

# SUARA NADI BELIA ORANG ASLI SEMENANJUNG MALAYSIA

Heartbeat Voices from  
Indigenous Youth of  
Peninsula Malaysia



KLIMA  
ACTION  
MALAYSIA  
(KAMY)

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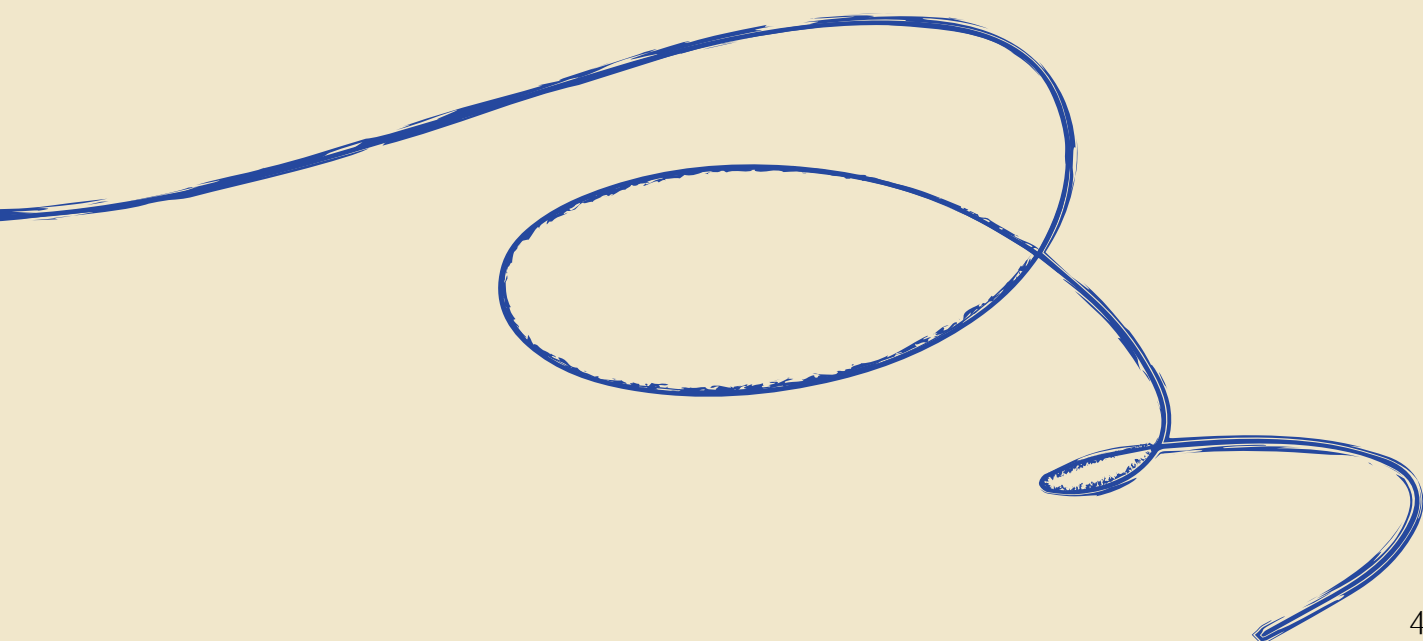


*Bunga Kantan  
(Etlingera Elatior)*

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# FOREWORD

**Ili Nadiyah binti Dzulfakar, Programme Director of Klima Action Malaysia – KAMY.**

As the world grapples with the escalating crisis of climate change, this report brings to the forefront the voices of the *Orang Asli*, the Indigenous custodians of Malaysia's ancient rainforests. Their firsthand accounts shed light on the stark realities of environmental upheaval and its human toll. Within these pages lies not only testimony to the hardships endured but also a testament to the *Orang Asli*'s deep-rooted wisdom in environmental stewardship. Their resilience offers invaluable lessons for an alternative development that is sustainable but also fair, and highlights the need for their inclusion in crafting the future of climate policy. This report is an urgent call to collective action, an invitation to listen and learn from those living on the frontlines. It is an appeal for a collective commitment to a future where human rights and natural harmony coexist. As we turn each page, let us be moved to act with resolve and hope.

**Azian Juliana Ng, an *Orang Asli* Rights activist.**

In any form of development, business, employment, or education, it will involve human rights regardless of race, religion, or descent. Every development undertaken should not only adhere to the law but also encompass human rights, especially for the communities in a particular area, as we may not be aware of the challenges faced by their community. Although not many *Orang Asli* have higher education, they are highly educated in environmental conservation.

**Dr. Rusalina Idrus, gender and *Orang Asli* expert at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of Universiti Malaya.**

This is an important report that captures and amplifies the voices of the *Orang Asli* in Malaysia, with a particular focus on women and youth. Indigenous communities have been at the forefront of environmental and climate change protection, yet they frequently encounter dismissal and at times, even violence when defending the environment. Their connection to the natural worlds holds valuable knowledge about living in balance with the ecosystem. As testified by Nora Kantin in this report, the *Orang Asli* are not only defending *Orang Asli* rights but also fighting climate change for the benefit of all. This report spotlights the role of Indigenous women and youth as important leaders and agents of change in the fight against the climate crisis. It is time to recognise their wisdom and leadership and heed their call to protect the environment.

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Most importantly, we extend our gratitude to our *Orang Asli* youth contributors, who have given their time, honesty, and heart in representing their community's voices. Over the timeline of six months, a total of forty *Orang Asli* youth contributors have participated in various Focus Group Discussions, Workshops, and Key Informant Interviews in creating this document together.

This report is reviewed by Azian Ng, an *Orang Asli* Rights activist, and Dr. Rusalina Idrus from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of Universiti Malaya. Illustrations and artwork by the penmanship of Bornean Indigenous artist Jennifer P. Linggi. This report's graphic and visual design is the work of Miki Wong Mei Qi.

Sekolah Iklim would like to extend its heartiest gratitude and acknowledgement to those who played part in of the proactive legwork required as part of the study's research process; Puteri Nur Inarah, Ian Francis Khoo, Sharon Wah, and Sarah Irdina, Aizad Bin Azman and Muhammad Hazeeq, Suney Leo Ertzeman and Ezan Marjan, Ilyahida Ismail Hisham and Kimberly Wong, and Fatima Jamaludin.

***Na Jear Na Tehor, Na Termak  
Na Terpak Ma Kandek***  
(We ask you all to listen to our voices)

***Jagak Beri Dawen Dak-Dak  
Kesan Terhadap Semak***  
(The forest is angry because the forest is sick)

***Pak Lak Berpaluhan Dak-Dak  
Tempot Dol***  
(The forest is our life, our spirit)

***Betoik Lagi Hijaunyo  
Dek Sikap Manusia***  
(We want to preserve what has been entrusted to us by our ancestors' spirits.)

*Written in Temiar, Jakun and Semai languages*

# GLOSSARY

**ACE** - Glasgow Work Programme on Action for Climate Empowerment

**AR6** - IPCC Sixth Assessment Report

**AKWOA** - Apa Kata Wanita Orang Asli

**AMK** - Angkatan Muda Keadilan

**CEDAW** - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

**COP** - Conference of the Parties

**DMN** - Dasar Mineral Negara (upcoming)

**DOE** - Department of Environment

**DPTOA** - Dasar Pemberian Tanah Orang Asli

**ESG** - Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance

**FELDA** - Federal Land Development Authority

**FPIC** - Free, Prior, and Informed Consent

**GEF SGP** - Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme

**GDP** - Gross Domestic Product

**GLC** - Government Linked Company

**IIPFCC** - International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change

**JAKOA** - The Department of Orang Asli Development (Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli)

**JKOASM** - Jaringan Kampung Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia

**JPOAJ** - Jaringan Perkampungan Orang Asli Johor

**LWPG** - Lima Work Programme on Gender

**MyNAP** - National Adaptation Plan (Pelan Adaptasi Negara)

**MBOA** - Majlis Belia Orang Asli

**MMKN** - State Executive Committee (Majlis Mesyuarat Kerajaan Negeri)

**MNC** - Multi-National Corporation

**NADMA** - Malaysia National Disaster Management Agency

**NAHRIM** - National Water Research Institute of Malaysia

**NCA** - Nature Conservation Agreement

**NDC** - Nationally Determined Contribution

**NEP** - National Energy Policy 2022-2040 (Dasar Tenaga Negara Nasional 2022-2040)

**NETR** - National Energy Transition Roadmap

**NGO** - Non-Governmental Organisation

**NCP** - National Climate Policy 2009 - 2012

**NRECC** - Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change (Kementerian Sumber Asli, Alam Sekitar dan Perubahan Iklim)

**POASM** - Persatuan Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia

**PERHILITAN** - Department of Wildlife and National Parks

**RISDA** - Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority

**SBSTA** - Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice

**SDG** - Sustainable Development Goals

**SME** - Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

**SUHAKAM** - Human Rights Commission of Malaysia

**SUARAM** - Suara Rakyat Malaysia

**The Aboriginal People's Act of 1954 (Act 134)** - Akta Orang Asli 1954 (Akta 134)

**TPA** - Third Party Actors

**TNB** - Tenaga Nasional Berhad

**UNDP** - United Nations Development Programme

**UNFCCC** - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

**UNPFII** - The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

**UNDRIP** - The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

**UNESCO** - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

# TRANSLATION

**Akar Rempah Gunung** - Cinnamomum  
Parthenoxylon

**Akar Segemuk** - *Rennellia elliptica*

**Asam Kelubi** - *Eleiodoxa conferta*

**Ayam Kampung** - Village Chicken

**Bangkong** - *Artocarpus Integer*

**Belia** - Youth

**Biola** - A type of traditional string instrument

**Bunga Kemerbang** - A type of flower endemic  
to Pekan-Rompin, Pahang

**Bunga Kantan** - *Etilingera elatior*

**Daun Gelenggang** - *Cassia senna*

**Daun Kersang** - *Elettariopsis curtisii*

**Daun Ketum** - *Mitragyna speciosa*

**Gaharu** - *Agarwood*

**Getah** - *Hevea brasiliensis*

**Gitar Buluh** - A type of traditional string  
instrument

**Gua** - Cave

**Halaa** - A traditional female healer from the  
Semai tribe

**Ikan Haruan** - *Channa striata*

**Ikan Pupuyu** - *Anabas testudineus*

**Ikan Bujuk** - Forest Snakehead

**Jaringan** - Union

**Kambing** - Goat

**Kacip Fatimah** - *Labisia pumila*

**Kampung** - Village

**Katak** - Frog

**Kerdas** - Archidendron bubalinum

**Kerang** - Cockles

**Ketam** - Crab

**Kubang Celor** - 'Signs' of environmental danger

**Kura-kura** - Freshwater Tortoise

**Labi-labi** - Softshell Turtle

**Lembu** - Cow

**Madu Kelulut** - Honey from the Kelulut Bee

**Mengkuang** - *Screw Pine*

**Meranti** - *Shorea*

**Nipah** - *Nypa fruticans*

**Orang Asli** - *Indigenous People of Peninsula  
Malaysia*

**Pisang** - *Banana*

**Rayau** - Area of subsistence-based foraging

**Rebana** - A type of traditional percussive  
instrument

**Rebung Buluh** - *Gigantochloa levis*

**Rotan** - *Rattan*

**Pensel Hidung** - A type of traditional wind  
instrument

**Rumbia** - *Metroxylon sagu*

**Semangat** - Spirit

**Sewang** - Spiritual Dance

**Taban** - *Palaquium gutta*

**Tampoi** - *Baccaurea macrocarpa*

**Tarian** - Dance

**Tongkat Ali** - *Eurycoma longifolia*

**Ubi Jaga** - *Smilax myosotiflora*

**Ubi Kayu** - *Cassava*

**Udang** - Prawn

**Wanita** - Woman/Women



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The *Orang Asli* youth of Peninsula Malaysia stand at the center of the climate crisis, bearing the brunt of its impacts; from socio-economic hardships to environmental threats that challenge their Indigenous rights to ancestral lands and endanger their way of life.

This report highlights three significant concerns within Malaysia's human rights and environmental nexus. *Orang Asli* youth, at the frontline of climate change, bear witness to a marked increase in extreme events, notably severe flooding, which brings profound losses from mortality to property damage. Inadequate emergency responses exacerbate the resulting hardships, further entrenched by escalating human-wildlife conflicts. Simultaneously, incursions into *Orang Asli* territories amplify environmental degradation, largely from legal logging, mono-crop timber plantations, and mining-related impacts such as soil erosion, landslides, and river contamination. This not only poses long-term health threats but erodes their connection to the land. Lastly, the energy transition towards renewable energy and rare earth mineral mining underscores a glaring distributive injustice. Marginalised communities disproportionately bear the transition's brunt, with development projects like mega-dams risking the erasure of spiritually vital historical sites and undermining Indigenous territorial autonomy.

The *Orang Asli* youth must be at the forefront of climate governance discussion. Their energy and determination are palpable, yet they are confronted with structural challenges that undermine their autonomy. The prevailing legal frameworks, unfortunately, recognise the *Orang Asli* as mere tenants of their ancestral lands, not as the rightful custodians. Such designations not only limit their autonomy but also threaten their cultural heritage. Frequent land acquisitions, coupled with inadequate government interventions, exacerbate their vulnerabilities. These actions lead to unwanted relocations, causing a deep erosion of their cultural identity.

