interviews of all the informants, no word in their local language, such as the Hmong, Khmu, Phong, and Xingmoun tribes in Huaphan province, replaces the word climate change. Because the

term climate change is too technical, it causes difficulty in understanding people's views in the area of study because, during the interview, the research team must ask in an indirect manner, such as in the past ten years, how has the weather in your village appeared, what has happened, and help explain it to the listeners, so that the informant can explain in detail according to the feelings and experiences he has experienced in the past.

The awareness of information, especially the state's policy on adapting to climate change, also depends on the frequency of information dissemination, especially through the state's official media, such as television, provincial radio, district, and village radio stations, or the dissemination of information at the village level of the relevant organization. For dissemination of climate change policies and regulations, the government assigned this task to the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment, and the Ministry also established the Climate Change Management Department, Provincial Division of Natural Resources and the Environment, and District Office of Natural Resources and the Environment which charges for climate change activities.

### **Interest in the information**

Attention to information is one of the things that shows adaptation to the climate change situation because, although in the past there was dissemination through notification, official state media, and social media, the public's interest in the field of education is limited due to many conditions, such as restrictions on access to the media, notifications only reaching the village administration or village chiefs, and there is no dissemination to inform the public or people do not care to participate in the dissemination.

### **Roles and responsibilities (village chief, deputy chief, or various units of the village)**

The heads of the villages in the research sites expressed the view that the heads of the villages play an important role regarding village development leaders and neutral persons between villagers and the district level. Apart from farming to have food, also expand the area for raising cattle in a semi-natural way, especially the expansion of the area of the barn and planting more grass for livestock because big animals such as cows, buffalo, goats, and pigs generate more and more income, and increasing the number of such animals is another side of the coin. In addition, every year, there are regular vaccinations against animal diseases. The village headman, who has served a long time, will act as a leader for development. Therefore, the climate change program operating in the village will generate knowledge and information for people who serve in the roles of the village chief, deputy chief, or various units of the village.

### **Conclusion**

The climate justice expressed through access to state policies and the attention of the public sector on climate change of the people of the ethnic groups is different depending on many factors such as the level of the area or the location of the village, the level of awareness of information (level of education), interest in information, roles, and responsibilities (village head, deputy village head or various units of the village), etc. village in the municipality, a village in the suburbs, and a village in the rural area are not equal in terms of access to climate change.

Accessing information about climate change is quite challenging because the word does not have a word in its local language such as the Hmong, Khmu, Phong, and Xingmoun tribes in Huaphan province.

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