



LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC  
PEACE INDEPENDENCE DEMOCRACY UNITY PROSPERITY

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President's Office

No. 126/PO

**DECREE**  
*of the*  
**PRESIDENT**  
*of the*  
**LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC**

**On the Promulgation of the Law on Water and Water Resources**

Pursuant to Chapter 5, Article 53, point 1 of the Constitution of the Lao People's Democratic Republic;

Pursuant to Resolution No. 005, dated 11 October 1996, of the 9<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the third legislature of the National Assembly regarding the adoption of the Law on Water and Water Resources; and

Pursuant to Proposal No. 08/SC, dated 16 October 1996, of the National Assembly Standing Committee.

**The President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic  
Decrees That:**

**Article 1.** The Law on Water and Water Resources is hereby promulgated.

**Article 2.** This decree shall enter into force on the date it is signed.

Vientiane, 2 November 1996

The President of the Lao People's  
Democratic Republic

*[Seal and Signature]*

Nouhak PHOUMSAVANH



LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC  
PEACE INDEPENDENCE DEMOCRACY UNITY PROSPERITY

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National Assembly

No. 02-96  
11 October 1996

## **LAW ON WATER AND WATER RESOURCES**

### **Chapter 1 General Provisions**

#### **Article 1. Function of the Law on Water and Water Resources**

This Law on Water and Water Resources determines the necessary principles, regulations, and measures relating to the administration, exploitation, use and development of water and water resources in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, in order to preserve the sustainability of water and water resources, to ensure [that water is available in the] volume and quality necessary for the people's living requirements, to promote agriculture, forestry, and industry, to develop the national economy, and to ensure that no damage is caused to the environment.

#### **Article 2. Water and Water Resources**

Water refers to a natural liquid resource, which is the most basic and fundamental of all water resources.

Water resources refers to living or non-living natural resources that are found in water or water resources [such as]: plants, aquatic animals, stones, gravel, sand, mud, minerals and others<sup>1, 2</sup>.

#### **Article 3. Water Sources and Water Catchments**

A water source is a place where there is an accumulation of water, an abiding body of water at rest, or a permanent or temporarily active body of naturally occurring water. Water exists on the surface, underground and in the atmosphere.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "and others" is a literal translation and is not subject to further specificity.

<sup>2</sup> The translators are aware that there are some inconsistencies between the definition of "water" (which appears to suggest that it is a subset of "water resources") and that of "water resources". The translators are also aware that it may be circular to define "water resources" to include natural resources that "are found in ... water resources".

Surface water sources are water sources above the surface of the ground which occur in long connecting flows [or] at specific locations [such as]: rivers, tributaries, streams, lakes, canals, ponds<sup>3</sup>, swamps, bogs, [and] springs.

Underground water sources are water sources below the surface of the ground occurring in strata, in aquifers, as a stream, or mixed with the soil.

Atmospheric water sources are water sources in the atmosphere that are in the form of vapour, or in small accumulated particles such as fog, clouds, rain, or hail.

Catchments are all areas of ground surface and forests, from river sources to the mouths of rivers, where water is distributed<sup>4</sup> and where raindrops are accumulated into a water source system.

#### **Article 4. Ownership of Water and Water Resources**

Water and water resources are the property of the national community whom the State represents in their management, and in the thorough and reasonable allocation of their use to various parties.

Individuals, legal entities, or organisations shall have the right to possess and use any natural water and water resource in any activity, provided that they have received approval from relevant authorised agencies, except in the case of small-scale usage as provided by this law.

#### **Article 5. Promotion, Development and Preservation of Water and Water Resources**

The government promotes the development, exploitation, use, preservation and protection of water and water resources, including the prevention of adverse impact from water and all acts that cause the depletion of water.

#### **Article 6. Basic Principles Relating to the Management and Use of Water and Water Resources**

Water and water resources must be managed and used according to centralised, comprehensive and integrated management principles, [and] according to the allocation plan provided for in Article 22 of this law.

