Sahabat Alam Malaysia - Friends’ of the Earth Malaysia (SAM), is an independent non-profit national organisation established in 1977 in Malaysia under the Societies Act 1966. SAM operates from two offices; in Penang in Peninsular Malaysia and in Marudi, in Sarawak, Borneo. SAM has been a member of Friends of the Earth International since 1983.

Vision
To create a peaceful and sustainable world based on societies living in harmony with nature. We envision a society of interdependent people living in dignity, wholeness and fulfillment in which equity and human and peoples' rights are realised. We believe that our children's future will be better because of what we do.

Our Mission
- To ensure environmental and social justice, human dignity, and respect for human rights and peoples' rights so as to secure sustainable societies.
- To halt and reverse environmental degradation and depletion of natural resources, nurture the earth's ecological and cultural diversity, and secure sustainable livelihoods.
- To secure the empowerment of indigenous peoples, local communities, women and other stakeholders in their participation in decision making.
- To bring about transformation towards sustainability and equity between and within societies with creative approaches and solutions.
- To engage in vibrant campaigns, raise awareness, mobilise people and build alliances with diverse movements, linking grassroots, national and global struggles.

Acknowledgement
We thank our staff, members, volunteers, friends, interns, donors, funders and the media for all your support. We also thank Amelia Collins of FoEI and all SAM staff for allowing us to use your photographs for this report.

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It was not an easy year for all of us at SAM after we lost one of SAM and CAP’s founder and former President, S.M. Mohamed Idris on 17 May 2019. Mr. Idris or Uncle Idris as he was fondly known, was indeed the champion of environmental activism in Malaysia. During his leadership, we had many achievements including the establishment of the Department of Environment in the 1970s, to the promulgation of environmental related laws and in empowering hundreds of local communities including indigenous peoples to stand up against environmental violations and deprivation of their rights to natural resources.

Mr. Idris was ahead of the curve on many issues. He drew attention to the dangers of global warming and climate change long before it became an international issue. He had talked about the adverse impacts of sand mining many years ago and pressured SAM to work on this, well before the United Nations Environment Programme drew attention to the problem recently. From soil microorganisms to tree planting, many of us were in the fight with him, as he was a man of action.

On 8 August 2019, together with CAP and TWN, we held a memorial for Mr Idris. There were more than 200 family, friends, journalists, politicians and well-wishers who attended this memorial to pay their tributes. Those who came shared stories and anecdotes of how Mr Idris touched their lives in different ways one can imagine.

His passing was indeed felt by many across the world and no one can ever fill his shoes. We will however continue on with the legacy he left behind.
In 2019, a few of the biggest and most talked about environmental issues were the approval of the EIA for the Penang South Reclamation project, the chemical pollution of Sungai Kim Kim in Johor which made people sick, the transboundary haze that affected the region, the collapse of a retaining wall in Penang killing 4 foreign workers, the deaths of the pygmy elephants, plastic waste trade and the pollution that came along with it and the impacts of climate change with heat waves and floods.

Amidst these issues and many others, we,

★ engaged, advocated and lobbied at the federal, state and local governments to advance climate change policy, law and actions as well as environmental protection;
★ took part in the international spaces relevant to climate change such as the UNFCCC and engaged with allies in those spaces including with Friends of the Earth International and TWN’s activities;
★ conducted awareness raising and training programmes among youth, women and local communities on rights based issues and agroecology;
★ conducted field surveys and engaged with local communities and indigenous peoples in supporting climate actions and environmental protection;
★ undertook in depth research and published digital and print documents;
★ worked with fishers and volunteers to rehabilitate degraded mangrove sites;
★ worked with local, regional and international allies on environmental justice issues; and
★ used mainstream and social media to raise public concern and awareness on environmental and human rights issues.
SAM supported climate change initiatives in Malaysia in the country through its engagement

★ with the Ministry of Energy, Environment, Science, Technology & Climate Change (MESTECC) and the Ministry of Water, Land and Natural Resources (KATS). SAM currently serves on the National Environmental Quality Council, which is responsible for advising the Minister of MESTECC on policy and regulatory issues in relation to environmental protection;

★ on Malaysia’s climate change policy, especially in relation to the implementation of the Paris Agreement, as well as on actions related to energy, transport, cities, etc;

★ in international negotiations related to climate change in assisting developing countries and also in strengthening the climate justice movement in Malaysia and with allies, such as Friends of the Earth International (FoEI); and

★ with KATS on the protection of forests, including mangroves and tropical rainforests, biodiversity conservation and wildlife issues.

A lot of our work was focussed on research, advocacy and lobby activities, conduct of climate change and environmental awareness programmes and support for local communities and indigenous peoples, fisherfolk, farmers, youth and women.
**Representation at the National Environmental Quality Council (NEQC)**

SAM attended two meetings of the NEQC in August and October. Among the issues discussed were the drafting of the new Environmental Protection Act, need for a national Transboundary Haze Act, combating open burning, plastic waste trade, importing of hazardous scrap metal, ambient air monitoring and implementation of the Clean Air Regulations. The Environmental Quality Council was invited to visit the Environmental Data Centre located in the Department of Environment. The centre has real time monitoring of pollution all over Malaysia and works on a 24-hour basis.

**Call for Climate Action**

In March, SAM issued a statement for the government to come up with the proposed National Climate Change Act, speed up the setting up of the long overdue Climate Change Centre and put in place our National Adaptation Plan. SAM stated that Malaysia needed to do better in ensuring that our planning and economic decisions are viewed through a climate-change lens, as business-as-usual measures will not protect us from the new climate change trends. The future will be harsh if we are not compelled to place the climate change reality and its impacts at the core in shaping our future.

**Approval of New Power Plants in Malaysia**

SAM sought clarification from MESTECC regarding an announcement reported in the media that Tadmax Resources Bhd had received the government's approval (via a letter from the Energy Commission), to go ahead with the development of a 1,000MW to 1,200MW combined cycle gas and turbine power plant in Pulau Indah. SAM stated that this approval, along with the upcoming plan for another power plant in Kedah, seemed to indicate an unexpected retreat from Malaysia's vision towards renewable energy, especially after making such good progress on cancelling four power plant contracts last year. Approving new gas power plants not only compromised the RE vision (including that of the Renewable Energy Transition Roadmap 2035), but it also strengthened the existing barriers towards reducing carbon emissions in the energy sector. SAM urged the Ministry not to approve further power plants, as this would unfortunately establish a precedent that business can go on as usual in the dirty energy sector.
Meeting with Minister of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry

A total of 9 people comprising state fishers representatives, JARING executive committee and representatives from SAM met with the Minister of Agriculture in January at Wisma Peladang, Kuala Lumpur.

SAM and JARING managed to secure a meeting with the Minister of Agriculture, YB Dato’ Hj Salahuddin Ayub, to put forward some recommendations for the improvement of inshore fishermen’s lives and livelihoods. Prior to the meeting SAM and JARING had worked on a policy paper which comprised of issues and recommendations, including legislation. This policy brief was handed over to the Minister, which he referred to and went through during the meeting. The issues raised and discussed were as follows:

Review the 1985 Fisheries Act

JARING raised sections in the Fisheries Act that had to be reviewed and suggested amendments with heavier penalties. It has been a long time since there had been a comprehensive review and amendments to the Fisheries Act.

