

# ANNUAL REPORT

FOR 2008

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## **SAHABAT ALAM MALAYSIA**

### **REPORT OF ACTIVITIES FROM JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2008**

As in the past years, 2008 proved to be quite an eventful year for SAM, in our quest for a better environment for all. We continued our efforts with various programmes and activities in Sarawak and West Malaysia.

Among some of the major highlights of our work during the year include the following:

#### **Peninsular Malaysia**

##### **1. Complaints and General Correspondences**

SAM wrote to the relevant authorities on environmental complaints received from the public and through monitoring of newspapers. More than 100 issues were dealt with and about 200 letters written and taken up with the authorities. The issues covered a whole range of environmental problems relating to logging, quarrying and mining, forest destruction, environmental pollution, land reclamation etc.

It is clear that there are many environmental issues needing in depth attention, as environmental violations continue, and policy responses and law enforcement are inadequate.

##### **2. Seminars and Workshops**

During the year, SAM conducted around 8 programmes for local communities on environmental issues and around 8 programmes for schools and universities.

The programmes for communities were carried out in the states of Penang, Kedah and Perak. As for the schools and universities, students from most of the states in the Peninsular were involved.

A special emphasis this year was on climate change, as SAM began to sensitise the communities and students on the impact of climate change and what policy measures and actions are needed to address the issue.

Several factsheets and streamers on the environment and climate change were produced.

SAM also organized a nationwide mangrove replanting program on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2008 in various parts of the country with the support of local fisher community groups. A total of 6,000 mangrove saplings were planted in 6 locations in the country simultaneously and received very good press coverage. The plantings were done to remember the Asian tsunami tragedy which killed hundreds of thousands of people in the region and caused much devastation.

The fishing communities with whom SAM works have pledged to ensure that mangrove forests will be protected and regenerated wherever possible as they also support fisher folk livelihoods. Around 700 people were involved these activities.

SAM has been able to promote the concept of Community - Based Marine and Coastal Resources Management. SAM and National Fisherfolk Network are actively involved in the National Replanting Committee, of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. Our efforts have received recognition from national and international bodies i.e. Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, University Science Malaysia as well as the United Nations' University.

SAM took the lead in organizing a workshop on what Malaysia's climate change plan should be with government officials and other leading environmental organizations in the country. It was held from 14-15<sup>th</sup> August 2008. The outcome of the workshop resulted in recommendations to the

government as inputs for the national climate change policy from civil society.

### **3. Support for Local Communities**

SAM continued to support local communities who fighting to protect their environment. Among the most major cases pursued during the year involved the campaign to Save Gunung Jerai from a massive quarry project and the Raub gold mine project.

The Jerai quarry matter was taken up to the High Court which rejected the case brought by the community challenging the legality of the project, as it had been approved contrary to the Yan Structure Plan. The community then appealed to the Court of Appeal which allowed our appeal. The quarry company then appealed to the Federal Court, which rejected the appeal and allowed the community to further their action with the High Court again. The matter is currently pending.

On the Raub gold mine, the case commenced in 2008 in the High Court which continued into early 2009. The case by the community for a detailed environmental impact assessment was rejected by the High Court and the community has now appealed. SAM and its lawyers are assisting the community with further actions and appeals to the authorities, in view of complaints from the people about health impacts. This matter is also still being actively pursued.

SAM continues to support the Malaysian Fisherfolk Network or 'Jaring' to address problems faced by the fishing community from the states of Johor, Penang, Kedah and Perak.

### **4. Wildlife Issues**

SAM has been very involved in taking up important issues in relation to wildlife protection and wildlife trade. We continued to advocate for a more comprehensive Wildlife Act, as well as in combating the illegal trade in wildlife.

### **5. Press Releases**

From time to time, press releases and letters to the editor were sent on a range of environmental issues including wildlife and conservation issues, environmental pollution and planning.

### **6. Collaboration with Malaysian Environmental Environmental NGOs**

SAM has also been very active in the Malaysian Environmental NGO network or MENGOS. The following issues were taken up with the government in collaboration with the MENGOS – climate change; overall environmental policies and biodiversity and indigenous peoples rights.

### **8. International/Regional Meetings**

SAM was also represented in several international meetings of FOEI and FOE partners in relation to climate change, forests, GMOs and shrimp aquaculture.

At the international level, SAM has been playing a critical role on the issue of climate change, biofuels, illegal timber trade, and deforestation.

SAM is also a very active member and on the Executive Committee of ASIA (Asian Solidarity Against Industrial Shrimp Aquaculture) - a recently formed network which deals with industrial shrimp expansion.

## **Sarawak**

### **1. Bakun Dam**

The 5 communities involved in the Bakun Dam civil suit lost their case on technical grounds and had appealed to the Court of Appeal. The preparation for the filing of the appeal was completed last year and it is currently pending appeal. SAM continued to follow up on the undersea cables by issuing press statements and writing to the relevant authorities.

### **2. Plantations**

SAM worked with a number of communities affected by an acacia plantation in Bintulu. Most of these communities faced threats against their native customary land wherein, the company had encroached into their ancestral domain, cleared and planted with these trees.

SAM assisted these communities by raising these issues with the State and Federal Governments through letters and memorandum as well as through press statements. There were not many responses to the plight raised.

### **3. Research and Memorandums**

SAM undertook the following activities:

- research in gaps in Environmental Impact Assessment laws in Sarawak. Research is still ongoing
- Abuses of natives in Sarawak by companies
- Improved its research on the agrofuel memorandum
- Prepared digital presentations on Native Customary Rights & legal issues
- Prepared digital presentation on timber trade

### **3. Community support and community mapping**

There was 1 community based resource management workshop in Sg Keluan, the home of Uma Bawang Residents Association. About 16 people from Long Belok, Long Benalih, Sg Peking and Long Nen took part this workshop to learn about the reforestation programme. Out of this workshop, one Penan community from Long Nen took interest in beginning the reforestation project within their communal area. SAM and UBRA helped them set this up.

There were a number of field trips between Long Belok and Long Nen to further enhance the community reforestation project between these Penan communities. Besides planting trees, the Long Belok community is now trying to explore various ways of using their community resources for long term sustainable resource management plan. Within their communal forest reserve area in Ulu Sungai Belok, they have identified a number of significant spots, such as waterfalls and clear river water with fresh fish which they want to protect. The community is hoping to explore these resources for the establishment of a sustainable community forest resource management where they can ultimately conduct community nature excursions and awareness programmes. They are also in the process of expanding their nursery shed to include the planting and preserving of medicinal plants collected from their surrounding forests. The Long Belok community has also begun constructing a pre school building which will be operational in 2009 after SAM proposed this idea.

The Long Nen community has successfully launched a community nursery project in June 2008. Their aim is to restore varieties of local tree species including useful medicinal plants available from their forest. SAM has been providing them with assistance by the supplying of materials, such as plastic netting for nursery shed, polythene-bags and some hand tools for use to launch the project besides guidance.

In December, after seeing the success of the reforestation project in Long Belok, another Penan community in Long Bangan has undertaken to do the same. They have started out small by constructing a nursery and planting essential seeds to be transferred later to the communal forest.

SAM also assisted a number of communities, teaching them how to prepare community maps.

#### **4. Complaints attended to**

SAM received about 600 complaints and/or visitors on a variety of issues including encroachment into native customary land, assistance in filling up birth certificates and identity card forms, water pollution due to logging activities, improvement of livelihood, drawing up boundary maps and filling up petrol subsidy forms.