

ONE YEAR LATER: LESSONS FROM ATTAPEU DAM COLLAPSE

Report Compiled by The SEAD Project & Partners
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PARTNERS

In 2018, an international and local volunteer-led mobilization response working group was formed in response to the mass flooding due to a major hydropower dam collapse in Attapeu, Laos and surrounding areas.

After consulting with local partners and advisers, The SEAD Project (SEAD) hosted a digital fundraising campaign to assist as a facilitating organization to support, mobilize resources, and share knowledge about relief efforts. This report is only intended to provide transparency on the use of dam collapse funds, the role of SEAD in working with partners Team We Run/Events for Good and Vientiane Rescue, the Q&A dialog from a flood relief advisory in 2018 to local researchers, and a summary of preliminary research on relief efforts.

For the latest information and summary of impact on the issue, SEAD recommends reading “Reckless Endangerment: Assessing Responsibility for the Xe Pian-Xe Namnoy Dam Collapse” by International Rivers and Inclusive Development International.

SEAD is committed to creatively growing sustainable community development through diaspora-led initiatives for, by, and with Southeast Asian diaspora communities. To be involved in our projects and initiatives in the region, please visit us at www.theseadproject.org.

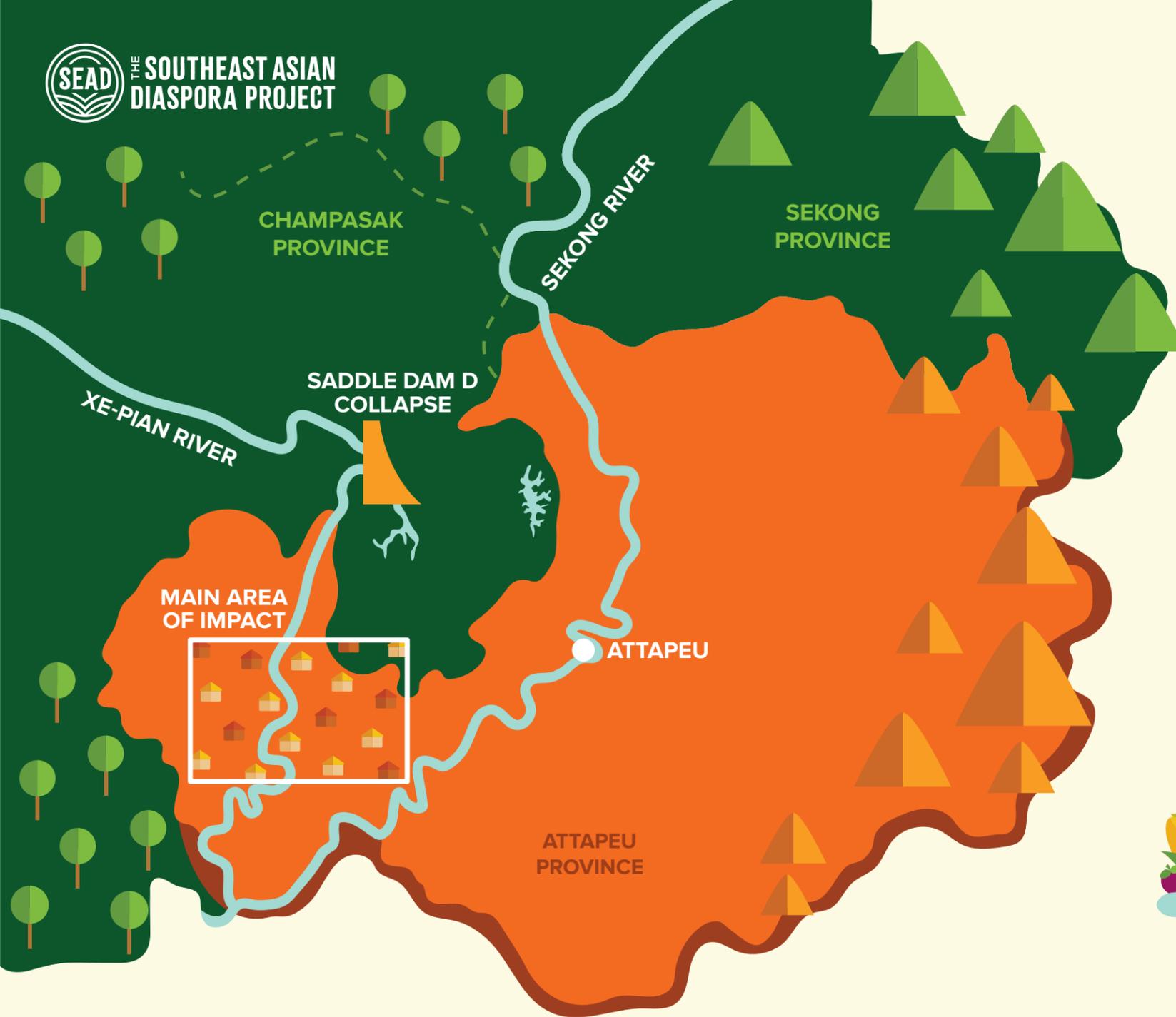
Flood Relief Advisory Goals

- To establish mobilization of funds, resources, and volunteers specifically for emergency flood response and rehabilitation for disaster-related relief for affected families in Laos.
- To function as a cohesive collective response effort within the local Lao, diaspora community, and international partners in and outside of Laos.
- To advise, research, and strategize for most effective and efficient use of time, resources and funds raised.

TIMELINE

- Morning of July 23rd, 2018**
 Hydropower dam officials sent a warning letter to Champasak and Attapeu Provincial Offices indicating high water levels and potential failure, urging villagers to evacuate.