Trawling

Encroachment of trawlers is very rampant in Penang and Perak waters. Statistics of detention of trawlers show very few effective actions were taken to curb these encroachments. We urged that the ban on trawling in Zone B is imposed as planned earlier and gradually a total prohibition is enforced. If we leave the juvenile fishes that are caught by trawlers to live till mature adult, we would be able to supply enough fish for the whole country. The Minister had asked how many licensed fishing vessels in Zone B were there and he said that they will ban them gradually. The Minister said that we may need to upgrade Zone A fishers so that they can cover till 15 Nm. JARING said that it would depend on the capacity and the engines used by fishers. Zone B is where 100% trawl nets are used. Zone A fishers use sustainable fishing nets.

Fishing gear

JARING representatives spoke on destructive fishing gears. The Fisheries Act prohibits fishing gears such as rawa sorong and bubu naga. Permit to use the
The issue of subsidy was raised as even large vessels get incentives and subsidies whereas they continue to exploit inshore fishermen's fisheries resources. Those trawlers who are already rich are still given subsidies. Screening by fishers for allocation of subsidy must be done transparently and there must be investigation as to whether the fishermen genuinely go out to fish. There is a need to check on the performance of LKIM subsidiary companies too.

The meeting ended with the hope that the Ministry would seriously consider the recommendations by JARING & SAM and take necessary actions. We have been following up on our calls.

**Rehabilitation of mangrove forests**

A total of 4,000 saplings, seeds and trees were planted on permanent reserve forests and state land in 8 areas, Byram Forest Reserve (Penang), Hutan Lipur Pasir Panjang, Segari (Perak), Hutan Simpan Balik Pulau (Penang), Kuala Tunjang, Kerpan (Kedah), Sungai Labu, Tanjung Piandang (Perak), Hutan Simpan Banjar Utara (Selangor), Pulau Indah (Selangor) and Pontian (Johor). The types of species planted were Bakau Minyak, Bakau Kurap, Ambong-Ambong, Tengar, Lenggadai and Tumu Merah. The rehabilitation work was undertaken with the help of the local fishers and their families, representatives from the fisheries and forestry departments, as well as volunteers from local universities interested in environmental issues. In places like Segari, SAM also undertook beach cleaning with the volunteers to keep the area clean as it was also a turtle landing site. One of the challenges that SAM faced during this programme was finding suitable and big enough places to be rehabilitated for a limited number of volunteers. A few areas suitable for rehabilitation activity were not suitable for students and the public as they were situated deep in the forest.
Nursery for mangrove saplings

As fishermen realise the benefits of rehabilitating mangrove forests, they take initiatives to establish nurseries and conduct replanting programmes. The aim is to have constant supply of saplings. This also generates income for the fisher group. Mature saplings are planted in the surrounding mangrove area if they have not been sold. SAM assisted the fishers network JARING Perak in maintaining the mangrove nurseries in Kerian District, Perak. To date, there are 5 active nurseries for mangrove saplings in Pontian (Johor), Pulau Indah (Selangor), Tanjung Piandang (Perak), Segari (Perak) and Sungai Acheh (Penang). Each nursery can produce between 3,000 and 10,000 saplings annually.

The saplings sown here are mostly Bakau Kurap and Bakau Minyak. The seeds are sometimes sourced by SAM and the fishers from the Merbok mangroves in Kedah. One of the challenges that the fishers face in maintaining the nursery is to estimate the right number of saplings required in each nursery to be replanted in degraded areas. Saplings like the Bakau Minyak and Bakau Kurap usually can be replanted between 8 and 18 months.

Why should mangrove areas be rehabilitated

Natural ecosystems such as coastal wetlands and mangroves can reduce vulnerability to natural hazards and extreme climatic events. The dense growth of mangrove forests is able to protect against property destruction and loss of life by absorbing the velocity of waves and calming the currents during natural disasters. At present there is a growing recognition of the importance of conserving and rehabilitating coastal mangrove forests to lessen the dangers from anticipated increase in the frequency and intensity of typhoons and storm surges.

Mangroves, considered a soft option in providing important shoreline protection can also be a mitigating measure in combating global warming because of their high capacity for sequestering carbon from the atmosphere and storing it in the wetland substrate. Besides their coastal protection attributes and carbon sinks, mangroves are important breeding, nursing grounds and habitat for species such as fish, mussels, oysters, shrimps, and crabs.

SAM encourages and implements mangrove planting with local communities, youth groups, students and non-fishers so they can see the importance of replanting and gain a sense of ownership to look after and manage the mangroves. By generating awareness and encouraging active participation among communities we have found that public support can be mobilised and increases pressure for policy reforms.
Problems faced by inshore fishers

**Shallow estuary impedes movement of inshore fishermen in Kuala Teriang, Pulau Langkawi, Kedah**

About 300 inshore fishermen at Kampung Kuala Teriang, Pulau Langkawi faced problems to go out to the sea as the river mouth was shallow due to mud and sediments. They had to moor their boat at sea and wait for low tide to land their catches. Letters sent to the relevant authorities were to no avail. SAM is considering holding a meeting with the fishermen to plan the next course of action.

**Inshore fishermen in Kampung Teluk Nipah, Pantai Merdeka, Kuala Muda, Kedah face problem due to sedimentation near the coast**

Inshore fishermen in Kampung Teluk Nipah, Kuala Muda, Kedah have problems going out to sea when the water is shallow as a result of sedimentation near their jetty area. Berita Harian reported this matter in March. SAM followed up with letters on 4 April to LKIM Kedah to take immediate actions to help the affected fishermen. At the end of April LKIM wrote that allocations to build a new jetty were limited thus upgrading works would be done first.

**Mud and sludge affect coastal fishermen of Teluk Bahang, Penang**

About 200 coastal fishermen in Teluk Bahang, Penang were affected by mud pollution believed to be caused by mud-carrying barges from the sea reclamation area in Tanjung Tokong and Gurney Drive. The mud and sludge were believed to be dumped before the barges reached Pulau Kendi, the designated dumping area.

The pollution became serious since 2018 and this caused fishermen losses between RM300 to RM700 as their nets were getting damaged. SAM issued a press statement in March and wrote to the relevant authorities. The DoE of Penang responded that their investigation found that the barges did not dispose mud and the dredged materials were reused for reclamation. However, the fishermen reported that mud waste pollution continued to plague them.
Usage of bubu naga in coastal area of Tumpat, Kelantan

We received complaints from inshore fishermen that a number of local fishermen were using *bubu naga*, to fish. This type of fishing gear is illegal because it threatens fish breeding grounds. In early April, we sent letters to the Kelantan Fisheries Department and the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (APMM) urging for investigation and actions to be taken against those who violate the Fisheries Act 1985. In the same month, APMM Kelantan informed us that they would monitor the usage of the destructive net.