#### **Article 7. Obligations to Protect Water and Water Resources**

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<sup>3</sup> Readers should note that the way in which these terms are used in Lao may not exactly coincide with the way they are used in English. E.g., a body of water may be named a pond but may be larger than a lake.

<sup>4</sup> The connotation is that water runs off or is drained into separate catchments.

In order to successfully protect and use water and water resources, individuals, legal entities or organisations are obligated to strictly comply with water and water resources management regulations.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Surveying, Listing, and Determining Types Of Water Sources and Catchments**

#### **Article 8. Surveying and Listing**

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is directly responsible for the surveying and listing of water sources and water catchments throughout the country, by coordinating with relevant sectors and local areas<sup>5</sup>.

#### **Article 9. Determination of Types of Water Source**

To support the national socio-economic and environmental development plans of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, water sources are categorised according to the following types of main purposes:

1. Water sources for drinking and use are water sources which are allocated for the peoples' consumption and use<sup>6</sup>;
2. Reserved water sources are water sources which are allocated for the care of animals, vegetation, living and non-living things, and others, including the natural environment and important and precious things;
3. Water sources for irrigation are water sources which are allocated for agricultural and forestry<sup>7</sup> production and raising livestock;
4. Water sources to produce electrical power are water sources which are allocated for the production of electrical power;
5. Industrial water sources are water sources which are allocated for industrial production;
6. Water sources for water transportation are water sources which are allocated for boat travel and water transport;
7. Water sources for tourism are water sources which are allocated to support tourism;
8. Water sources for protection of health and hygiene are water sources which are allocated to support healthcare and medical treatment.

#### **Article 10. Types of Catchments**

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<sup>5</sup> This is a literal translation. The translators understand that it is a reference to the local administrations.

<sup>6</sup> The term “use” in this and other articles is very broad and may include selling the water at the level of a small family business.

<sup>7</sup> The phrase “agricultural and forestry” is the translation of a compound word in Lao: “agro-forestry”.

There are three types of catchments: main river catchments, tributary catchments and branch<sup>8</sup> catchments.

1. The main river catchment is the catchment area of the Mekong River within the territory of the Lao People's Democratic Republic;
2. A tributary catchment is a water source catchment within the territory of the Lao People's Democratic Republic into which tributaries of the Mekong River or of other rivers flow;
3. A branch catchment is a water source catchment within the territory of the Lao People's Democratic Republic [from which water] flows into tributaries of the Mekong River or of other rivers.

The agencies responsible for water must determine the scope and type<sup>9</sup> of catchments according to Article 9 of this law.

#### **Article 11. Water Source and Catchment Allocation**

The allocation of water sources and catchments shall be based on surveys and on data collected, in order that water and water resources are distributed, managed and used effectively and in accordance with their purposes.

#### **Article 12. Determination of Water and Water Resources Allocation**

To ensure that water and water resources existing in the Lao People's Democratic Republic are used thoroughly and in accordance with their purposes, the government shall determine the distribution of water and water resources.

### **Chapter 3 Use of Water and Water Resources**

#### **Article 13. Objectives of the Use of Water and Water Resources**

Water and water resources can be used for various purposes [such as]: for family<sup>10</sup> consumption and use, irrigation, fishing, raising fish and other aquatic animals, agricultural and forestry production, raising livestock, producing electrical power, industrial production, communications and transportation, sports and recreation, medical care, [and for] cultural and other uses.

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<sup>8</sup> This refers to small streams, or tributaries of tributaries, but the word specifically used (unlike in Article 3) is “branch”, as in the branches of trees.

<sup>9</sup> This sentence appears to deal with determining what type of water source a catchment should be classified as, rather than determining the type of catchment.

<sup>10</sup> The translators are aware that in some other provisions a similar term “for the people’s consumption” is used. Here, the Lao original specifically uses the word “family”.

The use of water in the production of electrical power and irrigation shall be specifically regulated.

Water and water resources may be used for a single purpose or for multiple purposes, as the case may be and as appropriate. Underground water sources must principally be reserved for drinking and for use. Use of underground water in medium and large-scale activities must be approved by a<sup>11</sup> relevant agency.