- Evening of July 23rd, 2018**
 Dam collapsed and flooding swept through Yai Thae, Hinlad, Ban Mai, Thasengchan, Tha Hin, and Samong, and Sanamxay district in Attapeu area of Laos.
- International community responded to immediate rescue and recovery efforts.
- 2019 and beyond**
 Recovery and rehabilitation continues.

IMPACT OF THE 2018 ATTAPEU DAM COLLAPSE



15,000+
people affected in
Laos & Cambodia

7,000+
people displaced
in Laos

100+
people missing or
unaccounted for

71
people estimated
death toll

Main villages impacted:
Sanamxay District
Ban Mai
Samong
Yai Thae
Hinlad
Thasengchan
Tha Hin

Main ethnic groups impacted:
Lao
Oi
Lave
Jrou Dak
Brao



AGRICULTURE

Nationally:
90,000
hectares of paddy
fields destroyed

Khammouane Province:
26,590
hectares of paddy fields
completely destroyed

10,850
hectares of paddy fields
partially destroyed



TRANSPORTATION

630 Kilometers of
roads damaged

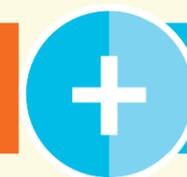
47 bridges
damaged



HOUSING

1,779 houses
destroyed

514 houses
damaged



HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Malnutrition cases reported:
76 moderate cases **17** severe acute cases
(cases reported mostly in the camps)

WASH facilities damaged in:
195 schools **9** health centres

Team We Run Report

Team We Run is a group based in Vientiane, Laos who runs for fun, fitness and friendship; as well as for charity causes. For more info: <https://www.facebook.com/TeamWeRun/>.

At the end of July 2018, Team We Run responded to the catastrophic flood in Attapeu Province. They received assistance from the Offroad Federation, who provided 30 trucks to deliver in-kind donations to Attapeu which included Kolao's contribution of 1 container truck, Lao Ford City's 3 trucks, and Coffee City's 1 truck; all of which were used to deliver emergency and urgent goods. Other in-kind donations for Sanamxay district came from Team We Run members, who hand-delivered donations to affected people residing in temporary camps.