Fish bombing activities at Taman Laut, Pulau Perhentian, Besut, Terengganu

SAM requested authorities to take action against fish bombing activities in the marine park off Pulau Perhentian, Terengganu. The Fisheries Department informed us that four people had been detained for fish bombing.

Pollution at Kampung Perigi Acheh, Pasir Gudang, Johor

Income of about 60 fishermen in Kampung Perigi Acheh was affected because of toxic waste pollution from Sungai Kim Kim, Sungai Kopok and Sungai Daing in Pasir Gudang, Johor. In addition, more than 500 fishermen in Pasir Gudang were also victims of the pollution. SAM conducted a survey here and in August, we sent letters to the relevant authorities urging for effective action to be taken to resolve the issue.

Coal waste pollution at Tanjung Kling, Melaka

The income of coastal fishermen in Tanjung Kling, Melaka was threatened due to coal waste pollution in the shores here. The problem was caused by ships carrying coal to the power plant. Wastewater from cleaning the ship after docking of coal at the Tanjung Beruas Port polluted the sea. SAM visited the fishermen here in August and followed up with the authorities. We wrote to the Marine Department and DoE Melaka to investigate the pollution and urge actions to be taken.
Concerns about a proposed port in Perlis

We raised concerns about the proposed construction of a RM1.8 billion cargo terminal in Perlis to the Perlis Development Corporation and Perlis State Secretary in October. This project would be invested by Syarikat Mutiara Perlis Sdn Bhd. The proposed project was causing anxiety among fishermen who were worried of the impacts to the environment and their livelihoods.

In December, the Perlis State Secretary’s office informed SAM that the company was in the process of realising the implementation of the Sanglang jetty which would cover about 203 acres. They were also in the process of getting an approval of the EIA from DOE. SAM would continue following up with the community here.

Proposed commercial cockle breeding affects fishermen in Kuala Sebatu and Merlimau, Jasin, Melaka

More than 100 inshore fishermen protested against the Melaka state government’s approval of a commercial cockle breeding project in an area covering 100 acres in a coastal fishing zone. The area is a natural breeding ground for cockles and shellfish and main catching area of fish and prawns. The project implementation would affect the incomes and lives of the fishermen here.

In November, SAM sent letters to the relevant authorities to conduct investigation and take actions to resolve the matter. Following this, in December 2019, the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry informed SAM that the Fisheries Department was not in favour of the approval by the State because it is a natural breeding area and would also cause conflicts between fishermen and the company. SAM supported the call by the department and would be taking further action to get the project stopped.

Presence of trawlers in Zone B

On 28 December 2015, the government issued a circular banning the use of trawl nets in Zone B (between 8 and 15 Nm from the shore) beginning 01 January 2016. However, this was not enforced in full but in stages until December 2020. The owners of trawlers have been trying to lobby the government to extend the time frame on the banning of these nets. The coastal fishers have not been sitting quietly on this. They have taken to monitoring the areas with the help of a group of fishers nationwide. This group has been active in reporting multiple violations by trawlers to the authorities directly and through the social media platform. This has proven to be more effective if compared with the monitoring and enforcement done by the authorities on their own. In areas such as Teluk
Bahang (Penang), South Kerian (Perak, South Johor and Kuala Kedah (Kedah), there have been a reduction of trawlers within the Zone B areas. The challenge that inshore fishers face is that despite having a policy banning trawl nets, enforcement is still lacking. Those caught fishing in the prohibited zone are merely fined and their time for the suspension of their licences can be reduced based on the discretion of the minister.

**Battling with foreign vessels**

Fishers in the east coast of Malaysia have had to battle with the trespassing of foreign vessels mainly from Vietnam. Fishers from Vietnam have allegedly regularly trespassed into Malaysian shores and have destroyed unjam or rumah ikan constructed by the local fishers. Additionally, the practice of using two trawler boats with one trawler net (pukat tunda ganding) have been particularly damaging to the fish source in the area. To raise this issue with the authorities and the media, two protests were held in April in Kuala Terengganu and one in Parliament in July. About 500 people turned up in Parliament with the fishers and handed over a memorandum to the Minister of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry. Fishers living in the east coast have had to deal with the constant trespass of foreign vessels into Malaysian shores because we are surrounded by a vast ocean and the enforcement unit has limited assets to apprehend trespassers swiftly. But, these are challenges that constantly need to be raised with the authorities in the hope that there would be a permanent solution.

**Why trawl nets are destructive**

Trawl nets destroy sea beds and they trap a lot of juvenile fish which are then transformed into fish feed. The statistics from the Fisheries Department show that in 2017, 267,892 metric tonnes / 267,892,000 kilogram of juvenile fish were caught in Malaysia. Between 2013 and 2017, a total of 1,317,828 metric tonnes of juvenile fish were caught. 75% of the juvenile fish caught are caused by the trawl nets.
Building the capacity of rural and fisher communities and activists

Through years of working closely with coastal fishers, we have built the capacity of these fishers and their families. We have active fishers in 15 areas in Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Perak, Selangor, Melaka, Johor and Terengganu who now monitor activities that would potentially destroy their fishing source and the coastal and marine environment. They are in constant touch with us to help them raise their issues at the national level. We place a lot of importance in building the capacity of fishers, both women and men as well as youth through various training programmes to ensure that they are able to defend their rights to life and livelihood as well as the environment they live in. We also continue to support the women especially in transforming their small local economies into something viable and strong which would collectively benefit the fisher community in the long run.
SAM took up several issues relating to the destruction of forests and biodiversity in various parts of the country.

**Destruction and exploitation of forest at Bukit Banjaran Kledang, near Chemor, Kinta District, Perak**

S A M conducted a survey with community groups and other NGOs after finding out that areas of the forest at Bukit Banjaran Kledang near Chemor had been cleared. Based on field observations, about 20 hectares of forest area had been cleared and left barren.

We questioned whether the logging licensee in the former HS Kledang Saiong had submitted and obtained approval of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report prior to commencement of the timber extraction activity. Total area of approval of the extraction licence is 151.49 hectares.

In a statement issued in December, we said that the validity of an EIA report as stipulated by DoE was only for two years from the date of the letter of approval is issued. At present, the activity in the project area was logging for the purpose of converting the forest to other land use covering 151.49 hectares of land at Lot PT 253408 and PT 253409. This activity is subject to the requirement of an EIA report as stipulated in the First Schedule of the Environmental Quality (Prescribed Activities) (EIA) Order 2015 and Section 34A of the...

FORESTS & BIODIVERSITY

Drone picture of the cleared forest

Licence for logging
Environmental Quality Act 1974 (Act 127). According to the Ipoh District Local Plan 2020, the area has been classified as a forest zone. Hence, the land owner may not convert the forest zone to agriculture zone unless a zone alteration, revocation or replacement has been carried out in the local plan in accordance with section 16(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1976. SAM is following up the issue to make sure the project is stopped, the cleared area is rehabilitated and the forest is re-gazetted as a permanent reserved forest and designated as the Kinta Valley Geopark.