#### **Article 14. Right to Use Water and Water Resources**

Individuals, legal entities, or organisations have the right to use water and water resources for family use or in business operations.

There are three levels of the right to use water and water resources: small-scale, medium-scale, [and] large-scale.

The right to use water and water resources must be in accordance with the water source allocation plan.

#### **Article 15. Small-scale Use**

Small-scale use is use that is not of a business nature of water and water resources, for the following purposes:

1. Family use for the benefit of the village or for purposes of culture and sports;
2. Fishing and raising fish or other aquatic animals;
3. Collecting soil, rocks, gravel, sand, mud, and also vegetation<sup>12</sup> in or around a water source;
4. Use in agricultural and forestry production and for raising livestock, at the basic family level.

Such small-scale use may be undertaken provided that there is no prohibition from a relevant ministry or a local administrative authority<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> The Lao language does not require nouns to contain information as to whether they are singular or plural. At the time of translation, some of the authorities responsible for these matters have not been designated; the translators are therefore unable to resolve whether the approval would be obtained from a single agency or multiple agencies.

<sup>12</sup> The literal translation is “other vegetation”. This has the connotation of “additional” vegetation of many types.

<sup>13</sup> The same Lao term may be translated as both “local administrations” and “local administrative authorities”. The translators have generally applied the following convention: (i) if the term is used in a sentence in juxtaposition to a reference to some specific agency within the line ministries, the term has been translated as “local administrations”, referring only to the bodies responsible for local administration discussed in the Law on Local Administration; and (ii) if the term is used alone in a sentence, it has been translated as “local administrative authorities” to indicate that it may be wide enough to cover local administrations as well as local divisions, offices or units of line ministries. However, the reader should note the alternative meaning that may have been intended.

**Article 16. Medium-scale Use**

Medium-scale use is the use of water and water resources for the following purposes:

1. Constructing small-scale weirs or dams, building things which impede or divert the flow of water, building dams or raising embankments to divert water flow for navigation or for [building] small reservoirs to produce electrical power, or for irrigation, livestock, fishing, and others;
2. Extracting stones, gravel, sand, soil, mud, minerals, trees, and others, in or around a water source having a minor impact on nature and the environment;
3. Installing small mechanical water pumps to undertake production or services which are not for family use;
4. Using water sources for businesses relating to tourism, sports, and culture.

**Article 17. Large-scale Water Use**

Large-scale water use is the use of water and water resources for the following purposes:

1. Constructing medium and large-scale reservoirs for the purpose of irrigation, consumption and use<sup>14</sup>, and to produce electrical power;
2. Constructing buildings or installing plants, factories, equipment, [or] large-scale machinery, within the water source area, or close to or surrounding the water source area;
3. Use of water and water resources in large volumes in the field of industrial plant production.

**Article 18. Each Type of Use**

Small-scale use does not require approval. For medium and large-scale use, approval must be obtained, there must be registration, or a contract must be entered into<sup>15</sup>. In addition, large-scale use must be accompanied by a feasibility study, an environmental and social impact assessment, and detailed measures to deal with such impact.

**Article 19. Management of Water and Water Resources**

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<sup>14</sup> See footnote 6.

<sup>15</sup> This sentence has been translated literally. The translators are unable to resolve whether the list of requirements is cumulative or disjunctive. The translators are also unable to determine who the parties to the contract are.

Water and water resources shall be centrally managed, and management [responsibilities] shall be allocated according to the size and [type of] water use right as provided in Article 14 of this law.

Large-scale use shall be approved by the government.

Medium-scale use shall be approved by a relevant agency, except for significant medium-scale use, where there must also be consent from the government.

Administration and inspection of such use are assigned to relevant divisions and local administrative authorities for execution.