For cash donations, Team We Run received 183,699,560 Kip, which included 73,350,000 Kip from The SEAD Project. **Out of the total amount; 143,176,500 Kip was spent on:**

1. Emergency goods, including 480 mosquito nets, 240 mats, 60 packs of black garbage bags, 40 waders, and 3 blankets.
2. Dengue fever medicine for a project with the Lao Women Union through Inter Clinic in August 2018.
3. Round-trip bus fare for 40 Attapeu youths to attend a 6-month Vocational Skills Training program in Vientiane for a development project with the Lao Youth Union in November 2018.
4. 1,150 condiment packs for the 7-affected villages for a project with UNICEF in December 2018.
5. Donations towards the South to North (S2N) project to deliver medical equipment to the Attapeu Provincial Hospital in May 2019.

The remaining amount of roughly 40,000,000 Kip was donated to UNICEF, which provides mental health support for those affected by the floods, particularly women and children in Sanamxay district. This project reached over 800 families.

Summary of Impact

Attapeu's Xe-Pian Xe-Namnoy dam collapse¹ on July 23, 2018 is one in a series of dam failures within the past few years in Laos, averaging one a year; with this disaster being the largest. In 2017, Xe-Kman in Attapeu and Nam Aow in Xiengkhouang collapsed, and earlier in 2016, one in Bolikhamxay province collapsed². The UN information bulletin No. 5 on Lao floods³ provided the most comprehensive collection of official information on 2018 flood disasters to date. This brief looks at the impact and what can be done to alleviate the impact of these disasters.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW) is the lead agency who conducted a post-disaster needs assessment, while the National Disaster Prevention and Control Committee is the central body overseeing the national response. Both agencies receive support from the United Nations. Below is the MLSW's summary of findings from the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, which is available online, supported by development partners.

1. <https://featurednewstoday.wordpress.com/2017/10/25>

2. http://tholakhong.blogspot.com/2016/09/blog-post_9.html

3. <http://www.la.one.un.org/flood-tracker>

As of November 2018, across the country

2,382 villages, 126,736 families, 616,145 individuals were reported to be affected by floods.	16,739 individuals remain evacuated from their villages.	1,779 houses are reported as destroyed, and 514 as damaged.
90,000 hectares of paddy fields, and 11,000 hectares of other plantations destroyed.	630 km of roads, and 47 bridges damaged.	Total estimated damage: \$147 million
Total losses (changes in economic flows, higher costs in production, lower revenue): \$225 million	Based on damages and losses, taking into account risk reduction and resilience building, the emerging needs have been calculated at \$493 million.	

As of 2018

Estimated death toll is 71 people.	Estimated missing persons or those unaccounted for is more than 100 people.	Displaced people living in temporary camps are roughly 5,000.
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Resource Allocation

\$42.7 million is required to provide humanitarian assistance to 110,000 households.

\$3.5 million was provided by Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) – adding to other funds, it brings a total to \$6.7 million currently secured. CERF money will be directed towards a project to support 6 hardest hit districts in Khammouane province through a cash distribution program for 6 months.

An estimated \$7 million has been contributed to the Humanitarian Country Team’s Disaster Response Plan, which complements the government’s response.

Nationwide

The most affected provinces are Vientiane Capital, Khammouane, Huaphanh, and Attapeu. Attapeu is most affected per capita.

Water supply systems sustained partial damages, with major damages in Huaphan and Attapeu provinces.

WASH facilities in 195 schools and 9 health centres are damaged. There is an urgent need to disinfect dug wells and provide support to repair water points. UN is working with government partners to develop short, medium, and long term plans.

48 schools in Khammouane, 39 in Savannakhet, 29 in Xaiyaboury, 27 in Attapeu, 26 in Xiengkhuang, 22 in Huaphan, 21 in Vientiane Capital, 19 in Vientiane, 18 in Sekong, 16 in Luang Prabang, 12 in Champasack, 6 in Borikhamxai, 5 in Saravane, 4 in Oudomxay, 3 in Borkeo, 2 in Phongsaly, and 1 each in Luang Namtha and Xaysomboun are impacted, educational materials destroyed.