Community mobilisation

In Sarawak, SAM continued to assist and mobilise indigenous residents’ associations affected by oil palm plantations and logging throughout the year. These included the Sungai Buri Residents’ Association, Rumah Lachi Residents’ Association, Sungai Malikat Residents’ Association, Nanga Seridan Residents’ Association, Long Pilah Residents’ Association, Melayu Marudi Association, Iban Marudi Association, and the Rumah Beliang/Kiam action committee. Among others, our activities included two community strategy meetings in October and December. These meetings were convened to receive updates from affected communities; discuss the responses received from the state to the questions that had been submitted to the state legislature in 2018; and plan for other mobilisation activities, which included the submission of a memorandum to the authorities on the impacts of monoculture plantations in Sarawak on indigenous communities; and the submission of land rights violation reports to SUHAKAM and new questions to the Sarawak state legislature.

Following these, a meeting was held between SAM, affected communities and a Sarawak state lawmaker in Miri in October, to discuss the submission of other follow-up questions to the state legislature. Altogether, nine questions were submitted to two Sarawak state lawmakers for the November assembly session.
Reaching out to SUHAKAM & JAKOA

In December, we organised for seven community representatives to lodge their reports on the violations of their customary land rights by monoculture plantations and logging operations at the SUHAKAM Kuching office, during a one and a half day session. A press conference was later convened by the SUHAKAM Sarawak Commissioner, participated by SAM and the community representatives, to highlight the issues raised by the communities’ reports.

This was reported in at least six articles in leading media and blog publications and one Sarawak television news station. SUHAKAM is expected to inform SAM and the communities on the result of their investigation into the reports in 2020.

Finally, in Peninsular Malaysia, we also participated in a consultative meeting organised by the new director general of the Department of Indigenous Peoples Affairs (JAKOA) in Shah Alam in July, which had begun efforts to reform its past policies and other governance approaches.

Meeting with Menteri Besar of Perak

SAM staff and a couple of council members met the Menteri Besar of Perak, Ahmad Faizal Azumu at his office in Ipoh in February. Prior to the meeting SAM had prepared a submission of the issues to bring up with the State. The issues mostly related to forest conservation and development plans. The Menteri Besar went through our paper and explained the reason for some of the actions taken by the State.

The meeting concluded with SAM submitting some of our publications on land rights of indigenous communities and environmental issues. We were invited for an open discussion on this matter. The media met us after the meeting and the issue was covered in several mainstream media.
Upcoming elephant sanctuary in Johor and Perak

SAM wrote letters to both Perak and Johore Wildlife Department to question the objectives in the establishment of an elephant sanctuary. We queried about the space, whether a 100 hectare area is adequate for 150 elephants considering that the area would contain a paddock, food storage area, administrative block and others. In Perak, the proposed area covers only about 40 ha. This may not be adequate to contain wild elephants.

The Johore Wildlife Department replied that the sanctuary is to reduce human elephant conflict; to provide ecotourism opportunities and habitat management as defined in the National Elephant Conservation Action Plan. The Perak Wildlife Department invited SAM to visit their elephant conservation centre in Kuala Pahang and another in Terengganu to get a clearer picture of their efforts in safeguarding the welfare of elephants affected by development.

We followed up with another letter asking whether the sanctuary was geared towards tourism which should not be the case. In June we issued a letter to the editor on this issue and this was carried by The Star. We still had not received any response from the authorities at the end of December 2019.

Police involvement in protecting wildlife

SAM commended the Inspector General of Police (IGP) for his duty of care and responsibility in protecting our wildlife. We called for the investigation into money laundering by the police and the MACC in addressing the transnational organised-crime aspect of money laundering. Corruption was another facilitator with traffickers bribing low paid public officials. Our letter was carried in Malaysiakini.

Following this the IGP revealed the involvement of wildlife trade by VIPs. The shocking truth was expressed by SAM whereby big businesses cover up their crime by exploiting their status to benefit themselves, those close to them and their organisations. We urged action on illegal wildlife trade by adopting tools commonly used in fighting serious crimes including money laundering techniques and financial investigation.

Proposed safari park in Sabah

The Chief Minister of Sabah mooted the idea of a safari park in the state and this was supported by the tourism minister, Christina Liew. We followed up with letters to express concern at the idea of exhibiting wildlife behind bars or in enclosures. We will continuously follow up on this matter.
Plastic waste trade, dumping and recycling

Our work on plastic waste pollution was related to dumping and illegal recycling following a surge of imports of plastic waste to Malaysia after China imposed a ban of waste imports in January 2018. A survey was done with the author and photographer commissioned by the Global Anti Incinerator Alliance (GAIA) to document the situation in Malaysia. SAM gave inputs and edited the Malaysian part of the GAIA publication titled ‘Discarded: Communities on the Frontlines of the Global Plastic Pollution Crisis’. This report which focused on three countries including Malaysia highlighted the stories of people on the ground who have been thrust to the frontlines of the world’s plastic problem.

In 2019, the illegal waste recycling issue, waste dumps and community action in Jenjarom were highlighted in a Netflix docu-series called Broken in an episode titled “Recycling Sham”. This episode featured an interview with SAM’s representative, the Jenjarom community and we also fixed an appointment with the Minister of Environment, Ms. Yeo Bee Yin, to be interviewed for this segment.

We also tracked consignments of waste exported from the United States of America (US) sent to Malaysia for recycling. Our US counterpart had put in a tracking device in their waste to find out the final destination of the waste. Some of the trackers ended up in Malaysia. We continued to work with community groups in Sungai Petani, Kedah, Klang and Kuala Langat, Selangor who were fighting pollution from illegal recycling operations and dumping of foreign plastic waste. Some of the illegal dumpsites were cleared eventually, but some got burned down, spewing more pollution.

One case that had immediate reaction from SWCorp was the dumpsite in Kampung Kemumbong on the riverbank of Sungai Muda, a major source of water for Penang. After revelation by SAM on its Facebook page, followed by media report, the area was cordoned and part of the waste comprising of foreign plastic waste, electronic waste, local market waste, construction waste, etc. were cleared.
SAM issued a statement in April expressing shock that the Entrepreneur Development Minister, Datuk Seri Mohd Redzuan Md Yusof, had said that Lynas Malaysia should not be compelled to export its wastes back to Australia, as the plant’s investments were “too big to ignore”. We stated that the Minister’s statement was completely unacceptable as it clearly reflected that he was putting the profits of the company over and above the safety of the Malaysian people and the environment.

SAM has been calling for the wastes to be exported back to Australia as these wastes were in fact made dangerous by technological processes which involve removal from the ground and concentrated by mechanical and chemical processes. We supported MESTECC’s decision to ask the Lynas plant to remove and dispose of its radioactive wastes contained in the Water Leach Purification (WLP) process, in accordance with the two letters of undertaking given by the company to the government in February and March 2012.

Lynas Malaysia countered our statement stating that the WLP residue was “naturally occurring”. We issued another statement in April, stating that Lynas’s claim is unscientific, defied common sense and logic. The fact is that the feedstock that is processed by the Lynas plant has been brought from Australia and removed from its natural state. Once naturally occurring radioactive elements material are removed from the ground and are technologically processed, they cannot be referred to as “naturally occurring” any more, as they are not in their natural state.