In pursuing its sustainability and net-zero goals, Malaysia must consider the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the 18 recommendations by the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) to safeguard Indigenous land rights. This approach bridges climate and development issues with a human rights perspective. Policy reforms must include *Orang Asli* youth voices to prevent community disempowerment, and legal tools should enable the *Orang Asli* to assert their rights


## **Grassroots Mobilization and Civil Action:**

It is heartening to witness *Orang Asli* youth, especially young women, galvanising their communities. They are not mere passive observers; they are at the helm of grassroots organisations, making their voices heard on national platforms, and driving civil-led actions. Their advocacy encompasses a broad spectrum, from Indigenous rights to climate policies that resonate with their unique lived experiences.

## **Women: The Pillars of Resilience:**

Both young and elderly *Orang Asli* women are not just survivors but active agents of change in the face of climate adversities. Their roles in climate adaptation and mitigation are nothing short of transformative. These women embody resilience and resourcefulness. Beyond just coping, they are leading the way in initiatives centred on climate adaptation, sustainable resource management, and bolstering community resilience.

# AMPLIFY AND EMPOWER VOICES




This aspiration report seeks to address the significant knowledge deficit and systemic issues faced by Indigenous youth in Peninsula Malaysia concerning climate governance. It aims to comprehensively understand their perspectives on climate impacts, literacy, participation in decision-making, and engagement in policy consultations. The project acknowledges the challenges faced by *Orang Asli* youth, including cultural loss, limited access to education and healthcare, exclusion from decision-making, and inadequate legal protection. The report also aims to bridge the gaps that have excluded *Orang Asli* youth as rights holders, especially in the context of Malaysia's sustainability plans. It also highlights the pressing issues of land rights and climate governance, aiming to empower and amplify the voices of *Orang Asli* youth in climate governance and conservation efforts. It emphasises the importance of a collaborative and participatory approach that involves *Orang Asli* youth in decision-making processes while prioritising Indigenous rights, cultural preservation, and environmental protection.

Ultimately, the project seeks to contribute to sustainable action plans that balance economic development with cultural preservation and effectively address climate challenges. The findings in this study underscore the need to identify systematic exclusions, especially in the context of Malaysia's sustainability goals. By empowering these youth voices in climate governance and conservation, the research aims to inform sustainable action plans, to balance economic growth with preserving cultural and environmental values and to address climate challenges effectively and justly.

## REPORT ROADMAP

### A Navigational Guide

The roadmap presented in this report serves as a structured guide through the complex landscape of the climate crisis and its profound impact on the *Orang Asli* youth of Peninsula Malaysia. With each chapter, this report will explore experiences and challenges, from socio-economic disparities to environmental threats and climate governance aspirations. Through its findings, the report emphasises the *Orang Asli* youth's crucial efforts in seeking justice, ensuring a sustainable future, and preserving their cultural legacy.



## CHAPTER 1: Who are the *Orang Asli* of Peninsula Malaysia?

Introduces the *Orang Asli* community in Peninsula Malaysia, highlighting their ethnic diversity and minority status. Key demographics, particularly age and gender, and key examination of the socio-economic conditions offer insight into the voices at the forefront of these consultations. Beyond that, it dives into understanding gender roles and how deeply culture weaves into their daily lives. Additionally, crucial aspects such as their health, well-being, and access to electricity and connectivity are adeptly addressed.

## CHAPTER 2: A State of Emergency

Focuses on climate justice, emphasising the need for actions beyond carbon reduction emissions. It provides an overview of how human-induced climate disasters have affected the *Orang Asli* territories and sheds light on the specific challenges faced by *Orang Asli* women. The chapter explores national policy and legal frameworks for climate change, including the current approaches of the government such as Malaysia's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) targets, and the relevance of instruments like the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

## CHAPTER 3: Changing Landscapes

Explores the evolving challenges the *Orang Asli* confront, focusing on land-use conflicts and a case study on the Nenggiri Dam. Personal narratives like Nora Awa's shed light on these struggles. It addresses their battles over land rights and suggests remedies for these injustices, while also proposing a just energy transition as a viable alternative.

## CHAPTER 4: Youth Aspirations for Climate Governance

Centres the aspirations of *Orang Asli* youth in climate governance, combining their climate awareness with traditional knowledge. It emphasises the significance of youth-led climate action, which encompasses community initiatives, national youth platform participation, feminist collectives, and grassroots civil-led actions. The chapter also offers key insights into the anticipatory strategies of *Orang Asli* women. Lastly, it pinpoints the barriers that limit the engagement and representation of *Orang Asli* youth in climate governance

## CHAPTER 5: Significance of COP and UNFCCC

Dives into the global context of climate action, focusing on the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It discusses the experiences of *Orang Asli* youth and emphasises the significance of women empowerment. Lastly, it highlights the importance of bridging Indigenous communities and global climate discussions.

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The subsequent sections provide recommendations for various stakeholders, including governments, corporations, institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs), and media organisations. These recommendations aim to address the challenges and injustices faced by the *Orang Asli* and suggest ways to promote sustainable and equitable solutions.

# RESEARCH SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

## Framework

In crafting a response to the climate emergency, the study centres its framework on issues critical to the *Orang Asli* youth of Malaysia. Climate change poses severe threats to these communities, undermining traditional livelihoods through loss of land and resources, increasing their susceptibility to extreme weather events, and eroding their reliance on ancestral forests for survival. The crisis also endangers the *Orang Asli's* cultural integrity, as the deterioration of customary practices and their bond with the land imperils the continuity of their heritage. A nuanced understanding of these unique challenges is essential to devise adaptation and mitigation strategies that are both culturally sensitive, fair and effective.

## Identified Themes

### *IMPACTS:*

Concerns the problems *Orang Asli* youth and their communities encounter due to the climate crisis.

### *GENDER LENS:*

Centres on issues specific to women.

### *DISCRIMINATION:*

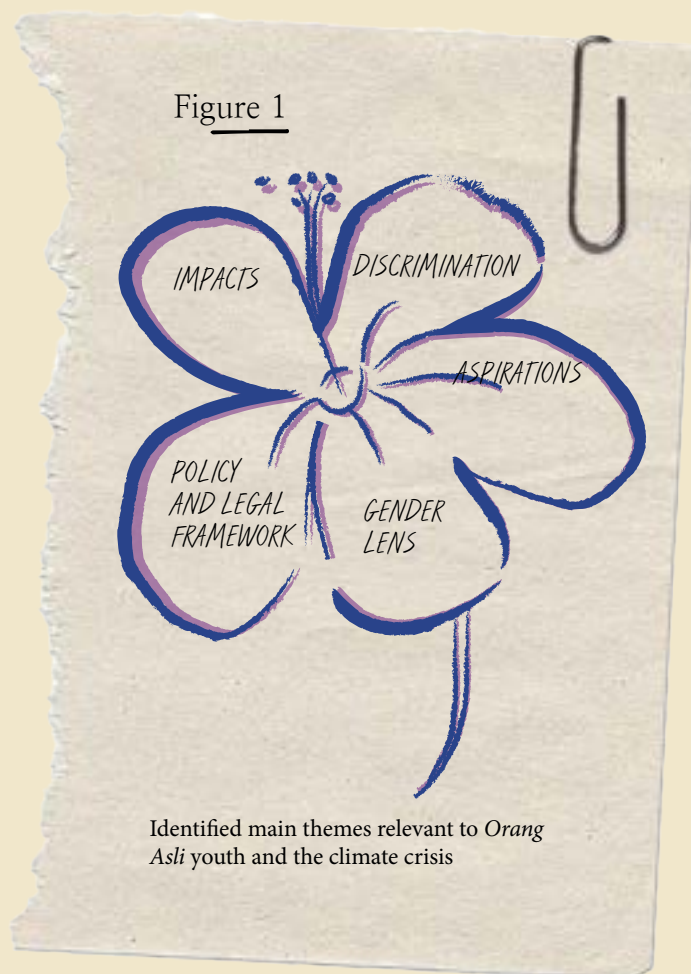
Focuses on identifying systemic discrimination patterns against *Orang Asli* youth, especially concerning their agency in decision-making regarding their Indigenous land rights.

### *POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK:*

Examines the influence and responsibility of policies and legislations, international obligations, and government bodies in equitably addressing the climate crisis and *Orang Asli* rights.

### *ASPIRATIONS:*

Highlights the desires of the *Orang Asli* youth to play an active role in climate governance.



In the process of data consolidation, participant responses were organised in a two-fold manner: primarily as anonymous contributors in group discussions (unless prior consent for identification was provided), and secondly as distinct, identifiable voices from the key informant interviews. By undertaking this assessment, the research aims to highlight the specific challenges they face, the implications of climate change on their cultural, societal, and overall well-being, and further contextualise these insights considering their geographical locations, gender, and current educational or occupational status.

All participating contributors have provided their consent to include their names and sharing of their experiences in the creation of this document. The research employs a participatory approach that actively involves *Orang Asli* youth and their communities in climate and development policy decision-making, and aims to analyse systematic gaps that have historically excluded Indigenous Peoples as rights holders in climate governance, especially in the context of Malaysia's sustainability and net-zero goals. In tandem, the research also aims to draw the connection between *Orang Asli*'s rights to land in the formulation of action plans addressing the climate crisis in Peninsula Malaysia.

## Contributor Selection Process

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The research established a participant selection criterion, as seen in **Table 1**. The project engaged a total of forty *Orang Asli* youths; thirty-three women and thirteen men aged between 18 and 36. This age criterion was set to emphasise the perspectives of the youth for inclusive representation. The participation pool is sourced largely from the networks of Apa Kata *Wanita Orang Asli* (AKWOA) across Peninsula Malaysia, a Jahut community in Jerantut, Pahang and a Jakun community from Pekan, Pahang. While the study's intent was to encapsulate voices from all eighteen tribes, time constraints necessitated a categorisation based on two geographic quadrants\*:

1. Quadrant 1: North and East - covering Perak, Kelantan, and Perlis.
2. Quadrant 2: Midland and South - encompassing Selangor, Pahang, Negeri Sembilan, and Johor.

By dividing the *Orang Asli* territory into these two quadrants, the research aims to analyse and understand the variations in governmental responses, land use, socio-economic perspectives, and traditional knowledge within these distinct geographical regions. It allows for a more nuanced examination of the *Orang Asli* communities' diverse experiences, even though the geographic distribution may not always align with state boundaries due to factors like nomadism, urbanisation, or displacements.

The study also places significant emphasis on understanding the experiences of young *Orang Asli* women driven by the recognition of their disproportionate vulnerability to the climate crisis. **Table 1** below presents the combined list of *Orang Asli* youth contributors to the project's research and data collection methodology process;

\* In the context provided, the research study has divided the area or territory inhabited by the *Orang Asli* into two distinct quadrants based on the geographic location of the communities.

TABLE 1

## Orang Asli youth contributors from Peninsula Malaysia (Ages 18-36)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Tribe</i>	<i>State</i>
1. Embun A/P Akim	F	Temiar	Kelantan
2. Islan A/L Along	M	Temiar	Kelantan
3. Aasmida Binti Along	F	Temiar	Kelantan
4. Roslena A/P Mat Som	F	Temiar	Kelantan
5. Nurul Najihah Binti Mohd Shahbi	F	Temuan	Selangor
6. Nasir Bin Dollah	M	Temiar	Kelantan
7. Hamalidah A/P Tip	F	Jakun	Pahang
8. Lungey A/P Uda	F	Temiar	Kelantan
9. N'Dang Seliman	F	Semai	Perak
10. Sylvia Ordina A/P Othman	F	Temiar	Perak
11. Reloi A/L Roslan	M	Temiar	Kelantan
12. Yaliyana Binti Lenab	F	Semelai	Negeri Sembilan
13. Rahamat Bin M Amin	M	Jakun	Johor
14. Liana A/P Suwadi	F	Jakun	Pahang
15. Aswaliza Binti Johanisan	F	Temiar	Kelantan
16. Reboy A/P Uda	F	Temiar	Kelantan
17. Rohainiza A/P Atan	F	Jahut	Pahang
18. Chai Mee See	F	Jahut	Pahang
19. Subaidah A/P Tajuddin	F	Jahut	Pahang
20. Roha A/P Roziman	F	Jahut	Pahang
21. Aken Khalisyia	F	Jahut	Pahang
22. Kamaliah A/P Esof	F	Jahut	Pahang
23. Norsyafiana A/P Atan	F	Jakun	Pahang
24. Norhida A/P Mddn	F	Jahut	Pahang
25. Nur Aida A/P Esof	F	Jahut	Pahang
26. Asmidah A/P Kadir	F	Jahut	Pahang
27. Syafizabella A/P Norhisam	F	Jakun	Pahang
28. Rosdila Binti Ngah Roslan	F	Jahut	Pahang
29. Analisa A/P Atang	F	Jakun	Pahang
30. Afiza Binti Ramli Ahmad	F	Semelai	Pahang
31. Eliana A/P Tan Beng Hui	F	Jakun	Pahang
32. Nora Binti Kantin	F	Temiar	Kelantan
33. Diana A/P Tan Beng Hui	F	Jakun	Pahang
34. Nini Binti Alang	F	Temiar	Negeri Sembilan
35. Noranizan A/P Marjan	F	Jakun	Pahang
36. Zulhasnizam A/P Marjan	M	Jakun	Pahang
37. Normalissa A/P Osman	F	Jakun	Pahang
38. Intanernamarzean Binti Marjan	F	Jakun	Pahang
39. Aznizuriana A/P Azninizam	F	Jakun	Pahang
40. Nor Iszat A/L Isman Adie	M	Jakun	Johor

## Data Collection: Focus Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews and Workshops

Data collection occurs through focus groups discussions (FGDs), workshop sessions and key informant interviews. The following information presented in **Table 2** details the research methodologies employed in capturing vital the insights and experiences of *Orang Asli* youth. Data was collected via online sessions, face-to-face interviews, and visits to *Orang Asli* villages to engage with the community. While the study aimed for comprehensive representation, challenges related to time, resources, and sample size were encountered. It is acknowledged that some variation in representation might be present.