#### **Chapter 4**

### **Water Source Development and Management of Water Source Development Activities**

#### **Article 20. Water Source Development Activities**

Water source development activities are activities which relate to constructing, digging, drilling, installing, improving, expanding, and repairing reservoirs, water catchments, ponds, wells, deep aquifer wells, canals, dykes, or drainage pipes to exploit, collect, accumulate or catch water from surface, underground, or atmospheric water sources for use for any purpose provided in Article 13 of this law, including activities to protect against the adverse impact of flooding, drought, and erosion.

#### **Article 21. Conducting Water Source Development Activities**

Individuals, legal entities, or organisations may conduct any water source development activity, provided only that they have obtained approval from the relevant authorised agency, except for small-scale water source development activities for non-prohibited purposes.

#### **Article 22. Principles Governing Water Source Development Activities**

Water source development activities must be conducted according to the following principles:

1. Must comply with socio-economic and environmental development plans<sup>16</sup>, the master plan, periodic development plans of each sector, and the construction plan for each approved project;
2. Must ensure the preservation of water and water resources, the environment and natural scenic beauty;
3. Must prevent adverse impact from water;

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<sup>16</sup> The translators are aware that Article 9 refers to the national socio-economic development plan whereas this article refers only to the socio-economic development plan.



4. Must be subject to inspection by relevant authorised agencies responsible for water and water resources.

**Article 23. Management of Water Sources Development Activities**

Sectors<sup>17</sup> and agencies responsible for water and water resources have the duty to issue regulations regarding water source development activities.

Individuals, legal entities or organisations which conduct water source development activities have the duty to maintain and preserve the things they construct in good condition and to ensure safety.

Individuals, legal entities, or organisations which have used or have received benefits from water source development activities have the duty to participate in providing data, and in maintaining and preserving<sup>18</sup> those water source development activities.

**Article 24. Contribution of Funds for the Preservation of Headwaters<sup>19</sup> and Water Resources**

Those conducting development activities and who use water and water resources must contribute funds for the preservation of headwaters and water sources.

**Article 25. Promoting the Preservation[,]<sup>20</sup> Development of Headwaters and Water Resources for Use in Producing Electrical Power**

The government promotes the development and use of water resources in the production of large, medium, and small-scale electrical power at water sources where there are suitable conditions for the production of electrical power. The use of water resources shall take into account the capacity and impact of [such use], [and] if there are conducive conditions, several hydro-electric dams should be built or multi-purpose hydro-electric dams should be built for the same river, according to the plan.

In the building of a hydro-electric dam, [one must] take into account the preservation of headwaters, [the preservation of] forests, the [preservation of the] environment, the prevention of flooding, the water supply, irrigation, water communications, fishing, the raising of fish and aquatic animals, and others.

**Article 26. Promoting the Building of Reservoirs by the Public**

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<sup>17</sup> The term “sector” is used in many Lao laws to refer to the cluster of government ministries or agencies engaged in a particular activity.

<sup>18</sup> The translators are aware that it is awkward to speak of maintaining or preserving activities.

<sup>19</sup> The literal translation is “the origins of water”.

<sup>20</sup> In the Lao original, these two words are simply separated by a space.

The State promotes the building of reservoirs by the public to ensure agricultural and forestry production and raising livestock. Local administrative authorities have the duty to mobilise and to encourage through appropriate methods [such as]: credit policies, exemption or reduction of duties and taxes.

**Article 27. Diversion, Separation or Modification of Water Flow**

In water source development activities, small-scale diversion, separation, or modification of water flow must be approved by provincial or municipal<sup>21</sup> administrative authorities; medium-scale must be approved by the government; large-scale must be approved by the National Assembly.

**Article 28. Population Resettlement**

If it is necessary to resettle people from the location or area of a water source development project, the project owner must assist in searching for an appropriate new place for the people to live and practice their livelihood. Funds to be used for such resettlement [or] assistance[, or] for the compensation of damage to such persons shall be included in the project capital.