We wrote to relevant authorities requesting that they do not renew the operating licence of Lynas. Further, Lynas should not be allowed to escape from its undertaking to the government, that if it cannot meet the condition of removing the radioactive wastes back to Australia, it should not be allowed to operate any further.

In April, SAM and CAP jointly submitted our objections and commented on the EIA of the proposed onsite secure landfill for the storage of Neutralisation Underflow (NUF) solids within the existing LAMP site.

The media reported in late May quoting the General Manager of Lynas in charge of radiation safety and compliance that its wastes can be used as a fertiliser or soil conditioner (Condisoil). SAM issued a joint statement with CAP at the end of May, calling on MESTECC and the Government to not approve Condisoil, especially in the absence of long-term studies. We also called on MESTECC and the Government to ensure that all current and future radioactive wastes are taken out from Malaysia, to the country of origin.

In August, SAM joined several CSOs in a protest action in Kuantan. We followed up
with letters to the relevant authorities. Lynas announced recently that a site for the Permanent Disposal Facility has been identified. The AELB has also approved the operating licence for Lynas albeit with several conditions. We continue to monitor this issue closely.

**Proposed Rare Earth Mining in Perak**

SAM issued a statement in November after learning from media reports that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) had been signed between the Perak state government and a Chinese company, Chinalco GXNF Rare Earth Development, to undertake the exploration of rare-earth minerals in Perak.

SAM was shocked that the Perak state government and KATS had not learnt the tragic lessons of the ARE plant that resulted in serious radioactive poisoning in the Bukit Merah community. We called on the Perak state government not to embark on any rare-earth mining activities in the state and on KATS not to promote such rare-earth mining with the dubious label of ‘sustainable mining’.

The statement was followed up with letters to the state government and the Ministry. KATS issued a statement in response to SAM’s concerns over the MOU. The Ministry clarified that “the context of the signing of the MOU is to use the Chinese expertise in identifying the potential of rare-earth sources in Perak especially that in ion-adsorption clay that does not contain thorium or uranium as by-product wastes”, and that the Ministry “supports any cooperation from foreign parties if it is positive for economic development and is sustainable and does not impact the environment and the well-being of the community.”

SAM issued a counter statement in November that our concerns were not allayed as our preliminary research on China’s experience showed that there were very serious environmental damage and human-health costs related to the mining and leaching of ion-adsorption rare-earth clay resources. A 2013 study by six Chinese university academics on the consequences in Southern China of the ion-adsorption rare-earth industry revealed devastating environmental effects in the region. The study, ‘China’s ion-adsorption rare-earth resources, mining consequences and preservation’ stated that the Chinese central government in June 2011, enforced a ban on surface mining and tank/heap leaching while implementing in-situ leaching for ion-adsorption rare earths. We made the following call on the authorities through the media and letters:
• Make public and disclose the contents of the MOU. What the Chinese company is tasked to do; at what costs; who will finance this venture; where the exploratory activities will take place and what activities are involved?
• Make public the government’s policy on the development of the rare-earths industry, including the environmental and social safeguards, laws and regulations as well as the implementing and enforcement capabilities and mechanisms in place prior to embarking on these ventures.
• Whether the MESTECC was consulted and its approval obtained for the MOU.
• **Not to proceed with the implementation of the MoU.**

**Rare earth mining in Kelantan**

In December, an online news mole.my reported that a syndicate from China had been mining rare-earth minerals in Jeli, Kelantan, and smuggling them out. It was learnt that the authorities had raided the mine. We wrote to the relevant authorities to get more information regarding the illegal mining.

We received a response from the Mineral and Geoscience Department (JMG) of Kelantan at the end of December stating that in 2018, the department had received an application for exploration of Niobium in Jedok, Tanah Merah. The company then applied to the Land and Mines Office in August 2018. In September 2019, three mineral tenement areas were approved, covering 19,427 acres.

The company then put in an application for mining in October, but the JMG decided to defer as an Environmental Impact Assessment study was yet to be conducted. In November, the JMG issued a written order that mining operations must not begin. We will follow-up on the progress.

**Air and odour pollution from United Oil Palm (UOP) Mill in Nibong Tebal, Penang**

Villagers staying in the surrounding area of the United Oil Palm Mill in Nibong Tebal complained of black smoke emitted from the stack of the oil palm mill. There are several houses nearby who have been directly affected by the air pollution. Besides this the odour from the mill has been unbearable and can be smelled from more than 3km away, affecting a township, housing estates and institutions. SAM was contacted by new residents in this area and we strategised with them. Several
meetings were held with the community, of which the community then started a signature campaign. We wrote to the Department of Environment and the Seberang Perai City Council for the pollution to be curbed.

We also met with the authorities for a discussion. On a meeting with the DoE in November, we were informed that the mill has been asked to improve their air pollution control devices and abate the odour. The mill was reported to be testing the systems and would be able to minimise the odour in a few months.

**Toxic Pollution at Sungai Kim Kim, Johor**

We issued a media statement and followed up with letters in March calling on the DoE and the Johore state government to take stern action against the culprits who dumped chemicals into Sungai Kim Kim near Pasir Gudang. The incident had affected the health of almost 500 people, mainly children from schools along the river. However this situation was not settled as another incident of pollution affected a school in the Pasir Gudang district in June where the health of students has been put in jeopardy. Fifteen students from Sekolah Agama Taman here were taken to a nearby hospital, as they were suffering from breathing difficulties and vomiting. We suggested that inspection of factories and industrial sites in the area be expedited to ascertain how industrial wastes were being disposed. We should not be waiting for emergencies to happen before taking efforts. These incidents have also revealed that enforcement measures by authorities were rather weak, as actions were only taken when complaints were received. The approach taken was usually one of ‘self-regulation’, meaning that factories and businesses were left to self-regulate themselves. We issued a statement in June calling on the Federal Government to set up a Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) into the recent spate of chemical pollution in Pasir Gudang, Johor. This is to enable comprehensive investigations in the public interest, to identify the root causes of the chemical pollution, including in ascertaining the culprits responsible for the damage caused, as well as in determining the culpability or negligence of the various authorities who have allowed the pollution to occur. We followed up on this issue with the different action committees set up by the affected community here.

We also conducted site visits in August and subsequently followed up on the matter at the meeting of the NEQC.
Lead pollution at lead acid battery plant in Jenjarom, Selangor

The community in Kampung Jenjarom, Kuala Langat protested the operations of a factory close to their village as it has been causing pollution. In April the community reported that the lead acid battery plant was discharging high levels of lead into the drainage system and waterways in the area. Activists took water samples for testing. The community’s grousces escalated after hair samples of workers and residents showed high levels of lead exposure and contamination.

Kampung Jenjarom villagers have since then pushed for the plant to be relocated. They also sought the assistance of our assistance, besides highlighting the issue in the media, holding protest action and pursuing the issue with the authorities.

SAM followed up with the Selangor government and relevant authorities, requesting more medical surveillance and urging for the plant to be shut down. SAM conducted a site visit in August and spoke to the representative of the community. We followed up with more letters urging for immediate action to be taken.