TABLE 2

### Types of research methodologies employed for data collection

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	The FGDs, through online and face to face mode, allowed <i>Orang Asli</i> youth to discuss the climate crisis's effects on them and their communities on topics like socio-economic issues, youth health, and climate awareness. The FGDs accrued <i>Orang Asli</i> youth contributors' personal experiences and mapped their present socio-economic challenges and the climate crisis's direct and indirect impacts through the short and long term.
Key Informant Interviews	Incorporating the insights of <i>Orang Asli</i> youth leaders is crucial to documenting the real-life experiences of those most directly impacted. These voices provide an immediate, firsthand view of the challenges, hopes, and its nuances.
Workshops	The Sekolah Iklim workshops programming consisted of sessions focused on enhancing contributors' knowledge and skills regarding climate science fundamentals, mitigation and adaptation strategies, media training for effective communication and COP-related discussions, exploring the Malaysian climate framework, fair energy transition, financial strategies for climate-induced losses, and the role of gender empowerment in climate initiatives.

# CHAPTER 1:

## Who are the *Orang Asli* of Peninsula Malaysia?

The *Orang Asli* in Peninsula Malaysia is composed of three main tribal groups: the Semang (Negrito), Senoi, and Proto Malay (Aboriginal Malay). The *Orang Asli* are the Indigenous People of Peninsula Malaysia, with approximately eighteen *Orang Asli* ethnic groups; Kensiu, Kintak, Jahai, Mendiq, Lanah, Bateq, Temuan, Jakun, Semelai, Kanaq, Kuala, Seletar, Temiar, Semai, Jah Hut, Che Wong, Semoq Beri, and Mah Meri—each with their language, customs, and traditions<sup>1</sup>. Forests, rivers, and mountains are more than landscapes for the *Orang Asli*—they are tapestries of existence, vessels of sustenance, and envoys of spiritual connection. This diversity contributes to the rich tapestry of Malaysia's cultural heritage.

The *Orang Asli* represent a mere 0.6% of Malaysia's total population of 33.4 Million<sup>2</sup>, and are central to the nation's cultural tapestry. Their name, "*Orang Asli*", translates from Malay as "original people" or "first people", signifying their status as the Peninsula Malaysia earliest inhabitants.

### 1.1 Ethnic Diversity and Minority Status

According to the latest statistics collected by the Department of *Orang Asli* Development (JAKOA) in 2022<sup>3</sup>, the total population of *Orang Asli* in Peninsula Malaysia was 209,575- seeing heavy concentrations in states such as Pahang and Perak. The majority of *Orang Asli* are of Senoic origin, followed by Melayu-Proto and Negrito. **Table 3** below presents the total *Orang Asli* population by sub-ethnic and state in 2022, as adapted from JAKOA.

TABLE 3

### Orang Asli youth contributors from Peninsula Malaysia (Ages 18-36)

State	Senoi	Melayu-Proto	Negrito	Total Population
Johor	49	15,773	3	15,825
Kedah	30	10	296	336
Kelantan	15,382	73	2,032	17,487
Melaka	23	1,809	1	1,833
Negeri Sembilan	110	12,107	4	12,221
Pahang	36,002	41,485	1,128	78,615
Perak	57,747	667	2,811	61,225
Selangor	5,425	15,532	4	20,961
Terengganu	944	85	43	1072
<b>Total</b>	<b>115,712</b>	<b>87,541</b>	<b>6,322</b>	<b>209,575</b>



Approximately 89.4% of the *Orang Asli* community live below the poverty line, a notable figure when considering Malaysia's broader context <sup>4</sup>. Even more striking, 35.2% of the *Orang Asli* experience hard-core poverty, a rate that starkly contrasts with the national average of 1.4% <sup>5</sup>.

In Malaysia, the *Orang Asli* communities face distinct health challenges, often attributed to their geographical locations. While the national infant mortality rate stands at 8.9 per 1,000 live births, it escalates to a significant 51.7 within the *Orang Asli* demographic.

Additionally, the life expectancy for the *Orang Asli* is approximately 53 years, a figure contrasting with the national average of 73 years <sup>6</sup>. The distribution of *Orang Asli* youth also correlates with the socioeconomic disparities that persist within these communities. The geographical distribution of *Orang Asli* youth is influenced by historical factors that have shaped settlement patterns over time. Distinct communities of *Orang Asli* youth are found in both rural and remote areas, each with its unique challenges and opportunities. Cultural ties to ancestral lands play a significant role in determining the locations where these communities reside, often reflecting their deep-rooted connections to specific territories <sup>7</sup>.

## 1.2 Age Structure and Gender Composition

Malaysia defines youth as being between the ages of 15 and 40. Country Metres <sup>8</sup> reveals that youth (65.4%) are the largest demographic in Peninsula Malaysia. Notably, almost 45% of the entire *Orang Asli* population is composed of individuals under the age of 15 <sup>9</sup>. The statistics portray the prominence of youth within the community—a gathering of potential, continuity, and energy. However, the challenges faced by *Orang Asli* youth are substantial and require comprehensive policies and initiatives that consider their distinct needs.

## 1.3 Whose voices are being heard in this consultation?

In the consultation process depicted in **Figure 2.1**, the voices of *Orang Asli* youth spanned various tribes. *Orang Asli* youth contributors from the Jakun, Jahut and Temiar tribes were notably dominant, making up 90% of the total number of contributors. They were followed by the Temuan, Semai, and Semelai tribes, representing 2.5%, 2.5% and 5% respectively, with no representation of the Negrito tribe. Regionally, as presented in **Figure 2.2**, Pahang-based *Orang Asli* youth recorded the highest in representation, likely due to their more considerable population.

Contributors from Kelantan, Perak, and Selangor showed significant participation, while insights from Johor and Negeri Sembilan, though fewer, enriched the discussions. Consequently, it's important to note that the results should not be interpreted as a reflection of one state having a stronger influence on the issue than the other. **Figure 2.3** highlights young Indigenous women as the dominant contributor constituting 85%.

Figure 2.1

### Distribution of *Orang Asli* youth contributors according to Sub-Tribe

Distribution of *Orang Asli* youth contributors

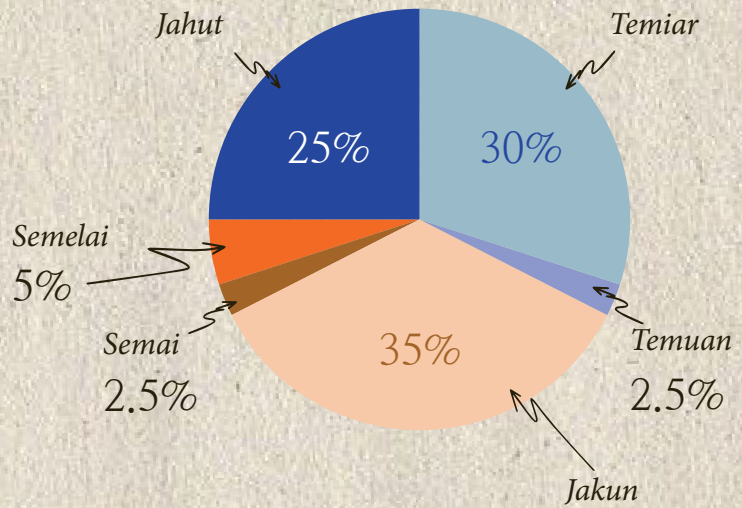
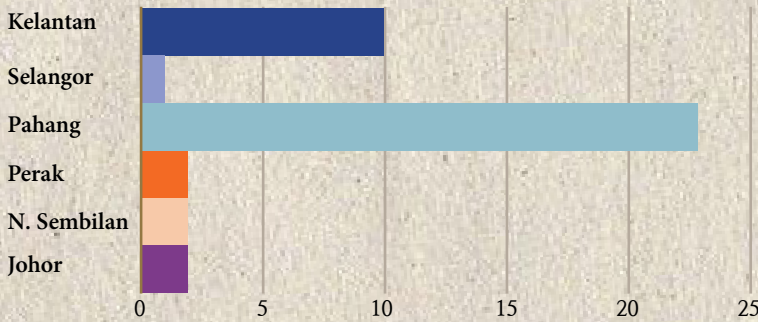


Figure 2.2

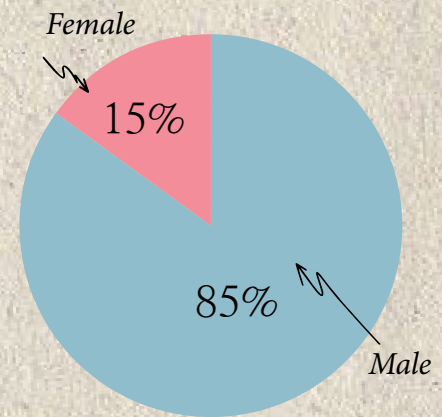
### State Representation of *Orang Asli* youth contributors



State Representation of *Orang Asli* youth contributors

Figure 2.3

### Percentage of Gendered Voices



Percentage of *Orang Asli* youth contributors' voices based on Gender

## 1.4

# Socio-economics of *Orang Asli*

*Orang Asli* communities engage in a diverse range of economic activities, with both men and women actively participating in formal and informal economy. For certain villages in Pahang and Johor, *Orang Asli* enterprises grow palm oil, *getah* (rubber), *ubi kayu* (cassava) and *pisang* (banana) but recent dips in market prices of these pursuits generate less income for the community. They also engage in the rearing and sale of livestock, such as *ayam kampung* (village chickens), *lembu* (cows) and *kambing* (goats). The younger generation have turned to external income sources, like *getah* (rubber) planting promoted by government agencies such as Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority (RISDA) and the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA), or privately-owned corporations such as Sime Darby.

One notable change is the shift in employment patterns as many young people from rural areas have moved towards urban employment, often in low-skilled labour roles. As denoted by N'dang, a Semai youth from Perak, that her village is situated near the town of Seri Iskandar and most women find jobs as cleaners at nearby educational institutions, whereas the men will work as landscapers. It is important to note that the level of employment of *Orang Asli* youth, like any other youth demographic, arguably is tied to their level of education, degrees qualification and professional skills.

The entrepreneurial spirit among *Orang Asli* youth is flourishing with the adoption of digital marketplaces such as Shopee and Lazada. These platforms facilitate the promotion and sale of products ranging from beauty items and traditional crafts to unique forest-derived goods like ike *madu kelulut* (*Kelulut* bee honey), *Kacip Fatimah*, *Tongkat Ali*, *rotan*, and *asam kelubi*. An increase in Indigenous-led small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is evident as many youths now oversee operations such as burger stands, online ventures, and local convenience stores.

The report notes cases where *Orang Asli* youth serve as forest rangers, a role that often presents dilemmas. For instance, conflicts arise when *Orang Asli* are tasked with policing activities like hunting, integral to their customs. Such situations have prompted community dialogue on harmonising conservation with the community's traditional livelihood practices.



## Contextualizing Gender Dynamics and Cultural Influence

The relationship between culture, tradition, and gender equality in Peninsula Malaysia's *Orang Asli* communities is rich for examination. *Orang Asli* women, once central to roles now occupied by men, face increased gender discrimination. Historically, communities have had esteemed female shamans and healers, such as the Semai '*halaa*' of 1960s Sahom, Perak, and a prominent Temuan shaman in 1990s Selangor. However, these figures have waned, with male shamans predominantly observed today<sup>10</sup>.

This discriminatory shift in gender roles became prevalent within *Orang Asli* society over the past few centuries, influenced by encounters with cultures dominated by males, and the subsequent adoption of these foreign gender norms<sup>11</sup>. Recognising traditional gender roles is essential, as they notably impact access to vital services, such as healthcare and education, for both men and women. Within *Orang Asli* society, as observed by the youth contributors, traditional norms often designate women to care roles such as homemaking, childcare, and foraging. Conversely, men are perceived as the primary breadwinners of the family.

