



The 2021 Mekong-ASEAN Environmental Week (MAEW 2021)

“Redesign ASEAN: Peoples' Voices in World Crises”

24-30 September 2021

Co-organizers

Community Resource Centre (CRC)

Equitable Cambodia (EC)

ETOs Watch Coalition (Thailand)

Focus on the Global South (FOCUS)

GRAIN

GreenNews (Thailand)

Land Watch Thai

Project SEVANA South-East Asia (Project SEVANA)

Public Media Network Department, Thai Public Broadcasting Service (Thai PBS)

Thai Society of Environmental Journalists

The Alternative Agriculture Network, Thailand

The Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD), Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Concept

Mekong/ASEAN Environmental Week (MAEW) is the annual regional platform and process for the deeper exchange among the people, civil society groups, and other relevant actors on the issues of development, natural resources, and the environmental/social and human rights impacts from the investments. For the third year running, the 2021 Mekong-ASEAN Environment Week (MAEW) or “MAEW 2021” will be organized during 24-30 September 2021 under the theme “*Redesign ASEAN in the World Crisis*”, following its first and second themes in 2019 and 2020 of “*Environment and Livelihood Impacts of ASEAN Economic Integration: The peoples’ stories*” and “*Environment, Democracy, Livelihood, and the Regional Interconnection*” respectively. The ultimate goal of MAEW is to be Southeast Asia’s regional platform for people in ASEAN, especially key actors including representatives from communities and people’s networks, civil society, young generation, and new media to exchange,

analyze and debate on emerging issues that significantly affect to them in the different formats of discussion, exhibitions, and actions in order to provide a deeper analysis of the situations and threats to livelihoods, natural resources, and environment that are major sources of the subsistence livings in Southeast Asia. Most of all, MAEW aims for the participants to explore the ideas and possibility towards positive change, protection, restoration, and more resilient livelihood that can be designed and strengthen together among the relevant actors in the most constructive and progressive way.

The planning for MAEW 2021 is ongoing amidst the devastating epidemic of COVID-19, combined with a political phenomenon in a region that has become the global focus, especially the situation after the coup d'état in Myanmar in February. Already more than one year, COVID-19, as the global threat, continues dragging Southeast Asia's economy to the worst. The region is the hub of worsening natural disasters by the climate crisis especially the extreme weather known as the Hydrometeorological hazards that mostly occur in Maritime Southeast Asia and affect many communities with severe floods, droughts, storms, and landslides. Unfortunately, foreign investments and invasive resource grab on forest, land, and river also prevail as major barriers for the communities that try to balance their livelihood by maintaining the use of natural resources and surrounded environment in order to live and adapt for the most resilient livelihood. The deforestation and transformation of tropical rainforests into large-scale agribusiness had been occurring all over the region, including in the areas that were traditionally occupied by indigenous people. The Economic Forest/land concessions are often led to the government's policies to move people away from the forest areas, which do not only happen in maritime countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines, but also in the mainland Southeast Asian countries including Cambodia, Thailand, and Lao PDR. The trade and investment, especially the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in natural resources both from the intra-ASEAN and by the outside investors are still not for the public to monitor and call for accountability. Similar to the large-scale hydropower dams on the Mekong mainstream, the decision to develop a series of large-scale projects on one of the most important region's rivers that is shared by six countries remains to be monopolized by a handful of governments and companies.

Over the years from now, the regional economic recovery and stabilization paradigm will likely take place alongside the world's post-COVID-19 transition period. This will be the critical moment for the world and Southeast Asia to reconsider and redesign some fundamental change at the same time rethink the meaning of the real "good life" they are looking for. Other major issues for the transitions, including the redesign of energy, is directly related to climate change and the future world. In the Mekong and Southeast Asia region, the energy deals being negotiated in the regional and global markets are still hidden from the public arena and the majority of the consumers, although the climate crisis has been giving major impacts on the region for a long time. The energy and climate crisis in the region are therefore great challenges and deserve in-depth discussions and analysis especially among the young generation who are looking for alternatives and opportunities from new technologies and markets but at the same time going to be the one who faces the future with more pressure on natural resources and environmental degradation.

While ordinary people across the region are increasingly concerned with health and economic insecurity for their families and among communities, the political movements led by a new generation in the region are facing more strict controls, seizure of power, and brutal repression. The state violence

in Myanmar has been challenging the region's democracy stand, Human Rights principles, and the trust in ASEAN as the regional Mechanisms. One of the major challenges in the region is also the threat to human rights defenders, the use of the strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP) and physical harassment that happen without a tendency to decline, affecting the struggles of younger generations, activists, and human rights defenders in many countries. The pandemic has also used as a tool and reason to control and intimidate the citizens and human rights defenders to prevent their involvement in development projects. Amidst the regional complexity, meanwhile, the powerful states and businesses from within and outside the region are still competing to show their power. The geopolitics influence has been increasing significantly.

MAEW 2021 invites the peoples' network, civil society groups, and media from all over the region to work and search together for a meaningful, just, and sustainable way of life and make ASEAN a part of a better world. Under the theme *"Redesign ASEAN in the World Crisis,"* MAEW 2021 aims to offer a variety of content and activities that can serve a wide range of discussions and exchanges including the politics from the international level to peoples' communities, life, and livelihood in post-COVID-19; democracy; governance; energy; cultural ecology; cross-border disaster; economic trends; digital disruption; youth's power and way forwards for a more progressive ASEAN.

Proposed Frameworks

- Part 1 - "ASEAN and the World, today" (Why redesign ASEAN?).** This first part of the forum will provide an analysis of the overall picture of the change that occurs in the global and regional context, and how COVID-19 outbreaks stimulate what change. The discussion will not only limit to the environment but also economic, political, and other aspects that impact the region and its people. The global perspectives and experiences from developed countries that can be the lesson learned for the region will be brought to discuss, especially on new trends in the environmental movement such as solution on energy, the dams decommission and conflict resolution models. This first part aims to provide some ideas and guidance on what the change in ASEAN the people can be concretely expected.
- Part 2 - "Crisis and mission".** The visible crisis that requires joint-mission and solution from different actors will be explored and discussed in this part with regards to the relationship between economic, political, and environment in the scales of national, regional, and global level. The discussion on the environment that relates to other aspects will link the global issues down to aspects of local and cultural ecology of the region. The broad issues will be discussed and perform including the good governance; energy in the region; Mekong ecology; climate crisis; cross border haze; plastic waste and ocean pollution; youth's power constriction; digital disruption; digital currency; green economy; the role of ASEAN; and the geopolitics of global and regional powers, etc.

Part 3

“Redesign ASEAN”. This final part of the forum will welcome all forms of brainstorming activities, debates, and the creation of open spaces for participants to think and propose ideas, especially those that already owned innovation and driven different kinds of transformation towards a better environment and livelihood in their respective areas. This part aims to bring together active groups and networks especially young people in ASEAN who are seeking better options as global citizens while also hearing from the experienced movement and networks. In sum, this part is the collective of networks and actors who believe in a better ASEAN that can be redesigned by the people of the region.

References

MAEW Facebook page <<https://www.facebook.com/Since2019MAEW>>

MAEW2019 < <http://www.sevanasea.org/the-asean-we-want.html>>

MAEW 2020 < http://www.sevanasea.org/MAEW_2020.html>