In October the Selangor Economic Action Council ordered the relocation of the factory after deliberating reports from various agencies that showed evidence of pollution in the area. The State Exco said that the plant, which had been closed by the authorities, was located in a light industrial area. If they wanted to operate again, it would have to be relocated to a heavy industrial area.

Monitoring by the community found that the factory was still open. Our follow up with the district council found that a temporary permit was given to the factory for administrative purposes. SAM will continue working with the community to ensure that the polluting factory is shut down.

Waste dumping in Batu Maung mangroves and drainage system

Investigation by SAM found that the drains in Batu Maung were filled with factory and construction waste causing pollution and the drainage was blocked. SAM’s survey also found that the sole surviving mangrove forest on government land in the middle of Pekan Baru Batu Maung and adjacent to the Bayan Lepas Industrial Park was threatened by irresponsible dumping of waste.
Subsequently, the brackish river flowing through the mangrove forest here was inevitably polluted by leachates, flowing into a sensitive ecosystem sustained by the mangrove forest located at the back of the Fisheries Research Institute Malaysia. The land was owned by the Federal Government and placed under the supervision of the Fisheries Department. We were surprised how lorries were able to dump the waste on federal land. SAM and CAP conducted a press conference on the site at the end of January.

After the press conference, which saw wide coverage of the issue in the media, we wrote to the relevant authorities. The Fisheries Department cordoned off the area to prevent lorries from entering the area to dump waste. The Penang State Secretary office informed us that the issue had been addressed and a follow up survey by SAM found the area cleared.

**Earthworks on steep hill slopes at Mount Erskine, Penang**

SAM was concerned and alarmed over earthworks and hill-cutting being carried out on very steep slopes at Mount Erskine in Penang, quite close to the Mont Residence apartments in Tanjung Tokong, Penang. We were alerted to the hill-cutting by concerned Penangites, who shared pictures of the on-going earthworks.

A significant part of the hill cutting involved slopes above 250 feet (75 m) and were on very steep gradient above 25 degrees. SAM issued a statement in November calling on the state authority and the Penang Island City Council to explain what mitigation works are being carried out and how come such steep slopes are being cut and cleared.

It was later revealed that the works were for construction of a road. We were very
concerned that with many parts of the slopes being bare, and with the rainy season, serious soil erosion would result, contributing to landslips and flash floods. We were worried of a repeat of landslide tragedies such as that at the Granito site and the Bukit Kukus in Paya Terubong which led to the deaths of workers working in the area. The problem was also exacerbated during the dry season as dust pollution started to occur, affecting the health of residents of the high-rise apartments. We are following up with the authorities on this matter.

**Illegal quarry in Teluk Bahang, Penang**

We were shocked to learn from media reports that an illegal granite quarry had been carrying out its activities in Teluk Bahang despite the authorities knowing of its operations since 2016. According to media reports, the state government had known about the illegal quarry since its exposé in May 2016.

Further, it had been reported that the Penang Island City Council (MBPP) had issued a stop-work notice in February and May this year but the operator continued to carry out the quarry works. We issued a press statement in October expressing shock that the authorities had not acted with more urgency, despite non-compliance by the quarry operator of the stop-work orders and the violation of all the relevant laws in place.

SAM pointed out that the illegal operations had been taking place partly on hill lands above 76m (250 ft.), which was contrary to the Penang Structure Plan, especially for activities of this sort which involved quarrying and blasting. The quarry was also in an environmentally sensitive area quite close to the water catchment forests.

We followed up with letters to the authorities, including the police due to the blasting works in the quarry. MBPP reported that the quarry owner must follow new rules which came into effect in 2019. The company was operating legally on first-grade land, which allowed it to carry out activities without prior approval. However under the new Penang Quarry Rules 2018, all quarry operators are required to submit earthwork plans to the local council for control purposes.
In 2019, we met with many indigenous communities in Sarawak expressing their interest in agroecology. Many wanted to learn natural farming methods to employ them in their day to day work at their farms. Farmers from the Sungai Buri Residents’ Association were already experiencing good harvests from their vegetables and pineapples planted after SAM’s agroecology workshop with them in 2018. Their testimony of successfully growing their own food both to feed themselves as a livelihood alternative are slowly inspiring others to do the same.

**New plant variety convention and the Seed Quality Bill**

SAM took part in discussions with allies in the Malaysian Food Sovereignty Forum (MFSF) to oppose Malaysia’s signing on to the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (ICPNVP) and the construction of a new legislation on seeds. Both the convention and legislation may effectively undermine the rights of local farmers including to farm traditionally and to plant, save and exchange seeds.

Together with our allies we held a press conference, issued joint statements and letters to the government and met with the Ministry of Agriculture to discuss about both the convention and the proposed SeedQuality Bill that the Ministry planned to table in Parliament some time in 2019.

At the end of 2019, both the convention and the bill were not signed nor tables in Parliament but the discussions within the MFSF were ongoing with plans for a regional meeting in the new year.

**Planting of tropical rainforest trees**

Communities in Baram, Sarawak have been carrying out tree planting in their native customary rights land. The seedlings and saplings were either from their own nurseries or bought. Some communities exchange saplings with other communities. SAM facilitates these exchanges and informs the communities on the availability of seeds and saplings through a WhatsApp group established and administered by SAM officers.
Training on Agroecology for Women in Kampung Lubok Nibong, Sarawak

The ecological model of agricultural production, which is based on principles that create healthy soils and cultivates biological diversity and which prioritises farmers and traditional knowledge, is climate resilient. In fact, many of these ecological farming systems are both mitigation and adaptation strategies, as they increase soil carbon and use cropping systems that are more resilient to extreme weather. SAM conducted a training in its agroecology centre in March. The training was attended by 20 women and it was conducted by SAM staff and volunteer.

Practising Agro-ecology

The women of Sungai Buri in the Baram region have ventured into agro-ecology, planting several types of vegetables on their farms and communal land. They reported good yield from their chemical-free cultivation.

Maintenance of agro-ecology centre and tree nurseries

We carried out maintenance work at SAM’s forest tree nursery in Kampung Lubok Nibong. Besides the tree nursery, the earthworm unit here produces vermicompost and vermiwash for use in farms, gardens and smallholdings. Seed sharing is also practised here and occasionally communities gather to prepare polybags for sowing seed. We went to Sungai Linei to collect seeds of forest tree species that are seasonal upon being informed by the community here. The collected seeds were brought to the nursery in Kampung Lubok Nibong to be prepared for sowing in polybags. Community members also joined us in the search for the seeds.
#PenangTolakTambak
SAM joined the #PenangTolakTambak and #PerakTolakTambak campaign against coastal reclamation.

We produced a report titled “Impacts of Coastal Reclamation in Malaysia” in English and Malay. The publication details the biological, physical, socio-economic, socio-cultural impacts of reclamation, highlighting several cases in Malaysia, but specifically the proposed project in Penang. Our study found that coastal development and reclamation projects have robbed fishers and communities of use and access to coastal and marine resources. We also produced a video on the impacts of reclamation. The report was extensively used to campaign against the proposed creation of three islands in the southern region of Penang. After it was launched in February 2, which had good media coverage, many other groups joined in and campaigned against the proposed reclamation project. SAM submitted the publication to members of the National Physical Planning Council (MPFN) in March 2019, urging the Council to cancel all proposed reclamation projects in the country and in particular the Penang South Reclamation (PSR) Project. The Council then came up with conditions to the Penang State government to fulfil before going ahead with the project.