The current social framework perpetuates gender stereotypes that curtail *Orang Asli* women's access to education, economic empowerment, and participation in decision-making, leading to marked disparities in health and education outcomes. Young *Orang Asli* women report that entrenched patriarchal norms have marginalised them, undermining their autonomy and educational opportunities. The predominance of male leadership in community decisions underscores the need to tackle these gender inequities, particularly in education and health sectors. The limited public engagement of women exacerbates these disparities. Furthermore, analysts suggest that the introduction of capitalist structures has altered gender dynamics within the *Orang Asli* community, historically more gender-inclusive<sup>12</sup>.

## 1.6 Health and Well-being

In an interview, Nora, a Temiar woman from Kelantan, emphasises the significance of ancestral forests for the *Orang Asli*, serving as natural clinics with diverse medicinal plants used in traditional remedies by healers and community members alike. A Jahut woman from Pahang illustrates the usage of local herbs with medicinal properties for treating common health issues within the community.



*“Leaves such as daun gelenggang (Cassia senna) are used to treat skin issues such as eczema and bacterial infections, whereas leaves from the pokok dukung anak (Phyllanthus niruri) are used to treat fevers for infants. Preparation for this natural treatment includes mixing boiled leaves with kapur sirih (edible lime chalk). Roots such as akar segemuk (Rennellia elliptica) are boiled in hot water and consumed as a beverage to treat back pain.”*

The *Orang Asli* communities are contending with environmental degradation that exacerbate health concerns. Workshop participants at Sekolah Iklim have reported grave health impacts due to water pollution, including fatalities and frequent cases of diarrhoea, asthma, and skin conditions linked to contaminated water sources. This problem extends across several states. Logging activities contribute to not only physical ailments but also mental health issues within the community, with an increase in depression, anxiety, and suicides, driven by economic stress. Furthermore, the trauma of discrimination and land encroachment, coupled with a rise in human-wildlife conflicts, has led to reports of fear and PTSD among *Orang Asli* communities.

Accessing healthcare services is another hurdle. Rahamat, a Jakun youth from Johor, mentioned that in his village, getting to the nearest healthcare facility requires a 12-kilometre journey along rough, off-road terrain, taking approximately 30 minutes. However, the healthcare centre is small, resulting in lengthy waiting times of 2-3 hours due to the queues. Floods exacerbate this issue, severing road access and prolonging travel to emergency services to 8 hours and routine visits to 2 days. Similarly, Nurul, a Temuan from Selangor, highlights the difficulty in summoning emergency services such as ambulances or fire departments due to a lack of infrastructure like telephone connectivity and house numbers in villages, complicating the provision of prompt assistance.

## 1.7 Education

*Orang Asli* communities confront a myriad of challenges in accessing quality education. One overarching concern is the geographical remoteness of their settlements. This remoteness often results in limited educational opportunities, leading to high drop-out rates. Rohainiza, a female Jakun youth who is a student at UMS, Sabah, shares that only a handful of *Orang Asli* youth continue their tertiary education:



*“There is a growing interest among the youth (at least half of the youth in her community) to continue their studies but the main challenge is the family’s limited income and limitations to supporting the high living cost and tuition fee in university. JAKOA does grant scholarships for Orang Asli youth in the communities here, to continue their tertiary education.”*

*Orang Asli* youths, as voiced by Lungey and Reboy from Kelantan, often face missed educational and employment opportunities due to late notifications about scholarships, university admissions, and government employment placements.

Compounding this, inadequate school infrastructure impairs their educational experience, potentially stalling academic achievement. A notable gap in Malaysia’s national education system is the failure to acknowledge *Orang Asli* identity and culture within the curriculum, compromising cultural rights. To address these challenges, urgent reforms and better coordination in government strategies for indigenous education are essential.

## 1.8 Access to Electricity, and Digital Connectivity

In the rural settlements of the *Orang Asli*, consistent access to reliable electricity and potable water remains a challenge. Rahamat reports frequent power outages in his village, particularly during floods, as the delivery of fuel to generators is disrupted. Communities without a stable power supply depend on petrol generators or firewood, leading to additional costs. Water is often sourced from ground-well pumps or nearby rivers, which is at risk of contamination from nearby agricultural activities or deforestation. The disparity in access to these basic amenities is stark: while brick and wooden homes might have electricity, bamboo structures often do not, underscoring an inequity in utility services linked to the type of housing.

Digital connectivity, essential for modern communication, is uneven among *Orang Asli* communities. The availability of WiFi and reliable internet is hampered by inconsistent electricity supply, which also impacts mobile phone coverage, often dependent on generators. While some villages enjoy adequate WiFi services, others, as noted by Temiar and Jakun youths, face limited access. Mobile data presents an alternative, yet its reliability fluctuates, often only providing strong signals in the early morning or late at night.

## 1.8.1 Case study 1:

### Water access through ground-well pumps

Hamalidah, a Jakun youth from *Kampung Guntung Minum Chempedak*, illustrates her community's reliance on ground-well pumps for water. These pumps, essential for drawing water from below ground, operate chiefly on power from external generators, reflecting the community's dependency on mechanised means for basic water access due to their location on elevated terrain.



*"This is a picture of the well (Figure 3.1). It was dug by my late father and mother- she is still alive and well. From it, we can use clean well water. These pumps are commonly used in residential, agricultural, and industrial settings to access groundwater for various purposes, such as drinking water, irrigation, livestock, and industrial processes. However, this year, it has experienced damage. The generator has broken down twice in a year (Figure 3.2) and couldn't be repaired, so the community had to collect/save money for a new generator. The solar panels provided by an NGO do not function at all, so solar energy in Kampung Guntung Minum Chempedak is not being utilised by the community.*

*When the solar panels repeatedly malfunction, the NGO representatives informed us that they do not have experts to repair the solar panels. The most stressful issue for the community is the cost of buying petrol, which is very burdensome. This has led to the community in the village experiencing mental stress. This because our only source of water (Figure 3.3) comes from rivers that have been polluted with chemicals from nearby palm oil plantations."*

Figure 3.1



A photo of a ground-well pump used to source water

Figure 3.2



Hamalidah demonstrating a broken electrical generator

Figure 3.3



Impacts of chemical pollution causing arid soil and contamination of river water

# CHAPTER 2:

## A State of Emergency

### 2.1 Climate Crisis: A Call for Justice Beyond Carbon

The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) offers an in-depth analysis of the current climate crisis, predominantly caused by human activity. This has led to global repercussions, especially affecting vulnerable systems and with communities. Extreme weather events and compromised ecosystems have strained both natural and human capacities to adapt, impacting socioeconomics and livelihoods. The report emphasises the pressing need to significantly reduce emissions, bolster adaptation efforts, and enhance international cooperation to tackle the intricate challenges of climate change. Central to this discussion is the importance of equity, justice, and inclusivity in climate action. The term "climate change" doesn't fully capture the gravity of systemic injustice, going beyond mere carbon concerns. It intertwines with issues of discrimination, exploitation, and colonisation. Addressing this as a climate crisis necessitates a sense of urgency in the pursuit of climate justice.

#### Current Climate Change Status and Trends:

Human-induced activities, primarily greenhouse gas emissions, have raised global temperatures by 1.1°C from pre-industrial levels. With emissions still rising, climate change continues to impact the atmosphere, oceans, and biosphere. While adaptation has progressed, significant gaps remain, especially in developing nations. Current emissions trajectories threaten to surpass the 1.5°C target, and climate financing is nowhere near enough.

#### Future Climate Change and Responses:

Persistent emissions will further elevate global temperatures, escalating climate hazards. Some of these adverse changes are irreversible. Minimising these impacts demands swift, comprehensive emission reductions. Achieving temperature targets such as 1.5°C or 2°C necessitates drastic emissions cuts across sectors. Any temperature overshoots mandate net negative CO<sub>2</sub> emissions but come with associated risks.

#### Immediate Responses:

Climate change jeopardises global health and safety, demanding immediate, combined mitigation and adaptation actions. Emphasising equity and justice in the responses is crucial. Effective strategies draw from varied knowledge bases and prioritise political will, streamlined governance, and improved access to finance and technology. International collaboration is vital, though funding and access disparities persist.

## 2.2

# Malaysia's Status On Climate Impacts

Between 1970 and 2013, the regions of Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, and Sarawak witnessed a significant increase in surface mean temperatures, with an escalation of 0.14°C to 0.25°C per decade<sup>13</sup>. Sea level rise projection 2100 for Peninsula Malaysia by NAHRIM is 0.25m to 0.52m (2.5 –5.2mm/yr)<sup>14</sup>. In recent years, Malaysia has faced extreme weather events: heat waves, choking haze seasons, erratic rainfall, and notably, devastating flash floods and landslides affecting both urban and rural locales.

## FLOODS

The frequent intensifying flooding is largely attributed to climate change combined with local governance challenges. Global temperature hikes have altered the region's precipitation, leading to more frequent and substantial rainfalls. Regrettably, the brunt of this crisis is felt most acutely in remote rural regions, where timely accessibility during disasters can mean life or death. Consequently, rainfalls have become more frequent and intense<sup>15</sup>.

The flood that hit this nation in the late of 2021 and early 2022 displacing thousands incurring an estimated national economic loss of a staggering RM6.1 billion<sup>16</sup>. 2023 also brought no respite as Johor, a significant economic hub, succumbed to severe flooding. Infrastructure, homes, and lives were grievously affected, underlining the pressing demand for climate resilience in Malaysia. While climate mitigation is pivotal, adapting for this evolving 'new normal' is equally urgent<sup>17</sup>.

Youth participants highlight the devastating 2014 floods in Kelantan, Perak, and Terengganu, where communities were isolated for weeks without electricity, food, or shelter, exacerbated by delayed rescue operations. The floods severely disrupted crop production and essential infrastructure such as roads and housing. Polluted waters, laden with timber and chemicals, have led to environmental damage, loss of habitats, and water contamination.

Health hazards from toxic exposure, and economic setbacks due to ruined infrastructure and agriculture, have been profound. Rahamat explains Johor's Kluang district flooding, attributed from rampant logging, as a cause of severe agricultural loss, burying agricultural fields under mud and stifling harvests. These events also negatively impact biodiversity and incur significant costs for post-disaster clean-up and waste management.

## LANDSLIDES

Landslides pose severe disruptions for communities dependent on tourism, with the *Orang Asli* youth in tourism and hospitality, especially within national parks, being disproportionately affected. These natural events frequently destroy tourist hotspots and trails they maintain, substantially reducing their revenue and livelihood sustainability. Additionally, landslides interrupt agricultural activities and access to resources, leading to the loss of homes, possessions, and crops, causing displacement and emotional and financial stress. The consequences include difficulty in meeting basic needs and a protracted recovery process, impacting community resilience and quality of life. Furthermore,



damaged infrastructure (as in **Figure 4.1** and **Figure 4.2**) and disrupted services exacerbate the community's vulnerability by hindering mobility and communication in emergency situations.

## HEATWAVES

The extreme heat during the dry season is hindering agricultural work in fields and orchards. According to Nasir from the Temiar community in Kelantan, reduced forest cover is having adverse effects on job opportunities and income sources for Indigenous people and the broader community. Unusual weather patterns and prolonged periods of high temperatures are negatively impacting the yields of essential crops like yams, vegetables, and fruits, which play a vital role in the livelihoods of *Orang Asli* communities. The combination of severe heatwaves and arid soil is resulting in the loss of these crops, which is a significant concern for rural areas.

Figure 4.1



Landslide blocking roads at Hamalidah's village

### 2.3 Food security: A threat

Food security, a fundamental human right, faces significant risks, with recent floods exemplifying the vulnerability of the agricultural sector. In Johor alone, floods have forced 929 farmers to apply for relief following losses exceeding RM17 million while the fisheries industry has sustained damages worth RM5.234 million<sup>18</sup>. The year 2023 has brought erratic weather that has halved vegetable yields in areas like the Cameron Highlands, causing prices to soar<sup>19</sup>. Across the country, the agricultural and agro-food sectors have suffered combined losses of RM111.95 million due to monsoonal impacts, affecting 24,500 hectares and around 12,000 agricultural workers and livestock owners.

Figure 4.2



Villagers attempting to fix the damaged road with steel pipes

### 2.4 *Orang Asli* Women and Climate Change

The United Nations highlights a striking gender disparity in climate change impacts: women and girls constitute 80% of those affected, with women being 14 times more likely to perish in natural disasters than men<sup>20</sup>. This disparity arises from the different roles and responsibilities of men and women in society. Despite both genders facing climate challenges, women encounter distinct obstacles, including those related to childcare, pregnancy, menstruation, and societal discrimination. It is crucial to acknowledge and address these systemic gender inequalities in climate response strategies.

In the wake of natural disasters, women frequently shoulder the burden of safeguarding children, elders, and other family members, which can impede their ability to quickly evacuate high-risk areas. The role of *Orang Asli* women as caregivers, food providers, and homemakers is emphasised during such crises. Yet, they face amplified challenges due to discriminatory practices and insufficient support. Presently, the specific experiences of *Orang Asli* women are underrepresented in both international and local legislation concerning climate change, development and land rights. The predominantly male decision-making bodies may not fully recognise or take into account the distinct adversities encountered by these women.