**Chapter 5  
Protection of Water and Water Resources**

**Article 29. Protection of Water and Water Resources**

Individuals, legal entities, or organisations have the obligations to preserve water and water resources, to not cause water to become shallower, to be depleted, to be polluted or to become noxious and to not cause damage to water, water resources, public property and the property of other individuals. Water and water resources must be used economically<sup>22</sup> and there must be measures to protect against adverse impact on the environment and natural beauty. In addition, there are obligations to preserve, restore and rehabilitate forest and land resources in water catchment areas, in accordance with plans relating to water source allocation, forests, land, and seasons, specifically [plans] relating to headwaters or water sources.

The government shall determine protected and reserved areas to preserve water resources.

**Article 30. Areas of Protected Water and Water Resources**

The government determines areas of protected water and water resources in order to supply sufficient volume and quality of water to the

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<sup>21</sup> The reader should note that the organisation of local administration has undergone change over time and that the administrative divisions and titles used in this older law do not conform to those used in newer laws such as the Law on Local Administration.

<sup>22</sup> The term “economically” is used in the sense of “with care”.

population in urban and rural areas. Such protected areas may be demarcated or fenced in. Within the protected areas, there shall be no construction, agricultural production or industry, raising of livestock, quarrying, excavation of stones, minerals, soil, or sand, dumping of trash, waste, waste water, poisonous substances, or chemical substances, setting off of explosives, burial of human or animal cadavers, and others which cause damage.

In the event that there is serious damage to water volume and quality or there is a risk of spreading disease, the government shall determine an additional protected area or region or shall use other protective measures.

### **Article 31. Prohibitions**

For water and water resource preservation to be effective, it is absolutely prohibited for any individual, legal entity, or organisation to:

1. Use, exploit, or destroy water and water resources within reserved areas;
2. Cut trees in protected areas that are headwaters or around water sources;
3. Dig, drill, excavate or modify land surfaces so as to cause erosion in a catchment area, [or] throw or dump materials into [any] water source so as to cause the water source to become shallow or depleted or to become noxious [or] poisonous.

The following acts are prohibited, unless approval has been granted:

1. Constructing or building by the water, on the shore or in the water;
2. Exploiting, pumping or digging sand, gravel, minerals, soil or mud from surfaces adjacent to the shore or surrounding water sources;
3. Digging drainage canals, [or] filling, modifying or changing<sup>23</sup> the area of rivers, lakes, ponds, [or] swamps that belong to the public, including organisations and individuals, [in each case] so as to damage the interests of the public or other persons;
4. Constructing things that obstruct the flow of water or that obstruct water communications;
5. Modifying water flows, build sluice gates, [or] dig or excavate medium or small-scale drainage ditches.

In addition to the above prohibitions, the government promotes the planting of trees and the rehabilitation of forests in the protected areas of water sources.

### **Article 32. Water Quality Standards**

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<sup>23</sup> The two Lao words translated as “modifying” and “changing” have the connotations of “making a small change” and “changing in entirety”, respectively.

The agency responsible for water shall determine the quality standards for drinking water and for used water that is drained into water sources or into some other place.

## **Chapter 6 Unavoidable Facts**

### **Article 33. Unavoidable Facts**

Realities which must be accepted are actual conditions which occur naturally or which are provided by law.

### **Article 34. Unavoidable Natural Facts**

The person who possesses the land above has no right to block the regular flow of water, so as to cause damage to those who use water on the land below.

In the event that there is blockage to those who use water on the land below, the person possessing the land above shall be liable to appropriately compensate.

The person who possesses land below must allow water to flow naturally from the land above into or across such person's land.

In the event that the person who possesses land below dams up the water, causing damage to those who possess land above, such person who possesses land below shall be liable to compensate for damages which arise.

### **Article 35. Unavoidable Legal Facts**

Those who construct or who have received approval to conduct any activity have the right to receive a right of way for any type of water, including polluted water, waste water, or toxic water, through a pipe or by digging a trench across the land of another individual, legal entity or organisation, but must apply appropriate measures and shall not cause damage to the person possessing the land over which the water flows.