An EIA of the project was exhibited for the second time after the first one and its addendum were rejected by DoE. SAM reviewed and submitted our comments in June 2019 but unfortunately the report was fast-tracked for approval by the DoE. Many rallies, joint press conferences and programmes were conducted with fisher groups, NGOs and CSOs. Together with the #PenangTolakTambak and #PerakTolakTambak groups, a peaceful rally was held at the road leading to Parliament on 11 July 2019. The project has yet to begin as of end of 2019.
Community Mapping Training at Tenyok Rimba, Long Bedian, Baram, Sarawak

SAM Sarawak office conducted a special training on community mapping upon request by participants of previous community workshops. Community representatives wanted to learn how to map out their customary territory and have a land use map produced to protect the same.

The two-day workshop was conducted by our mappers. The workshop held in June took place in Tenyok Rimba Longhouse in Long Bedian,

Training of Coastal Communities
SAM in collaboration with the fisher network JARING conducted a training in Merbok, Kedah for 30 people comprising of young fishermen and children of fishermen. The training included lessons on the importance of mangroves to the coastal ecosystem and climate, various functions of different species of mangroves, conservation of mangrove forests and how to conduct replanting programmes. Veteran fishermen, SAM staff and activists acted as resource persons for this training.

Environmental Awareness programmes
We conducted two environmental awareness raising programmes in April on the importance of mangroves and the coastal ecosystem, and environmental protection. One was for 50 secondary school students of SMK Permai Indah in Seberang Perai and the other for undergraduates in the School of Social Science, Universiti Sains Malaysia.
Baram. This outdoor site was selected to facilitate the training where the participants could learn to take coordinates. A total of 32 participants from eight Penan, Iban, Kayan, Kenyah communities attended the workshop.

On the first day of the workshop the participants were exposed to the reasons community maps were done, preparations and equipment needed before a land use map was generated. Participants learnt about the “Global Positioning System” (GPS) and were introduced to tools for mapping including various GPS models, compass and measuring tape.

Training for defenders of territories

In April, we concluded the final training with environmental human rights defenders. The training was held in Marudi, Sarawak and attended by 36 participants and we had more women than men this time and mainly youths from the neighbouring longhouses. The sessions were fun and focussing on the concept of territories, human rights and defenders of territories, identifying issues, types of violations, risks assessment, security mapping and monitoring, documenting and reporting of violations and mapping out a case identifying threats, resistance, drivers and looking for effective solutions. During the course of the training, participants also visited SAM’s training centre in Lubuk Nibong and learnt a little about the benefits of agroecology and agroforestry. Later, everyone took part in a show of meaningful solidarity with the communities of Logan Tasan and Sungai Malikat whose lands have been encroached into by companies and have been behind bars for defending their rights to their customary territories.
In June, we conducted a series of events in Kuala Lumpur to discuss the growing issue of threats to defenders of territories. We are all defenders of our own territories, our spaces. This include our homes, office space, farms, places where we fish and hunt for a living, our commons like the parks, places of worship, even our own bodies. We have rights in these spaces and they are violated, we have a right to defend them. We had with us Romel De Vera, the FoE Asia Pacific EHRD project coordinator from the Philippines, who assisted us as the resource person in moderating many of the sessions during this series of events.

We started with a strategy meeting with about 10 members of the Malaysian (Peninsular) Bar and Sarawak Bar with the objective of learning more about the existing legal resources available to support communities whose rights have been violated for defending their territories. Part of the expected outcome was to learn and understand the challenges faced by communities and the legal fraternity in receiving and providing of services. We also explored the possibility of a common legal resource that could benefit community and environmental activists when they are under threat or where their rights have been violated. The meeting concluded with the group trying to work together to find common grounds to not only lend support to those under threat, but also to raise the conscience of lawyers, judges and parliamentarians as well as to provide a platform for the exposure of students in public and private universities on environmental issues.

Right after the strategy meeting with lawyers, we went into a two day defenders of territories advocacy and strategising workshop about 68 participants and staff of SAM. All participants were from various organisations from around Malaysia. There were altogether 10 sessions during the two day workshop where we covered issues on territories, the challenges in defending them, the types of violations faced
locally, human rights violations around the globe, security measures and how do we protect ourselves, resources available to support defenders of territories and ways forward.

Out of this meeting, we set up a social media group to interact, share news and come together as and when solidarity is needed.

The last event in this series was a public forum on awareness and risks to defenders of territories. About 80 people from all over Malaysia attended it. We had many veteran activists and young activists present. The audience heard from fisherfolks, farmers, indigenous leaders, lawyers and environmental activists from various NGOs and CSOs. The panel discussion was on whether there were enough protection globally and locally for defenders of territories. SAM emphasised the importance of authorities to take better actions against violations. The government must be able to ensure the defence of the people's territories and natural resources from continuously being destroyed for economic and political profit. The government must also protect the rights and security of the defenders of territories and environment, as well as their families and communities.
Earth Day Exhibition in Penang

SAM was invited to hold an exhibition in a state-wide event held in Taman Brown, Penang in conjunction with Earth Day 2019. There were more than 500 members of public at the event. SAM put up an exhibition on mangroves and two of our officers manned the exhibits and responded to questions posed by the public. The Chief Minister of Penang, the Penang Water Corporation (PBAPP), students and undergraduates were some of the visitors to SAM booth.

Exhibition at SUHAKAM’s 20th Anniversary Celebration

SAM put up an exhibition in Istana Hotel, Kuala Lumpur in September to highlight our work on environmental protection and human rights in conjunction of SUHAKAM’s 20th Anniversary celebration. The participants at the event comprised of SUHAKAM officers from various states, SUHAKAM headquarters, government agencies and other NGOs. Around 120 persons visited our booth. SAM also put up our publications to showcase our work.
Solidarity visit to Nanga Seridan, Tinjar, Baram, Sarawak

We organised a solidarity visit to Rumah Labang, Nanga Seridan in early May. Four residents associations joined the visit. The gathering was an opportunity for the communities to share their struggles and strategies to uphold their land rights. The chairperson of the Nanga Seridan residents’ association shared their plight about the encroachment of a particular oil palm company on their customary territory. He also shared that in 2012, the company withdrew their plans to expand after the villagers protested. However, in 2017, the villagers of Nanga Seridan found that part of their customary territory had been included and would be affected by a provisional lease for plantation development. When they found out, SAM provided assistance and helped the community to produce a land use map and write a letter to the Sarawak Chief Minister informing of the community’s concerns towards the same. This visit was meant to promote relationship and trust building and gave strength to all communities to continue defending their territories.
Apart from the national work, SAM was also busy engaging with regional and international allies while at the same time organising regional events and attending regional and international events. SAM organised two meetings in Penang on climate and environmental human rights defenders (EHRDs) in March and September, respectively.