### 2.4.1 Care Work: Labour Intensified

Care work, often unpaid and undervalued, encompasses a wide range of activities that involve providing physical, emotional, and social support to individuals within families and communities<sup>21</sup>. It includes but is not limited to tasks like childcare, eldercare, nursing, cooking, cleaning, and offering emotional solace. Care work plays a critical role in sustaining human well-being and maintaining the fabric of societies, yet is rarely factored and recognised into economic assessments. For *Orang Asli* women, particularly the younger generation, the burden of unpaid care work is heavy, reflecting their roles within their society. Youth contributors note that *Orang Asli* women are central to nurturing children, caring for the elderly, managing households, and upholding cultural traditions.

Erratic weather patterns amplify these responsibilities as they become increasingly labour-intensive and disrupt traditional agricultural practices, compelling women to adapt to additional challenges such as diminished water supply, crop failures, and disease outbreaks, thus intensifying their workload and emotional stress. Female contributors shared how for young *Orang Asli* women, the journey into adulthood often involves a transition into care work.

This transition is accelerated during climate crises when the need for additional support and resilience-building becomes paramount. These young caregivers find themselves at the intersection of cultural tradition and environmental change, taking on labour-intensive care work responsibilities while also pursuing education and personal development. This dual burden can lead to stress and health issues, impacting their well-being. However, *Orang Asli* women display formidable resilience, underpinned by strong community networks that help share the load of care work, demonstrating the community's adaptability and unity in the face of climatic adversity.

### 2.4.2 Women and their Role in the Family Unit

*Orang Asli* women are central to their communities, upholding family welfare and cultural legacy. Yet, climate change intensifies their vulnerabilities, straining familial bonds and societal cohesion. This dialogue examines the intricate ties between climate effects and the experiences of *Orang Asli* women, highlighting the resulting domestic tensions, economic hardship, and constrained prospects for their offspring. Fiana, a young Jakun mother from Pahang, offers her perspective.



*“In my view, children or youth of this age have been robbed of the opportunity to experience the same things as I and the older generations did. Meaning, before all of this development, our forests were not only our source of subsistence, but learning grounds for our young to learn traditional survival skills, such as fishing, hunting and being able to identify plants for specific purposes.”*

Youth contributors highlight that following divorces, young *Orang Asli* women often become the main caregivers for typically five to eight children. Without land ownership, their earning potential diminishes, making it challenging to support their families. Climate disasters worsen this situation, as floods and extreme heat lead to crop failures, fuelling family disputes and financial uncertainty. These conditions sometimes force children into early employment, disrupting their education and perpetuating long term poverty. Despite mothers' efforts to prioritise education and welfare, patriarchal attitudes frequently undermine women's voices in these matters.

## 2.4.3 Access to Healthcare and Basic Services

Recent floods have spotlighted the considerable physical and psychological burdens placed on women, impacting their reproductive health significantly. Women face heightened risks of injuries, skin diseases, and vector-borne illnesses like dengue and malaria in flood conditions. As Aswaliza, a Temiar youth from Kelantan observes women's roles in times of crisis



*“When faced with the urgency to flee, women often bear the physical weight of carrying children, and packing vital supplies and important documents resulting in potential back issues and other musculoskeletal problems.”*

Their critical role as caregivers, ensuring the safety of their families while managing resources during emergencies, adds to their stress, which can indirectly affect their reproductive health. The dialogue also highlighted significant shortfalls in the support provided to young mothers by authorities and non-governmental organisations. Essential items, including nutritious foods, infant formula, nappies, and sanitary products, are often absent from aid packages. Diana and her peers observe that women in their communities frequently take the lead in organising flood relief efforts. They find themselves isolated from healthcare services, unable to procure essential medicines, or attend medical appointments during floods. In response, these women coordinate efforts to identify needs, raise funds, acquire supplies, and ensure aid reaches those most affected. Sharing and leveraging these grassroots strategies could be invaluable, pointing to the need for local and regional training to strengthen disaster risk management capacities.

## 2.5

# Key national policy and legal framework on climate change

The 12th Malaysian Plan emphasises sustainable development and environmental protection, clearly specifying a goal of achieving Net Zero emissions by 2050. This commitment encompasses various climate mitigation measures, including the discontinuation of new coal power plants, the introduction of carbon pricing mechanisms, the promotion of electric vehicles (EVs), support for payment for ecosystem services (PES), nature-based solutions and renewable energy (RE) targets<sup>22</sup>.

Notably, Malaysia has extended its goal to reach net-zero emissions, including other greenhouse gases like methane, by 2050, demonstrating a strong dedication to mitigating climate change, despite its relatively low historical emissions contribution of only 0.37% up to 2020<sup>23</sup>. This commitment is further reinforced by the 4th National Physical Plan, which integrates land use planning with a focus on climate resilience. Malaysia has also strategically aligned its climate initiatives with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlighting the importance of climate action, sustainable development, and economic growth. In the industrial sector, the i-ESG framework has been introduced to expedite the transition towards sustainable practices among manufacturing companies, all set against the backdrop of Malaysia's Net Zero emissions target.

Meanwhile, the Environmental Quality Act of 1974 stands as the principal legislation for environmental concerns, overseeing processes like the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA). Malaysia's key national policy and legal framework on environmental and climate are shown in **Table 4** below:

TABLE 4

## Key policies and legal framework on climate and energy transition, current and upcoming.

<i>Policy</i>	<i>Key objective or targets</i>	<i>Status</i>
National Climate Change Policy 2009	This policy provides a framework for climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies at the national level.	In Review
National Energy Policy, 2022-2040 (NEP)	The NEP prioritises the enhancement of macroeconomic resilience, energy security, social equity, affordability, and environmental sustainability. The NEP encompasses a suite of action plans to realise these objectives and introduces the Low Carbon Aspiration 2040 framework pertinent for investors and entities striving to meet environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria. Recognising the dynamic nature of the energy sector, the NEP is designed as an adaptive instrument, with revisions scheduled every three years to align with both domestic progress and global energy transition trends.	Ongoing

National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR)

NETR represents Malaysia's comprehensive plan to transition towards an energy system that supports a high-value green economy, demanding collaborative engagement across all levels of government, industry, civil society, and international partners. The Roadmap articulates 'Responsible Transition' (RT) targets and a set of sectoral enablers and levers to implement the country's ambitious goals within the energy sector and its broader strategic outlook. Notably, the NETR sets specific renewable energy goals, aiming for 31% of Malaysia's installed capacity by 2025, escalating to a 70% contribution by 2040, and includes provisions for lifting the renewable energy export ban.

Ongoing

Peninsular Malaysia Forestry Policy 2020

This policy addresses forest management and conservation, crucial for carbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation to strengthen the national aspiration to ensure the national forest resources will be safeguarded as best as possible for the future generations.

Ongoing

National Mineral Policy 2.0

This policy will focus on the sustainable development and optimum utilisation of mineral resources; promoting environmental stewardship; enhancing the mineral sector's competitiveness and advancement in the global arena; promoting the use of local minerals and further development of mineral-based products; and encouraging the recovery, recycling and reuse of metals and minerals

Upcoming

Malaysia National Adaptation Plan (myNAP)

This plan addresses adaptation strategies in sectors such as water, health, and food security. It recognizes that certain vulnerable groups, including *Orang Asli* (Indigenous peoples), women, and youth, are more exposed to climate impacts.

Upcoming

Climate Change Act

This Act provides a legal framework for addressing climate change in Malaysia

Upcoming

National Carbon Policy

This policy will provide guidance on carbon trading at the state government level.

Upcoming

NDC Roadmap

The roadmap will be developed to help achieve NDC targets in mitigation and adaptation.

Upcoming

## 2.5.1 Malaysia's Nationally Determined Contributions

Under the Paris Agreement, Malaysia's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) commits to a reduction of carbon intensity in GDP by 45% by 2030 relative to 2005 levels<sup>24</sup>, without conditional reliance on climate finance, technology transfers, or capacity building from developed countries. However, concerns have arisen regarding its top-down formulation and the limited involvement of civil society in its creation. Critics highlight its predominant emphasis on carbon mitigation, with a noticeable absence of explicit strategies or mentions of adapting to climate disasters. KAMY's Climate Energy and Transition Report<sup>25</sup> points out that in 2019, during political transitions in Malaysia, the country launched 80 initiatives promoting renewable energy, yet reports on adaptation measures were scant. Notably, it is essential to recognise that Indigenous communities, such as the *Orang Asli*, as well as vulnerable groups like women, are incorporated within the adaptation planning process<sup>26</sup>.

## 2.5.2 Policy-making: UNDRIP and FPIC

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) acknowledges the rights of Indigenous peoples, including the *Orang Asli*, to self-determination, protection of their cultural heritage, and autonomy over their lands and resources<sup>27</sup>. This reinforces the imperative need for respecting their deep-seated connection to their ancestral territories and securing their consent before any development activities are undertaken.

The declaration underlines the necessity of protecting Indigenous languages, customs, and livelihoods. Central to UNDRIP is the principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)<sup>28</sup>, ensuring Indigenous voices are heard and heeded in matters impacting their communities and lands. Malaysia, having initially abstained, endorsed the declaration in 2010, signalling a commitment to these principles. Nevertheless, concerns persist over the enforcement of UNDRIP and FPIC within Malaysia, especially concerning Indigenous land rights and the extraction of resources from these customary lands.

Despite Malaysia's endorsement, the mandatory adoption of FPIC into national policy and legislation encounters challenges, leading to potential land conflicts and contention over resource use. Strengthening adherence to UNDRIP and FPIC would promote a rights-centric development ethos that is inclusive, participatory, collective and fair.

## 2.5.3 Critique of Social Forestry Plan of Malaysia 2021–2025

The Social Forestry Strategic Plan of Malaysia for 2021-2025 sets out the blueprint for advancing social forestry initiatives in Malaysia. While it aligns with broader visions such as the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 and the 12th Malaysia Plan, among other key policies, it holds a central aim of promoting the rights and well-being of the Indigenous *Orang Asli* communities. This is envisaged through their proactive engagement in forest management to bolster socio-economic conditions<sup>29</sup>.

Yet, the third principle of the plan, which aspires to lessen the reliance of these Indigenous communities on natural forests, demands a nuanced interpretation. It's imperative that *Orang Asli* youth are not only consulted but are active contributors in moulding the national stance on climate and environmental strategies. While ensuring the rights and viewpoints of *Orang Asli* youth are upheld, meaningful engagement helps craft policies that are robust, fair, and long-lasting.

# CHAPTER 3:

## Changing Landscapes

### 3.1 The Playing Field

The SUHAKAM 'Report of the National Inquiry into the Land Rights of Indigenous Peoples' (2013) recognises that Indigenous groups, including the *Orang Asli*, are governed by their own set of traditional customs known as adat. This intricate system underpins their cultural identity, social order, and educational practices, while safeguarding and affirming their belief systems, identity and worldviews. Adat covers a broad array of community and individual guidelines, both codified and tacit, including laws, norms, and traditions integral to Indigenous life. It also refers to the customary institutions that uphold and enforce these principles, effectively constituting a holistic Indigenous governance framework<sup>30</sup>.

For the *Orang Asli*, ancestral lands are the lifeblood of their cultural heritage, beyond mere geography. These territories are both their homes and the bedrock of spiritual and cultural traditions, nurtured over countless generations. In the face of a mounting climate crisis, it becomes increasingly important to acknowledge how policy gaps and discrimination impact these communities, affecting their profound connection to their lands, traditions, and identities.

Presently, the *Orang Asli* are currently classified as tenants at will on state-owned property, with the Aboriginal People's Act of 1954 (Act 134) denying them rightful land ownership<sup>31</sup>. The State Executive Committee, also known as Majlis Mesyuarat Kerajaan Negeri (MMKN), is the primary authority overseeing socio-economic and land administrative matters, often overlooking the *Orang Asli*'s rights to their ancestral territories at state level. This oversight has sparked deep disappointment and demonstrations against displacements<sup>32</sup>, contributing to psychological distress within the community.