If there is a violation of [any obligation relating to] unavoidable legal facts, which causes damage to any individual, legal entity, or organisation, the violator and any person who enjoys a benefit from such violation must make appropriate compensation for [such] damage. The person accepting unavoidable legal facts who suffers damage but also receives benefits must still receive appropriate compensation.<sup>24</sup>

### **Article 36. Rights of Those Who Possess or Reside near Land over Which Water Flows**

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<sup>24</sup> Compensation is presumably due from the person exercising the right of way but the text is not clear on this point.

Those who possess land over which or near which water flows have the right to use the works<sup>25</sup> referred to in Article 35 of this law, but they must contribute to various costs [such as]: construction costs, use costs and costs to maintain and protect the portion of the works which they use.

**Article 37. Rights and Duties of Agency Responsible for the Management of the Use of Water and Water Resources**

The agency<sup>26</sup> responsible for the management of the use of water and water resources has the right to install and construct necessary items on the land of individuals, legal entities, or organisations, in order to distribute and monitor water or improve water quality, including the right to lay electricity lines and water pipes across such land, but must make appropriate compensation for damages which arise.

**Article 38. Dispute Resolution**

Administrative authorities shall resolve disputes arising from unavoidable facts through mediation. If no agreement can be reached, the courts shall consider<sup>27</sup> the matter.

**Chapter 7  
Preventing and Countering Water Damage**

**Article 39. Water Damage**

Water damage refers to damage which arises from water due to natural disasters or due to human acts [such as]: floods, rising water, flash floods, water salinity, water pollution, waste water, muddied water, drying up of the flow of water, erosion, and others.

**Article 40. Prevention of Flooding**

All levels of administrative authorities must be responsible for leading, using effective measures, and applying the general plan and instructions relating to the prevention and countering of flooding. If there is flash flooding, the local administrative authorities at such place must resolve the matter.

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<sup>25</sup> The Lao word which has been translated as “works” is literally “activities”. However, this sentence appears to refer to a person’s right to use the pipes, trenches and other works permitted under Article 25, rather than to use “activities”.

<sup>26</sup> The Lao language does not require nouns to contain information as to whether they are singular or plural. At the time of translation, the relevant agency or agencies have not yet been designated. It is therefore not possible for the translators to definitively decide whether this reference should be translated in the singular or the plural form. The translators have therefore chosen to translate the term in the singular form.

<sup>27</sup> The term “consider” has the connotation that the relevant authority also has the right to render decisions on the matters considered.

To prevent and counter flooding, administrative authorities at each level have the right to mobilise materials, equipment and labour and to use the budgets of the State, individuals, legal entities or organisations. When the works have ended, such materials and equipment must be returned to their owners and appropriate compensation must be made for damage to such material and equipment.

Individuals, legal entities or organisations have the duty to cooperate with administrative authorities to prevent and counter flooding.

#### **Article 41. Preventing and Countering Erosion**

The agency responsible for water and administrative authorities at all levels must strengthen their leadership in preventing and countering erosion. It is prohibited to carry out activities that cause erosion [such as]: construction, cutting trees, quarrying of stones, gravel, soil, sand, [or] minerals, and others. In addition, in order to prevent the impact of erosion, such agencies must have plans to prevent erosion where necessary [such as]: reforestation on shorelines and undertaking various other measures.

#### **Article 42. Preventing Polluted Water and Waste Water<sup>28</sup>**

Polluted water is water which is not clean or water which has been used, which can be reused after being recycled. Waste water is water which has been used and which has dirty substances in it [or] has chemicals mixed in it so as to cause it to lose its characteristics as water, being dangerous to the environment.

Individuals, legal entities or organisations must adhere to regulations regarding the prevention of waste water.

It is prohibited to undertake any activity that may cause damage to water or water resources, the environment, animals, and the living condition of the people; it is prohibited to dump or discharge waste of any kind into water sources so as to [create]<sup>29</sup> polluted water or waste water containing [pollutants or waste] in excess of the discharge standard.<sup>30</sup>

Polluted water, waste water, [and] waste that exceed the discharge standard must first be treated before they may be dumped or discharged into water sources[; this includes]: water from plants, factories, abattoirs, hospitals, and others.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> The translators are aware that it is awkward to speak of preventing polluted water and waste water. However, here, polluted water and waste water appear to be used in the sense of “a situation where there is polluted water and waste water”.