In Sanamxay, Attapeu

76 cases of moderate, and 17 cases of severe acute malnutrition have been reported, mostly in the camps.

Where the population was not displaced in the 7 flood affected villages, household stocks that were not damaged are starting to run out.

In temporary resettlement, space is limited, making it hard for the displaced households to engage in home gardening, or hold small livestock like poultry.

In the impacted area include ethnic Lao, Oi, Lave, Jrou Dak (Sou), and Brao. The ethnic Lao and Oi were the most heavily impacted by the dam break, though all have been impacted to varying degrees since the dam’s construction and after the subsequent collapse.

In Khammouane

26,590 hectares of paddy fields, 203 hectares of maize, 21 hectares of cassava, and 240 hectares of vegetables were completely destroyed.

10,850 hectares of paddy fields were partially damaged.

32,000 households in 435 villages have been affected.

International Response

Nationwide:

- ASEAN will donate 1,000 metric tones of rice that will be dispatched upon request.

In Sanamxay, Attapeu:

- 35 government staff and camp managers from MLSW and other ministries had received training on camp coordination and camp management.
- Displaced people in camps and those resettled in temporary shelters were reportedly receiving 20 kg of rice/person/day, and LAK 100,000/person/month, plus LAK 15,000/person/3 days through local authorities; although many of the disbursements were many months late for some families.
- Households in the affected, but not displaced villages will receive in-kind food assistance starting in November.
- Ministry of Health has been carrying out integrated health outreach in 23 villages.
- With malnutrition numbers high in the area, blanket distribution of supplementary food like Nutributter to children under five by UN agencies will continue.

In Khammouane:

- CERF \$1.7 million is committed to the affected population in Hinboun and Nongbok districts through a cash distribution program to cover food assistance for 6 months.

Gaps

Nationwide:

- Information on road access continues to be an issue, impacting transportation of educational supplies and goods to remote camps. As of October 2019, a few of the bridges have been reconstructed or rebuilt by a Chinese company.

In Sanamxay, Attapeu:

- The current food assistance to the 7 affected, non-displaced villages will continue. As there are limited opportunities for winter crops, people are likely to be dependent on assistance until then.
- Though limited, there are options for some winter crops, provided farmers have seeds and other inputs.
- There are a lack of teachers for temporary learning spaces as well as schools in host communities to accommodate the increased number of students. Further support is required from development partners to local education authorities.
- Mental health therapy services and psychosocial support are also needed for surviving families.

Is the affected area and current situation in Attapeu livable for survivors?

In the temporary resettlement camps of Had Yao and Dong Bak one year after the dam collapse, people live in cramped fabricated shelters. Most have built veranda 2-3 meters extending from their shelters in order to get some relief from the heat. In Had Yao, some residents have returned to Ban Mai during the day to visit their homes, tend to the animals, or just to escape from the mundane existence in the camps. From what was gathered by local researchers, they are to return to the camps in the evening and especially when officials come to visit. Delayed stipends and compensation, lack of arable land, and uneven distribution of assistance have added to the precarious situations of those in these camps. Though some residents of Ban Mai and Ban Tha Hin are looking forward to the construction of more permanent settlements (20x40 m plots with 1 hectare of land for cultivation—very poor soil; sand), frustrations are visible. Other temporary resettlement sites may be faring about the same, better, or even worse. In Ang Boua Thong, about half of the ethnic Oi of Ban Tha Hin have decided to resettle on their agricultural lands there. They seem to be doing well, though the government has instructed them to join the others of Ban Tha Hin when the new settlement construction is finished but conflict may ensue because of this.

Are there other affected areas that are being overlooked that we should pay attention to and aren't getting the assistance they need?