### Resource Exploitation and Environmental Degradation

In Peninsula Malaysia, local communities, particularly the *Orang Asli* youth, are witnessing severe environmental degradation due to rampant resource exploitation. They attribute deforestation as a key factor in the loss of their forests and lands. These young voices highlight key economic activities contributing to this plight: logging, mining for sand and minerals, large-scale infrastructure projects, unsustainable mono-crop farming, industrial processes such as steel production, and wildlife exploitation. Each of these encroachment activities significantly affects the Indigenous communities and their natural surroundings, with the level of impact differing from one state to another, as tabled in **Table 5**;

TABLE 5

# Encroachment on Orang Asli lands

<i>Encroachment</i>	<i>Impacts and consequences</i>
Logging	Logging has far-reaching environmental consequences, resulting in extensive habitat destruction. It poses a significant threat to essential resources and the cultural and spiritual importance of forests. Moreover, logging triggers disputes related to land ownership, resource access, and the distribution of profits from timber sales, which can disrupt community cohesion and collectivism. Additionally, external parties may employ intimidation tactics in these contexts.
Sand and mineral mining	Mining activities provide economic benefits but come with environmental risks and conflicts. Concerns about water safety and environmental pollution often arise, causing a decline in water quality, potential health issues, and the loss of traditional food and medicinal plants.
Mega Infrastructure Development	The development of mega infrastructure projects significantly alters the forest landscape through land reclamation, airport construction, and more. While it promises immediate economic growth, it may have adverse long-term effects on <i>Orang Asli</i> youths and communities, disrupting access to traditional areas for activities such as hunting, fishing, and farming. This can lead to displacement, loss of cultural heritage, and environmental impacts, especially from projects like hydroelectric dams.
Unsustainable Monocrop Plantations	Large-scale mono-crop plantations provide an alternative income source but come at an environmental and social cost. These plantations can lead to a loss of biodiversity, affecting traditional food sources, medicinal plants, and resources. They may also cause displacement and disrupt traditional livelihoods.
Processing Factories (Steel Manufacturing)	These industrial factories have varying effects based on the scale and type of industrial activities. They contribute to pollution, affecting local air and water quality. This can lead to widespread environmental destruction, health risks, displacement, and reduced access to natural resources for <i>Orang Asli</i> communities.
Wildlife Exploitation	The hunting and commercialization of local wildlife raises concerns about biodiversity conservation and its impact on <i>Orang Asli</i> youths. It leads to the depletion of nutrient-rich foods and vital resources, affecting traditional hunting and gathering activities. Wildlife exploitation disrupts ecosystems, causing ecological imbalances and impacting the livelihoods of <i>Orang Asli</i> youths. Some community members' involvement in the wildlife trade adds complexity and concern to the issue.



In examining the shared characteristics of these destructive activities as tabulated in **Table 6** below, it is evident that, while each activity might have distinct features, they collectively present challenges that compromise the well-being, cultural heritage, and future of the *Orang Asli* youth and their communities.

TABLE 6  
Impacts of Human Encroachment on  
*Orang Asli* communities' well-being

<i>Shared characteristics of impacts on Orang Asli Youth</i>	<i>Description</i>
Environmental Impact	Activities cause environmental degradation: deforestation, loss of biodiversity, water/air pollution, habitat changes.
Disruption of Traditional Ways	Activities impede or disrupt traditional lifestyles, customs, and practices of the <i>Orang Asli</i> communities.
Resource Depletion	Activities lead to depletion of natural and essential resources like timber, medicinal plants, water, and wildlife.
Health Concerns	Environmental changes, especially pollution, result in direct health risks for Indigenous communities.
Safety issue	Intimidation from external parties are commonplace
Economic Trade-offs	Some activities provide short-term economic benefits but come with long-term environmental and social costs.
Land Disputes and Displacement	Activities lead to land ownership disputes, resource allocation conflicts, and community displacement from ancestral lands.
Cultural and Spiritual Significance	Activities threaten areas of cultural and spiritual importance to the <i>Orang Asli</i> communities.
Conflicts and Social Strain	Activities cause internal conflicts within communities, straining social relations and community cohesion.
Impact on Food Security	Activities impact the availability of traditional food sources, affecting the community's food security.

### 3.1.1 Case study 2:

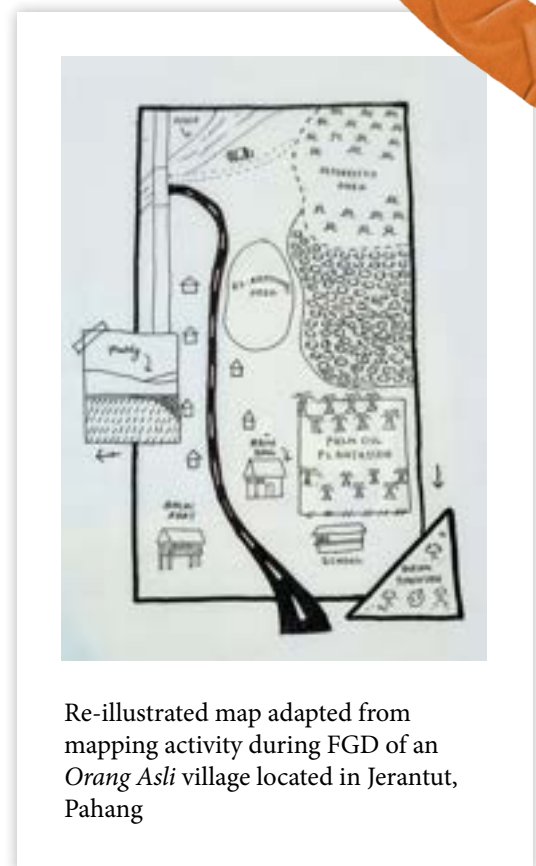
#### Mapping climate impacts in a village in Jerantut, Pahang on traditional resource management.

Data collected from a field study and a mapping exercise conducted in the village based in Jerantut, Pahang, showcases the varieties of encroachment activities happening within the village's surrounding forests such as third-party palm oil plantations and deforested acres of ancestral forests. They reflected on the diminishing *rayau* spaces which has resulted in the unavailability of forest resources like *taban* (*Palaquium gutta*), *tampoi* (*Baccaurea macrocarpa*), *kerdas* (*Archidendron bubalinum*), *bangkong* (*Artocarpus Integer*), *rumbia* (*Metroxylon sagu*), *mengkuang* (screw pine), *gaharu* (Agarwood), *meranti* (*Shorea*) and *nipah* (*Nypa fruticans*)- further impacts the preservation of their traditional practices, such as weaving handicrafts and furniture.

Local plants and flowers such as *rebung buluh* (*Gigantochloa levis*), *bunga kemerbang* (A type of flower endemic to *Pekan-Rompin, Pahang*), *Ubi Jaga* (*Smilax myosotiflora*), *bunga kantan* (*Etligeria elatior*), *akar rempah gunung* (*Cinnamomum Parthenoxylon*), *akar Segemuk* (*Rennellia elliptica*), and many more, are traditional medicinal or edible plants in this area.

The excessive heat has led to shallow and dried-up rivers, making it difficult for fish to leave their nests or migrate. This, in turn, is affecting the economic well-being of communal spaces and impacts fishermen. As recounted by the FGD contributors, species such as *ikan keli* (catfish), *labi-labi* (Softshell turtle), *udang* (prawn), *ketam* (crab), *kerang* (cockles), *ikan pupuyu* (*Anabas testudineus*), *ikan haruan* (*Channa striata*), *katak* (Frog), *kura-kura* (Freshwater tortoise), *ikan bujuk* (Forest snakehead) that were once abundant for consumption are now disappearing along with their habitats.

Figure 5



### 3.1.2 Socio-economic Conflicts in Land Use Management

There's a clear lack of meaningful engagement between third party actors such as state government agencies, private corporations and authoritative bodies with the *Orang Asli* communities in Peninsula Malaysia. A majority of contributors in the data collection events feel that consultation processes are often insufficient, leading to a diminished ability for these communities to find solutions and seek redress, especially on the topic of fair compensation. A critical concern is finding balance between economic growth, social wealth, and environmental protection while at the same time upholding their rights to self-determination for the marginalised communities.

While development projects may bring economic potential, the primary beneficiaries often remain

external corporations and stakeholders, leaving the local *Orang Asli* communities often at a disadvantage, widening the wealth gap and intensifying poverty among the Indigenous populations. This unfair distribution of economic benefits and opportunities exacerbates existing inequalities, leaving them further isolated from the formal economy, and increasing their vulnerability in informal sectors. Furthermore, these communities bear the brunt of environmental degradation, facing heightened pollution and health hazards.

The section turns to the Nenggiri Dam development in Kelantan, illustrating the profound impact of large-scale infrastructure projects on the well-being and land rights of the *Orang Asli*.

### 3.1.3 Case study 3: The Nenggiri Dam in *Gua Musang, Kelantan*.

In Malaysia's push towards renewable energy targets, the emphasis has been placed on large hydroelectric dams<sup>33</sup>. One project drawing attention is the Nenggiri Dam, set to be one of Peninsula Malaysia's substantial energy infrastructures with a capacity of 300MW. While the project promises co-benefits such as flood control, consistent water supply, and increased energy security, it does not come without concerns. The potential environmental repercussions include threats to biodiversity, forests, and fish populations. These ecological effects have direct consequences for local communities, particularly the *Orang Asli*, who rely on these natural resources. An estimated 5,000 Temiar residents<sup>34</sup> stand to be affected, with vast areas of customary lands, and significant cultural sites at risk of submersion, and multiple villages poised for displacement.

The Nenggiri Dam, despite its significant "Gold" rating and declared alignment with the SDGs, finds itself in the eye of a storm of debate. Although certain studies suggest public approval, an increasing voice from the local community paints a different story. Their concerns revolve around the dam's potential environmental repercussions and threats to their culture and livelihood. Furthermore, large hydro projects are vulnerable to climate impacts like droughts and floods.<sup>35</sup> Central to this discussion is the pivotal role of FPIC. The dam's alignment with global climate goals might suggest a project of great benefit. Yet, the persistent questions surrounding its comprehensive adherence to FPIC cast a shadow on its legitimacy.

Figure 6.1



*Gua Batu Kemirik*, where developers levelled the land to create the site for the Sg. Nenggiri dam

Figure 6.2



Male Temiar youths riding a raft built from bamboo while monitoring the dam construction site

Figure 6.3



A group of Temiar youth pictured on a raft observing damage to *Gua Batu Kemirik*

Further amplifying the scale of the project is its robust financial backing, secured through RM2 billion in sustainability sukuk wakalah. But with entities like the Indigenous Villages Network of Kelantan Organization (JKOAK) raising concerns about the project's transparency and accessibility for the affected communities. Without genuine FPIC and fair compensation, mega dams remain contentious as a responsible energy in the national energy transition agenda<sup>36</sup>.

Nora, a female Temiar activist shares her firsthand experiences, highlighting the challenges faced when trying to protect her community's sacred sites and forests within the Temiar territories. The Nenggiri Dam, while promising on the surface, encapsulates the broader challenges of achieving renewable energy targets in an equitable sustainable manner especially in conflict areas. The situation shows the need to strike a balance between developmental goals, environmental protection, and community rights. As Malaysia continues to eye on energy transition, such case studies serve as vital touchstones for policy and action.

In Nora's and her community's fight against development projects in *Gua Musang's Orang Asli* territories, she highlights the absence of transparency, clear legal terms, and consultation with *Orang Asli* voices during conflicts with third-party actors.

“

“When they announced that the Nenggiri dam would be built, we were really sad. The government told us that mega dams are important for our community. First, they say the dam prevents floods. Second, it provides piped water for the Indigenous community. However, they didn't engage us in any discussions. Suddenly, they released a media statement that the Kelantan Orang Asli had already been supporting the dam when in reality, only two or three people supported it. We were surprised because no one in their community had been approached by the developers to be consulted directly on the project.”

“In Kelantan, our network of Indigenous villages set up blockades to protect our forests from corporate harm. We're not just defending Orang Asli rights; we're fighting against climate change and pollution. Yet, while defending our land, many agencies tried to tear down our barriers, labelling us provocateurs for standing in their way. Those who came to destroy it were from the forestry office, logging companies. They brought a lot of chainsaws. We didn't run away; we stayed in front of the gate, not letting them in. They gave a lecture and told us to leave. We told them, we're doing this because we love the forest, we're fighting for the forest, we don't want our forest destroyed. They brought chainsaws and cut our blockade. Near our blockade, we built a traditional hall, like a mosque to uphold our culture.

We even held a Sewang performance while guarding to prevent outsiders from coming in. Eventually, the forestry department sent their General Operations Force (PGA) and military personnel. They wore muddy shoes and stepped inside, and they tore everything down. We prayed and performed ceremonies, but they came and immediately cut down our hall. Why did they insult Indigenous people so much that they did that? Don't they care about how we feel?”

Hamalidah, a young member of the Jakun community in Pahang, conveys her people's perspective on the development.



*"Right now, we already have palm oil plantations moving in, but we are holding on. We've only heard these stories from others, and they say that maybe in 2024, new settlers will come to cultivate palm oil plantations in the peatland around the village. What's happening in other villages might happen in ours."*

*The injustice often impacts Indigenous communities in remote areas, particularly due to the lack of communication and information provided by third-party actors (TPAs). While TPAs are aware of the presence of Indigenous people in remote regions, they frequently fail to communicate, share information adequately, or consult with these communities on development plans within Orang Asli territories. TPAs should not focus solely on developed villages, as many remote communities are left out. Letters are often incorrectly delivered or not provided at all, leaving residents uninformed when TPAs enter the area.*

*To address these issues, it is crucial to engage with permanent residents who are located and registered in remote villages. Although the water quality remains unaffected for now, there have been cases of surrounding villages experiencing water quality problems due to encroachments by large-scale palm oil plantations in the area. This raises concerns about third-party actors seeking to acquire Orang Asli land. Consequently, the community is worried about potential developments within their village boundaries. They have sent letters to government-owned plantation entities like the FELDA and RISDA to ensure they are aware of their villages within their respective territories."*

## 3.2 Challenges in Defending Land Rights

Orang Asli youth highlight significant struggles in protecting their ancestral lands despite legal efforts, facing unauthorised logging and mining. Disturbingly, land crucial for local sustenance is often allocated to outsiders without stringent regulations to prevent such encroachments on indigenous territories<sup>37</sup>. To counter this, some communities have resorted to demarcating territories with stones, highlighting their susceptibility to external pressures and deceit. An example of this vulnerability is an account of outsiders coaxing a family to surrender their land. Transparency issues in Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) add to these concerns<sup>38</sup>.

