**Ua Bav Loog / Passing the Zones**

**Site of Documentation**

Ban Na Ouane, Luang Prabang, Lao PDR

**Description**

*Ua Bav Loog* is a popular team game that is played by Hmong children living in the village of Ban Na Ouane near Luang Prabang. The aim of the game is for players to try to run across a series of lines that are guarded by their opponents, without being caught. If they successfully make it back to their home ground they shout “*Ua Bav Loog*”.

**Who Plays?**

This game requires a group of 10 players. Both boys and girls aged between 8 and 12 years old can play. Teams can be mixed or single sex depending on the availability and preferences of players.

**Accessories/Equipment**

This game requires only an item to draw out the game area. This could be chalk, charcoal or a stick depending where the game is being played.
Time and Place

*Ua Bav Loog* can be played throughout the year at any time of day, as long as it is light and dry. As the game requires a lot of running and contact between players, it is best to avoid playing in wet weather when the ground is slippery and dangerous. A flat, smooth dirt ground or concrete yard is ideal as the players can easily see the lines of the game area. Players usually all agree how long they are going to play for before the game commences. Each round of the game usually lasts around 5 to 10 minutes, depending on the skill and fitness of the players. A game usually comprises of multiple rounds and lasts for 30 minutes to one hour.

Skills, Strategies and Qualities of a Good Player

Players have to be quick and agile if they are to make it across all the lines in the game area and back again, without being caught. Fast runners or those who are skilled at dodging opponents often make the best players. Players that are able to focus and wait patiently for an opportunity to run (or catch) also often excel at the game. All of these skills can be developed through frequent experience of the game. As each game can be different depending on the number of players and their level of skill, there are no specific strategies that can be used each time to beat opponents.

Popularity

*Ua Bav Loog* is most popular with children aged 8 years or older and is played every week for fun and to give it’s participants a good physical work out. The majority of children learned this game at school while others were taught it by their parents and friends.

History of the Game

*Ua Bav Loog* has been played by generations of children living in Ban Na Ouane. The game is played much in the same way it always was, although as the lives of the community has changed the game is played more often. Some decades ago, children would farm the land with their parents and free time was limited, so this game would have only been played on special occasions, such as holidays and festivals.
Preparation

1. The players must first draw out the lines of the game area on the ground. To do this they can use a stick, stone or even charcoal depending on what surface they are playing on.
2. It is easiest to first draw a large rectangle that measures 7 x 5 metres and then mark out the additional lines within the rectangle, as shown in the diagram.
How is the Game Played?

Step 1. First the players must divide themselves into two equal sized teams. A representative from each team then competes in a round of Rock, Paper and Scissors to determine the roles of each team. The winners (Team A) stand within the narrow lines of the game area. They can stand anywhere they like and are allowed to freely move around their lines during the game. The losers (Team B) have to stand just outside the start line, ready for the game to begin.
Step 2. Team B must decide on a Team Leader. When ready, the Team Leader signals the start of the game by slapping the hands of the Team A player positioned nearest to the starting point.
**Step 3.** At the starting signal, each player from Team B players has to try to run from one side of the game area to the other without being caught by Team A players. They can step in any part of the game area, but are only safe when they are outside of the narrow lines.

**Step 4.** Once a player from Team B has reached to the opposite end of the game area, they must turn around and repeat the challenge. They must be sure to not retrace their steps on the return journey and must instead follow the opposite route back to the start line. For example, if a player ran across the right side of the game area after leaving the starting point, then they must only run on the left hand of the game area when returning.
**Step 5.** If a player from Team A catches a player from Team B; Team B have failed their task and the two teams have to swap roles.

![Children playing a game](image1.jpg)

**Step 6.** If a player from Team B manages to get back to the starting point without being caught they must shout, *“Ba Ti Loun”* (in Lao language) or *“Ua Bav Loog”* (in Hmong language). When one player has completed the challenge, their Team wins and the game starts again, with both teams playing the same roles.

![Children playing a game](image2.jpg)
Rules

1. Team B can step on the narrow lines where Team A is positioned in the game area, but are not allowed to step outside the game area (except when they reach either end). If they do, they lose the game and must swap roles with Team A.

2. If players of Team A step outside the narrow lines of the game area then they lose the game and must play again in the same roles as before.

3. If a Team B player runs back to the start line using the same route as they came on, then their team loses the game and must swap places with Team A.

4. Prizes for the winners are usually agreed before the start of the game. If included, children tend to play for small rewards such as rubber band balls, sweets or snacks.