**Climate meeting**

A meeting on climate issues was held in March with the presence of FoEI representatives from the climate justice and energy (CJE) programme steering group members and a few allies from the region. This was a planning and strategy meeting of the CJE programme. Steering group members from the 5 different regions for FoEI attended this 5 day meeting which also included a trip to plant mangroves to rehabilitate the mangrove forest in mainland Penang.

**EHRD Project evaluation meeting**

SAM was host to 6 FoE member groups in the joint FoE Asia Pacific EHRD project. The project had come to an end after 2.5 years and member groups came together to not just evaluate the cumulative work done together but also to plan future work together. This project apart from providing support to frontline communities, also built the capacity of SAM staff and gave us an opportunity to impart knowledge and at the same time learn from communities as well as improve our skills in running interactive workshops using popular education methodologies.
**FoE Asia Pacific annual general meeting (AGM)**

In July 2019, SAM sent a couple of representatives to the annual FoE Asia Pacific meeting in Bangladesh with other FoE member groups. This annual planning and strategy meeting also had different capacity building sessions specifically on food sovereignty, fundraising, the belt road initiative (BRI), communication and EHRD, amongst others.

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**Transboundary haze problem in Southeast Asia**

From June to October, research on Indonesian laws and other regional and international policy and legal mechanisms was undertaken, to understand better the ways in which the transboundary haze in Southeast Asia, which is caused by the forest and peat fires in Indonesia, can be halted from re-occurring in the future. We presented our findings in a conference organised by TUK Indonesia in Jakarta in November. Additionally, we also organised the visit of six representatives from Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (WALHI) to Kuala Lumpur in the same month, for them to participate in meetings with parliamentarians and civil society organisations, apart from another public forum, again organised in partnership with KBU. Future strategic actions also were planned for a future CSO collaboration to resolve the issue.

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**Conference of Parties of the Basel Convention**

In May 2019, SAM represented FoEI and campaigned with GAIA, BAN, IPEN, CIEL and others in the Break Free From Plastic movement at the 14th Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal. The joint advocacy, including presentation at a side event and presenting petition to the Chair, led to amendments to the Basel Convention which requires exporters to obtain the consent of receiving countries before shipping most contaminated, mixed, or unrecyclable plastic waste. This provides an important tool for countries to stop the dumping of unwanted plastic waste into their country. The Malaysian government played an active role too. SAM is actively following up on this.
In 2019, SAM was involved in publishing information from five areas of research, namely, monoculture plantations in Sarawak, transboundary haze in Southeast Asia, land grabbing in Asia Pacific, impacts of reclamation and community agroecology and agroforestry initiatives.

**Launching of The Land We Lost: Native Customary Rights and Monoculture Plantations in Sarawak**

From January to May, the research and writing for a 261-page publication on the law and monoculture plantations in Sarawak, which began in 2018, continued. This report, titled ‘The Land We Lost: Native Customary Rights and Monoculture Plantations in Sarawak’ and an accompanying briefing document, were finally released in July 2019 in Penang. The launch was attended by four representatives from the two Iban communities affected by oil palm plantations in the Miri Division, who participated in the case studies presented in the report. Prior to the launch, the communities also participated in a series of activities in Kuala Lumpur to highlight the key messages of the publication. These included meetings with parliamentarians, SUHAKAM and civil society organisations and lastly, a public forum, which was held in partnership with Kelab Bangsar Utama (KBU). The launch was reported by at least nine national and international media and blog articles. The Ministry of Primary Industries also responded to the report, a day after the launch, which in our view however, failed to fully address the concerns raised by the report.
In December, FoE Asia Pacific launched the 63-page regional publication ‘The Law of Land Grabs: Legislative linkages to land grabbing activities in Papua New Guinea, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Palestine’ in Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea. SAM contributed a chapter on Malaysia in this report and also acted as the publication co-editor.

On International Human Rights Day, in December, FoE Asia Pacific launched its regional publication, ‘Defending Territories, Defending Our Lives’ which highlighted case studies from 7 countries. SAM contributed a case study for this publication.

Both these publications were launched on 2 February. Both hard and soft copies are available for sale through our website.

This is a shorter and concise version of the Land We Lost (see above) publication. This document is available on our website.
This publication was done jointly with the communities we work with on agroecology and agroforestry initiatives in Sarawak. It is available in 3 languages, Iban, English and Bahasa Malaysia. Both hard and soft copies are available for purchase on our website.

Photos of indigenous communities in Kuala Lumpur for the launch of the Land We Lost report
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA

In 2019, we released 77 press statements and letters to the editor on climate change, environmental protection, forests, wildlife and coastal ecosystems, customary land rights and healthcare challenges of the indigenous communities in Peninsular Malaysia, transboundary haze and monoculture plantations in Sarawak. We also contributed key information and statistical data for an article published by the World Rainforest Movement (WRM) on monoculture plantations in Malaysia in May.

SAM's small communication team continued to run our web and social media sites. There was an increase in the information we put out and we received more complaints via our Facebook page. As and when we have the capacity, we investigate into the complaints we receive via Facebook and issue the necessary statements and letters. Through our monitoring of the media, we are happy that the public have become more vigilant in monitoring environmental degradation and wildlife and animal abuse. Many have complained directly to the authorities and have demanded for immediate actions to be taken. There is growing awareness on issues that impact people and the environment and we shall continue to raise the voices of the marginalised.

Videos released in 2019

A short interview with the Chair of the Batu Bungan Action Committee, Naru Bete. The interview was about the trespass by a plantation company into native customary territory of the Penan Batu Bungan in Mulu Sarawak.

We produced a 7 minute video to highlight the impacts of reclamations on fishers and the marine ecosystem. The video focussed on reclamation projects in Penang, Malacca and Johore.

Members from Friends of the Earth Asia Pacific and International stood in solidarity with fishers impacted by Penang South Reclamation in this video we produced.
We were agents of change in every possible way we could. We continued to march alongside the communities we worked with and the general public and raised as many issues as we could. We were successful in some instances and in some we did not quite make it. Following are a few highlights of some of the work we did that saw some positive impacts.

**Our contribution to the work on plastics and participation at the Conference of Parties of the Basel Convention** saw the government being more vigilant on the plastics waste trade and industry.

**The coordinated effort of the MFSF of which we are a part of,** for the time being did not allow any new legislation affecting the rights of farmers and seed sovereignty to be passed in Parliament.

**Our EHRD work** gave us an opportunity to gather and provide a useful learning experience for different sectors of marginalised communities. We provided a space for different groups, from fishing communities, farmers, indigenous peoples and members of political parties to congregate, with gender and age group balance, and where a historical and international perspective to their struggles could be discussed. The continued provision of such an integrated space will be able to widen our current approach. It will also enable us to garner a larger support for the cause of environmental justice, during various strategic actions.

**MESTECC appointed us as one of 2 NGO representatives to the National Environmental Quality Council.** The appointment is for 2 years. The Council acts as an advisor to the Ministry.

**A total of 4,000 mangrove saplings, seeds and trees** were planted in 8 areas in Malaysia with fishers, students and the public to rehabilitate the coastal forest. These areas were given a fresh lease of life.