Figure 6.4



Nora wears a traditional "tempok" crafted from various wildflowers and forest herbs

Nora describes her village's struggle:

“In my village area, they wanted to open an oil palm plantation (Figure 6.7), so they bulldozed our own ancestral graves. In addition, contractors destroyed our community's garden (Figure 6.6), where we sell bananas, rubber, rambutan, durian, and other produce. We don't know who gave them permission. Even though we resist, they (the government) remain stubborn. Figure 6.5 shows a sign which implies, "This land isn't Indigenous land, it's government or privately-owned land.”

Youth contributors point out that, with occasional misrepresentations of the *Orang Asli*'s claims and rights in the media and unclear protocols for grievance mechanisms with external parties, the community often finds itself resorting to private legal avenues to safeguard their interests and the environment. Nora, in her advocacy for *Orang Asli* land rights, emphasised the necessity of well-prepared documentation, including GPS data, for legal proceedings. Youth contributors stress the need for more straightforward pathways to formal land ownership for *Orang Asli* communities. They also underscore the significance of establishing dedicated economic zones that both boost their economy and uphold Indigenous rights.

### 3.3 Affirmative action against land rights injustice

In Peninsula Malaysia, the *Orang Asli* youth play a crucial role in protecting their ancestral lands. Ensuring land rights for Indigenous groups is aligned with the sustainable agenda, as compared to other carbon-storing solutions<sup>39</sup>. However, the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) has highlighted that, in practice, these communities face structural barriers in upholding their land rights where mega development projects often trump the needs of prioritising Indigenous land ownership. SUHAKAM's 2013 National Inquiry into the Land Rights of Indigenous Peoples presented 18 key suggestions spread across six areas. These touched on recognising Indigenous

Figure 6.5



Sign board with developers' licence in Nora's village

Figure 6.6



Deforested area for palm oil plantation

Figure 6.7



One of the many excavators used to destroy the community garden

rights to their traditional lands, compensating for past land losses, balancing land development, preventing future land loss, improving land management, and highlighting the deep connection between land and the identity of Indigenous Peoples.

Some of the primary recommendations include ensuring clear land rights, better understanding of traditional land ownership, and addressing past oversights concerning Indigenous lands. It's about righting past wrongs. The report also underscores the need for better systems to address grievances, reconsidering how compensations are given, and revisiting the effects of past policies. Adopting a development approach that respects human rights and adding principles of FPIC in the laws are vital.

This approach makes sure that any development does not harm Indigenous communities. It's essential to have development plans that centre on people, inclusiveness, and long-term sustainability. The report also advises against any future land losses and recommends recognising Indigenous territories in protected areas. Furthermore, it advocates for the active involvement of Indigenous groups in looking after forests. An in-depth look at related agencies and strengthening the abilities of land departments are also seen as crucial for making these suggestions work.

Lastly, the idea of an Independent National Commission on Indigenous Peoples is put forward. This is to both recognise the deep bond between Indigenous Peoples and their lands and to ensure their strong voice in decisions. In aiming for a brighter and more just future, it's essential to keep Indigenous groups at the forefront of discussions about land and justice. Their insights and views are critical in steering the way forward.

## 3.4 Just Energy Transition

Malaysia's energy landscape has long been entrenched in fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas, resulting in significant carbon emissions. Conversely, while cleaner alternatives such as solar and hydro power offer more environmentally friendly solutions, their adoption has been relatively modest. In response to this, in 2023, the government intensified efforts to transition towards a more sustainable energy paradigm by launching the National Energy Transition Roadmap (2020-2040)<sup>40</sup>. This roadmap builds upon the National Energy Policy 2022, aligning with the renewed commitment to achieve Net Zero emissions by 2050, as outlined in the 12th Malaysian Plan mid-review. The objectives are ambitious, aiming to attain 70% renewable energy by 2040 and lift the ban on renewable energy exports<sup>41</sup>. There is also a growing focus on the development of the rare earth minerals sector, crucial for electric vehicle battery production; this industry is poised to significantly boost the economy by creating approximately 7,000 job opportunities<sup>42</sup>.

As Malaysia explores export restrictions on critical minerals to enhance the downstream segment of the sector, a critical aspect must not be overlooked: the principle of justice. The focus must be on ensuring that the communities most affected by these changes, especially the *Orang Asli*, benefit directly. There's a risk that if the primary gains are reaped by distant, privileged groups, local voices, including those of the *Orang Asli*, may be sidelined. For instance, the acquisition of land for hydro dams highlights that 'green' initiatives are not inherently just. The indirect costs borne by rural communities in the energy transition often go unacknowledged, with plans ignoring the nuances of energy poverty and unequal distribution. For remote *Orang Asli* communities, the higher costs of accessing electricity off-grid reflect this inequity. Environmental sustainability must go hand in hand with fairness, necessitating increased accountability in the supply chain of the energy transition, especially in conflict-sensitive zones.

# CHAPTER 4:

## Youth aspirations for Climate Governance

*Flowers from Concrete*

### 4.1 Youth and Climate Governance

The *Orang Asli* youth maintain an intrinsic bond with their environment, integral to both their cultural identity and livelihoods. The adverse effects of climate change on these ecosystems have serious implications for the accessibility of vital resources, with consequential impacts on their traditional practices and self-reliance. These young community members are at the forefront of sustainable development. They are actively involved in the stewardship of local biodiversity, endorsing eco-tourism, and advocating for responsible consumption<sup>43</sup> that align with environmental conservation efforts.

They are also engaged in organic agriculture, contributing to food security while preserving indigenous gastronomy. Their commitment extends to advancing sustainable rural development initiatives. By enhancing eco-tourism and promoting environmental awareness, they strive to manage resources judiciously to safeguard against depletion, ensuring a balance between community welfare and ecological integrity.

### 4.2 The Empowerment of Art and Culture in Preserving Indigenous Identity

The *Sewang* dance of the *Orang Asli* is a cultural mainstay, encapsulating healing, memory, and celebration. It provides them with *semangat* forming a symbolic link between the spiritual and physical realms. Youths are pivotal in sustaining these traditions, with dances like the Semai tribe's "*Tarian Ne'asik*" performed to the sounds of traditional instruments like the *rebana*, *gitar buluh*, *biola*, and *pensel hidung*. These practices, upheld by the community's young musicians and custodians, safeguard their rich heritage, promote unity, and honour spiritual connections, preserving their collective identity and history.



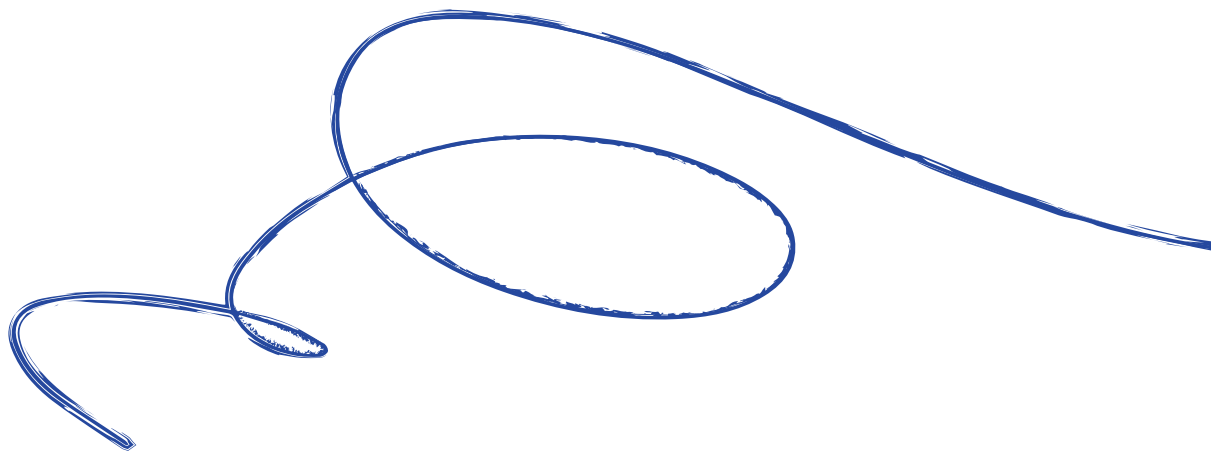
*Orang Asli* youth honour their heritage through music, fostering unity and identity across generations. Diana illuminates the "*bersawai*" ritual, a practice that acknowledges spiritual entities. *Sewang* dances and rituals are not mere performances; they are vital threads that weave together the past and present, safeguarding the community's collective wisdom and spiritual beliefs. These enduring traditions reinforce the *Orang Asli*'s cultural fabric and their deep connection to the spiritual world.

## Preservation of Cultural Heritage through Handicrafts

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) play a vital role in preserving cultural heritage by producing and selling handicrafts made from native materials like *mengkuang* leaves and ceramic beads. These crafts are more than just products; they are a testament to the legacy of traditional skills handed down through generations. These businesses support not only economic sustainability but also the perpetuation of cultural wisdom. Iszat, from the Jakun community, discusses the difficulties artisans face, including competition from modern technology and synthetic materials. Intan points out the precision of traditional craftsmanship, often achieved without formal education, emphasising the critical role of authentic materials like specific *mengkuang* varieties, such as propok and rasau, which are essential for maintaining the authenticity of these traditional crafts

## Visual Storytelling: Documenting *Orang Asli* Cultures

Film and documentaries have emerged as powerful mediums for capturing the rich and diverse tapestry of *Orang Asli* cultures and narratives. Visual storytellers such as Ronnie Bahari, a Semai photographer and film-maker, offer a nuanced glimpse into the experiences, struggles, and triumphs of these communities, providing a platform to convey their unique viewpoints. These documentaries challenge and dispel prevailing misconceptions, educate audiences, and rekindle a sense of pride within the *Orang Asli* community. By presenting indigenous life through their own lens, these films promote cultural empowerment and reinforce the community's resolute commitment to preserving their heritage. An example of this is '*Klinik ku Hutan*'\* a short film created, produced, and featuring young *Orang Asli* women from AKWOA, supported by Freedom Film Network <sup>44</sup>.



\* Shown at the 2020 Freedom Film Fest, the film follows two city-based *Orang Asli* women, Nget and Abong. Initially drawn to the forest's beauty, they soon reconnect with their elders' wisdom about medicinal herbs and their deep spiritual bond with the forest.

## 4.3

# Key Insights: *Orang Asli* Women's Anticipatory Strategies

*Orang Asli* female contributors illuminate the central role that *Orang Asli* women play in disaster readiness and response. The *Orang Asli* women's hands-on involvement is diverse; they often shoulder the weight of being both the primary caregivers and orchestrating strategic tasks such as aid distribution and management and data gathering. Not only are they pivotal in times of emergencies, but they also champion environmental conservation and forest protection. Key adaptive measures devised by *Orang Asli* women in anticipation of and response to climate impacts are presented includes

- Elevating valuable possessions to safe heights before potential threats.
- Ensuring boats are fuelled and ready.
- Installing emergency water storage mechanisms.
- Designating hilltop forests as safety refuges.
- Crafting raft houses in readiness for monsoon periods.
- Building greenhouses to shield crops from floods.
- Assembling essential kits for prompt evacuations.
- Maintaining communication channels with governmental and NGO representatives for swift flood assistance.
- Transitioning to agroecology farming methods derived from forest ecosystems, including thoughtful farm design and crop choices.
- Introducing banana trees to areas affected by mining to restore soil health.
- Using naturally abundant weeds to retain soil moisture.
- Preparing generators for emergencies.
- Advocating and empowering the community to protect their customary land rights

These approaches highlight the comprehensive and anticipatory thinking of *Orang Asli* women. Contributors also emphasise on the collaborative and harmonious partnership between men and women in problem solving as key to navigating future challenges.



## 4.4

# Youth-Led Climate Action

The *Orang Asli* youth are emerging as leaders in the fight against climate change and environmental degradation. They are not only motivated by their commitment to preserving their traditions and ancestral lands but are also actively involved in grassroots initiatives. Socially-inclusive education models such as *Sinui Pai*, *Nanek Sengik* (New Life, One Heart), spearheaded by long-time *Orang Asli* activist Tijah Yok Copil, have since evolved into the community-based organisation known as *Jaringan Kampung Orang Asli* Semenanjung Malaysia (JKOASM) today<sup>45</sup>. Through these platforms, *Orang Asli* youth play a vital role in supporting young members and their communities.