<sup>29</sup> The literal translation is “cause”.

<sup>30</sup> The literal translation is “causing polluted water or waste water beyond the standard of discharge of polluted water or waste water”. The phrase “discharge standard” refers to permitted levels of pollutants and waste.

<sup>31</sup> For readability, the sentence structure and punctuation of this sentence have been changed.

Should any individual discover any act referred to above, he<sup>32</sup> must report it to the village administrative authorities or to a responsible agency for timely resolution.

**Article 43. Monitoring and Inspection**

The agency responsible for water and other relevant agencies have the duty to regularly monitor and inspect the adherence to and the application of the following measures:

1. Standards, volume and quality of water as provided by laws and regulations;
2. The proper use of water and water resources according to type and system of use;
3. Execution of construction projects relating to the development of water sources so that they are in accordance with the socio-economic development plan, the environmental development plan, the water sources allocation plan, the master plan and the construction plan relating to the development of water resources.

In addition to applying other laws and regulations relating to water and water resources, a fund must also be organised for the protection and development of water and water resources.

**Chapter 8**  
**International Cooperation Relating to the Use,**  
**Management, Protection, and Development of**  
**Water and Water Resources**

**Article 44. Development and Management of Water and Water Resources between Countries**

The exploitation, use, management, protection, and development of water and water resources between countries must be conducted in compliance with international law and with signed treaties and conventions [such as]: the use and preservation of water and water resources between the Lao People's Democratic Republic and neighbouring countries must be carried out based on fairness, reasonableness, equality, and respect for independence, sovereignty and autonomy.

**Article 45. Resolution of Disputes between Countries Relating to Water and Water Resources**

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<sup>32</sup> The reader should note that the Lao language does not distinguish between genders in pronouns. In this translation, a reference to a gender is a reference to all genders, unless the context requires otherwise. The translators' decision to use the male gender was made in the interest of simplicity and consistency.

Disputes which arise between the Lao People's Democratic Republic and neighbouring countries regarding the exploitation, use, management, and protection of water and water resources and the prevention of damage caused by water must be resolved by the government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the government of the relevant country based on friendship and equality through diplomatic channels and as provided for under treaties entered into or accepted by the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Policies towards Persons with High Achievement and Measures Against Violators<sup>33</sup>**

#### **Article 46. Application of Policies towards Persons with High Achievement**

Individuals, legal entities or organisations which have outstanding and effective performance in the protection, development, exploitation, use and preservation of water sources, water resources and the environment, in accordance with the socio-economic development plan, the water source allocation plan, [and] the environmental preservation and protection plan, including building reservoirs and planting trees in protected water source areas, shall receive awards and other policies determined by the government.

#### **Article 47. Measures Against Violators**

Individuals, legal entities or organisations that violate this law shall be re-educated<sup>34</sup>, fined or punished according to the laws and regulations of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on a case by case basis according to the seriousness of the violation.

In the event that civil liability or criminal punishment is imposed, [any] illegal construction work or operations shall be removed or destroyed.

## **Chapter 10**

### **Final Provisions**

#### **Article 48. Implementation**

The government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has the duty to issue detailed regulations for the implementation of this law.

#### **Article 49. Effectiveness**

This law shall come into force after 90 days from the date of the promulgating decree issued by the President of the Lao People's Democratic

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<sup>33</sup> The term “policies” in this context takes the meaning of “privileges” and the term “measures” takes the meaning of “sanctions”.

<sup>34</sup> Here, “re-education” does not mean the same as “re-education without deprivation of liberty” referred to in the Penal Law.



Republic. All regulations and provisions which contravene this law are null and void.

Vientiane, 11 October 1996  
President of the National Assembly

*[Seal and Signature]*

Samane VIGNAKET