There are a number of other villages where the extent of damages did not warrant full or partial relocation of villages. Ban Khok Kong, for example, experienced uneven damage to homes and agricultural land. Because of this, villagers of Ban Khok Kong have not received the same attention from the state. For example, plans for more permanent settlements for the villagers of Ban Mai and Ban Hin have been extended to the villagers of Ban Khok Kong whose homes were completely destroyed. In Dong Bak temporary resettlement camp, villagers of Khok Kong point to the uneven, often delayed aid they receive (in terms of building material, rice, and stipends). Ban Mitsamphanh in Sanamxay District is another village that could use assistance. While many homes here were not affected

directly, the influx of displaced families that relocated to Ban Mitsamphanh during the initial aftermath of the dam collapse had an adverse effect on the families there. Homes in Ban Mitsamphanh opened their doors to displaced families. The strain on their resources were never compensated. While many said that compensation for the nearly three months of lodging and use of their facilities was not a huge concern, they are concerned about their exclusion from rice disbursements and delayed compensation for loss of livelihood. There are small but impactful ways to assist.

Is there a way to get direct access to the people impacted? Even to see which of the proposed assistance recommendations they would favor, or if they have other unmet, unreported needs.

Access to the temporary resettlement camps of Had Yao and Dong Bak are open and accessible. Both camps are within approximately 3 kilometers from Sanamxay, and can be reached on foot. There is no security currently present. For large-scale aid efforts, accessibility to the camps aren't without going through proper government channels. From conversations local researchers had with a few families in both Dong Bak and Had Yao camps, condiments and dried foods are still needed and desirable, though monetary donations are preferred.

How many will return to their villages or if not, what is the resettlement process?

At least for those in Ban Mai and Ban Tha Hin, returning to their old villages is not an option. Construction on their new settlement villages has begun. In July, household plots were demarcated. To date, 8 of 10 permanent homes have been completed for the most impoverished families from Ban Mai. Some, as in the case half of the Oi from Tha Hin who have decided to live on their agricultural lands safely elevated from the flood zone, will not be living in the new village. Others, like those from Khok Kong, have received some indication from the government that they will get land for new homes, but the villagers will be responsible for the cost and construction of their homes so uncertainty remains.

In regards to the recommendations, what is already being done or not being done? Will this be addressed in the Laos national response plan?

To date, there has not been a national response plan that has been made available to the public.

What are some accounts from villagers that have been reported publicly?

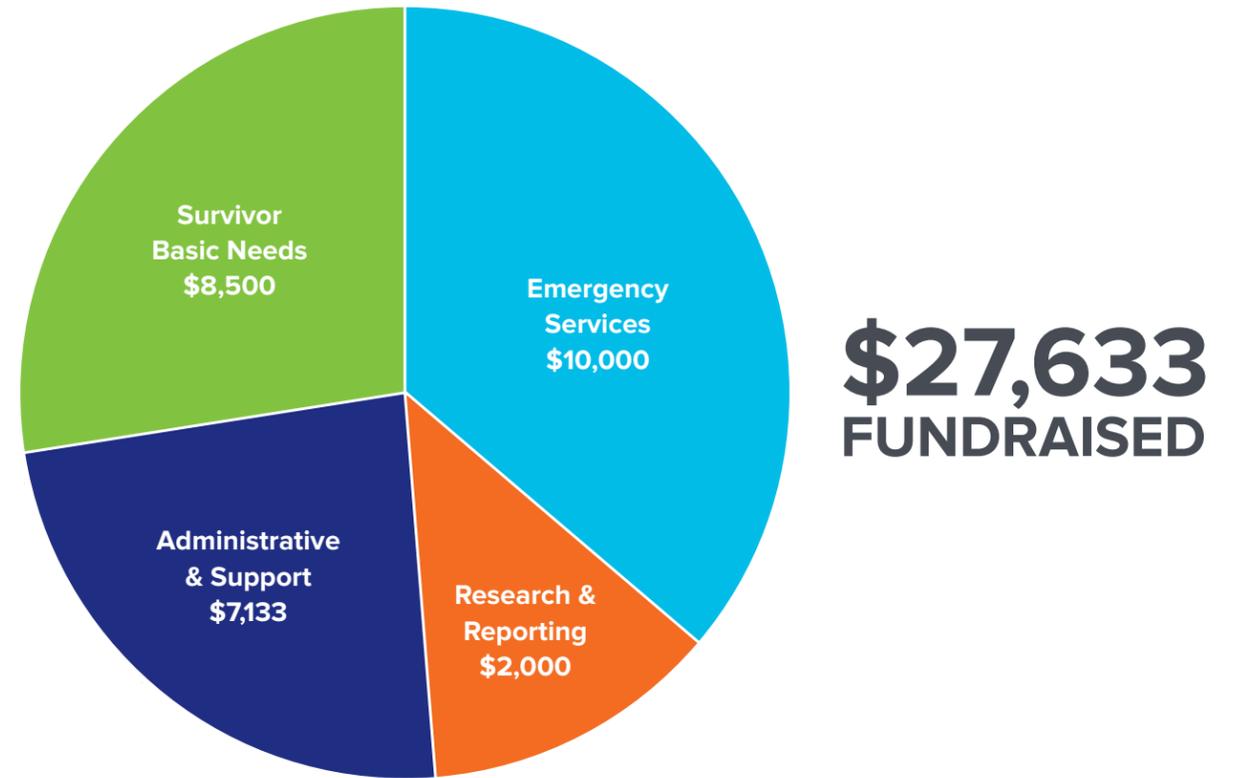
Below are few media articles:

- <https://www.internationalrivers.org/resources/report-reckless-endangerment-assessing-responsibility-for-the-xe-pian-xe-namnoy-dam>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/27/world/asia/laos-dam-survivors.html>
- <https://www.eco-business.com/opinion/the-laos-disaster-reminds-us-that-local-people-are-too-often-victims-of-dam-development/>
- http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-08/13/c_137386590.htm
- <http://www.atimes.com/article/collapsed-lao-dam-was-built-on-a-sinkhole/>
- http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-01/03/c_137716716.htm
- <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/soil-05282019153902.html>

Anything else we need to consider, especially areas that civil society can assist with?

There is a big degree of frustration felt by many of those affected. The International Expert Panel report is clear. This was not a natural disaster. It was due to “substandard construction” and those responsible must be held accountable. Civil society can continue to provide pressure on those companies and institutions to expedite the compensation owed to those affected, not just for the material loss, but also for the emotional and psychological damage they have caused as well. Some women shared how they still cannot sleep at night and any loud noises, especially at night, startle them. They will most likely have to live with the psychological scars of this aftermath and in constant fear of another potential dam collapse. Therapy in creative outlets and trauma-responsive support services are needed.

In 2018, SEAD raised \$27,633 that went towards partners doing direct assistance and response, gathering research, and mobilizing efforts including:



Recovery and rehabilitation will take many years. The areas of support and assistance to consider for long term sustainability includes:

Direct Financial Assistance

Financial assistance to families in impacted areas where they are not receiving any assistance.

Economic Interventions

Assisting with economic opportunities for resettled families.

Agricultural Training

Facilitating techniques such as gardening and permaculture in temporary camps and recovering residential areas where the land and soil are still recovering.

Transportation Infrastructure

Assessing roadways and accessibility to impacted areas, which can improve GPS data for others.

Assessment on Impacted Families

Continuously assessing the needs, hopes, and dreams of those impacted on what kind of help they would like to see.

**Emergency Services
\$10,000**

Funds used for water rescue gear, repeaters, emergency equipment, and general operations for flood relief efforts.

**Survivor Basic Needs
\$8,500**

Funds used for the transportation and direct assistance with meeting basic needs including sanitation kits, food supplies, clothing, etc.

**Administrative & Support
\$7,133**

Advocacy, mobilization, general reporting, paperwork, accounting, insurance, and other administrative and operational related expense

**Research & Reporting
\$2,000**

Informational research on response relief efforts from governments, NGOs, and testimonials from impacted villagers.

SEAD Partners

Vientiane Rescue

<https://vientianerescue.org>

Team We Run/Events For Good

www.facebook.com/TeamWeRun

Local Researchers

Note: Due to the sensitivities of the issue, some advisers and researchers have chosen to remain anonymous.



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