Nurul Najihah Binti Moh Syahbi, a Temuan youth from Selangor and a member of JKOASM, explains the organisation's multifaceted role. She mentions that JKOASM collaborates across different states to defend Indigenous rights, offering guidance to communities facing land rights issues. Moreover, they assist in legal matters and connect community members with the National Legal Aid Bureau, dispelling misconceptions about legal battles. Rahamat, another young Jakun activist from Johor, emphasises the importance of grassroots initiatives within JKOASM. He highlights their role in voicing concerns about the reclassification of *Orang Asli* customary land and advocating for recognition of these rights. These dedicated young leaders work closely with the state branch of JKOASM, actively engaging with their communities to educate them about the significance of defending customary land rights.

Aside from youth-led climate action, independent *Orang Asli* feminist collectives such as AKWOA centred around gender empowerment, serve as important avenues for climate engagement. Young *Orang Asli* women create their own initiatives that focus on raising awareness, organising workshops, and promoting sustainable practices within their communities. These grassroots organisations focus on storytelling and filmmaking to challenge patriarchal structures and bring visibility to the struggles of *Orang Asli* women.

Eliana Tan Beng Hui, a Jakun youth from Pahang, highlights the critical role of cultural documentation in addressing the climate crisis. By capturing their traditions on film and documentaries, she believes in both safeguarding heritage and fostering dialogues on environmental preservation. These visual narratives demonstrate the consequences of environmental degradation on *Orang Asli* communities, thus raising broader societal awareness.

*Orang Asli* youth are catalysing grassroots movements to spotlight the urgency of climate action and environmental conservation. They lead initiatives ranging from advocacy projects to public protests, aiming to amplify the climate challenges faced by their communities. These young activists are pivotal in shifting public opinion, pressing for policy reform, and rallying community support for decisive environmental measures. In conclusion, the *Orang Asli* youth stand at the forefront of environmental advocacy and climate action. Their dedication, supported by community organisations and independent collectives, is not only preserving their heritage but also inspiring change and awareness in a broader societal context. The following case study below illustrates the challenges of conservation management and long-term youth engagement.

## 4.4.1 Case study 4: The Heritage Garden Project

### Cultivating Sustainable Conservation Efforts among Orang Asli Youths

Zulhasnizam, a Jakun youth in Kampung Simpai, Pahang draws attention to the necessity for more nuanced conservation strategies among *Orang Asli* youth.



*“Maybe a decade or two ago, all of us were still in some way or other connected to the traditional ways because the forests weren’t so disrupted by encroachment then. Now, it’s not that the youth don’t want to engage in traditional activities relevant to environmental conservation but that we (the Orang Asli youth) lack guidance in these matters. For example, back in 2006, our community was once involved in a project funded by UNDP called “The Heritage Garden” or “Taman Warisan”, that aims to create a living library of all the medicinal herbs and plants available in our local forests.”*

*“I and a few other Jakun male youths included, acted as assistants in procuring these plants from our surroundings and travelling out further into the region as a means to document all of the specimens available. It was honestly amazing because we managed to capture quite a lot and we were proud of what we had achieved. However, after the researchers and the project managers left upon its completion, our community eventually faced challenges in managing the Heritage Garden. While it was indeed a community effort, the upkeep relied on voluntary manpower and as the youth needed to prioritise earning money, no one was often around to look after it on a full-time basis. This meant that the garden was often trespassed by outsiders who came looking for these herbs for their own personal use.”*

*Eventually, the Heritage Garden had fallen into disrepair over time as the once abundant, live archive was now replaced with weeds. As time passed, the rights to the land that the Heritage Garden project was located in, as well as a few surrounding acres, was procured to be developed into a palm oil plantation. So now, there’s nothing left of it, perhaps just a few images that I posted to MySpace and Friendster at the time.*

*Knowing what I do now, if we had a chance to do it all over again, I’m sure we could manage it more properly. The problem is that volunteering for this type of work often doesn’t pay, but with the advent of social media and online marketing, I’m sure we could promote it to become a really impressive eco-tourism site. That’s why reviving the Heritage Garden Project is so important to me, it is one of my biggest dreams.”*

Insights from the "Heritage Garden" initiative, detailed in **Table 7**, reveal the complexities of achieving lasting environmental stewardship within Indigenous territories.

TABLE 7

# Mapping analysis of the Heritage Garden Project

<p>① Long-Term Training and Guidance:</p>	<p>There is the critical need for enduring support and education for <i>Orang Asli</i> youth in conservation efforts. The enthusiasm of the youth to preserve their environmental heritage is palpable, yet without consistent mentorship and training, initiatives such as the Heritage Garden risk becoming unsustainable. It is imperative to implement comprehensive mentorship and educational programmes that equip young individuals with the expertise required for the long-term success of these conservation initiatives.</p>
<p>② Land Rights and Project Grounds:</p>	<p>This issue highlights the necessity of securing land rights to guarantee the sustainability of conservation initiatives. Firm establishment and recognition of land rights are crucial to thwart encroachments and unauthorised developments. There is a pressing need for rigorous enforcement to protect lands designated for such projects, which are pivotal in conserving biodiversity and indigenous knowledge.</p>
<p>③ Eco-Tourism Opportunities:</p>	<p>The aspiration to transform the Heritage Garden into an eco-tourism destination illustrates the synergy between conservation and economic viability. Utilising social media and digital marketing, this initiative can enhance income streams and elevate awareness of indigenous plants and herbs. Eco-tourism promises a sustainable economic model for <i>Orang Asli</i> communities, intertwining the preservation of nature with their economic security.</p>
<p>④ Unique Learning Platform:</p>	<p>The Heritage Garden serves as a unique learning platform, offering insights into indigenous plants and herbs for further documentation and scientific research. This knowledge contributes not only to the preservation of traditional wisdom but also to broader ecological and medical research. Efforts should be made to document and disseminate this wealth of information, making it accessible to a wider audience.</p>

Zulhasnizam's account highlights the need for continuous education and mentorship, secure land rights, opportunities in ecotourism, and the preservation of ancestral wisdom. Such comprehensive measures are critical for the success and sustainability of conservation projects that not only engage *Orang Asli* youth but also benefit the wider community.

Moreover, the allure of technology and increasing ambition among the youth are fueling a "brain drain" as young residents seek advanced training and employment prospects beyond their villages. This exodus challenges efforts to retain youth within their communities and involve them in local advancement schemes<sup>46</sup>.

## 4.5

# Barriers in *Orang Asli* Youth Engagement, Participation and Representation in Climate Governance

Several challenges confront *Orang Asli* youth in their pursuit of climate advocacy and awareness. First, the sharing of climate-related information often relies on technical language, mostly in English language and intricate terminology that can be difficult for *Orang Asli* youth to comprehend. This language barrier, especially when dealing with scientific concepts, hinders their understanding and active engagement.

The digital gap in remote *Orang Asli* communities restricts young people from accessing online climate resources and platforms, compounded by poor internet connectivity that further limits information access and virtual engagement. Additionally, the scarcity of peers and mentors in climate advocacy within these communities can lead to a sense of isolation among the youth, dampening their involvement. Furthermore, their geographical remoteness hinders exposure to wider climate engagement opportunities such as workshops and conferences, essential for enhancing their capabilities and involvement in climate discourse.

The participation of *Orang Asli* youth in leadership roles is essential for fostering inclusive and dynamic community representation. It is crucial to encourage equitable opportunities within organisations such as the *Orang Asli* Youth Council (MBOA) and the Association of Peninsula Malaysia *Orang Asli* (POASM), ensuring diverse voices are heard and valued. By promoting gender balance and empowering youth, these organisations can further enhance their impact, aligning with the advancements seen in other Malaysian youth groups that celebrate a plurality of racial backgrounds. Embracing this approach can help to focus on community interests and enhance the leadership experience for the *Orang Asli* youth.

Figure 7.1



FGD session held in Kg. Simpai

# CHAPTER 5:

## Significance of COP and UNFCCC

The active involvement of the *Orang Asli* in international dialogues is vital for addressing Indigenous concerns. The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), the central body for Indigenous rights and concerns, underscores the significance of such voices<sup>47</sup>. Yet, participation at forums like UNPFII and the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC) remains limited among the *Orang Asli*. In the past 27 years, few have engaged in the Conference of Parties (COP) process.

This limited involvement reflects a broader issue: the long-standing marginalisation of Indigenous communities. Misunderstandings often arise among the public and policymakers, resulting in challenges like the erosion of cultural identity, restricted access to resources and services, and limited representation in decision-making. As the impacts of climate change amplify, the need for *Orang Asli*'s participation grows. Their contributions are vital to protect lands, cultures, and futures from the adverse effects of climate change. Therefore, it's crucial for Malaysia to actively champion the rights of its Indigenous communities in international spaces, ensuring a sustainable and equitable future for all.

### The International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC)

Indigenous Peoples, recognised as the land's guardians, have historically been underrepresented in significant climate negotiations. While global economic interests have often taken the spotlight, it's imperative to focus on sustainable solutions that benefit both the planet and its diverse inhabitants. In 2008, to address this gap, the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC) was founded<sup>48</sup>. This forum acts as the representative body for Indigenous Peoples engaging with UNFCCC processes. Every member attending official UNFCCC Conference of Parties (COP) and the intersessional sessions, represented by SBSTA/SBI bodies, seeks consensus on Indigenous Peoples' priorities in alignment with the UNDRIP. One notable achievement of these efforts is the establishment of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP) in 2015.

It's a platform meant to foster the exchange of knowledge and best practices concerning climate mitigation and adaptation. Highlighting this engagement, at COP26, the LCIPP's initial two-year work plan (2020-2021) welcomed 28 knowledge holders to the Knowledge Keepers Gathering, with women representing half of these attendees<sup>49</sup>. The subsequent three-year work plan for 2022-2024 was later endorsed at COP27, focusing on knowledge-sharing, capacity building, and climate policies and actions. This growing involvement underscores the pivotal role that Indigenous Peoples can play in shaping global policies and amplifies the need for their representation in global climate discourses<sup>50</sup>.

## 5.1

# The Paris Agreement under UNFCCC

The Paris Agreement emerged from COP as a pivotal advancement in addressing global climate change, succeeding the Kyoto Protocol<sup>51</sup>. It embodies the global fight to limit temperature increases to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels.

Building on this, the Glasgow Pact further refines this goal, targeting a rise of no more than 1.5°C. The Paris Agreement, encompassing 29 articles, provides a comprehensive strategy to counter climate change and safeguard the environment for coming generations. Countries set a three-year timeframe to devise the Paris Rulebook, a guideline set for the Agreement's implementation. By COP24 in 2018, the bulk of the Rulebook was adopted. Although certain aspects, notably related to Article 6 required further discussion and were finally consolidated at COP26.

The Paris Agreement, a global initiative, holds significant implications at various levels. Particularly at the local level, it's crucial to understand its impact on communities most susceptible to climate change. Among these, the *Orang Asli* People in Malaysia stands out as a poignant example. Their experiences shed light on the broader relationship between global climate agreements, international and national obligations and the realities faced by marginalised groups. The following information in **Table 8** will focus on how the Paris Agreement affects the well-being and resilience of the *Orang Asli* community, highlighting the necessity of ensuring that global climate actions benefit those most directly affected by climate change.

TABLE 8

## Mapping relevance of the Paris Agreement on Orang Asli communities

**Article 2:** Limiting Global Temperature Increase

Malaysia, through its NDCs, is expected to contribute to global efforts to limit the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, ideally to 1.5°C. This commitment reflects the urgency of addressing climate change. *Orang Asli* youth, living in vulnerable areas, stand to benefit significantly from such efforts, as a lower temperature increase can reduce the risks and impacts of climate change on their communities, including threats like floods and extreme weather events.

**Article 3:** Enhancing National Efforts

The article emphasises that countries in its NDCs, should prioritise and communicate ambitious climate actions. For *Orang Asli* youth, this commitment can translate into increased support for climate resilience and adaptation projects in their communities, such as improved infrastructure and access to basic needs.



**Article 4: Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction**

The article spotlights the need for countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve a balance between emissions and removal of greenhouse gases. This can lead to policies and initiatives that promote clean energy and sustainable practices in Malaysia. *Orang Asli* youth can benefit from these measures through access to cleaner and more sustainable living conditions.

**Article 6: Carbon market mechanism**

Article 6 establishes the framework for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, outlining the methods for calculating or accounting for these emissions. It details the procedures for Carbon Markets, Emissions Reduction, and National Climate Action Plans. Essentially, Article 6 introduces a carbon trading system, potentially enabling major emitters to maintain their levels of pollution. Indigenous People largely oppose carbon market mechanisms as a genuine solution to climate change. During the COP26 negotiations, these mechanisms were presented as nature-based solutions. However, the IIPFCC chose to engage within this framework, advocating for the incorporation of human rights and Indigenous Peoples' rights in the wording of Article 6. While the final text recognises the importance of respecting Indigenous Peoples' rights, it falls short in highlighting the necessity for FPIC.

Despite IIPFCC's efforts, which led to the inclusion of human and Indigenous rights terminology in parts of Article 6, as seen in the Glasgow Climate Pact, the language remains somewhat ambiguous and lacks the robustness desired. Regrettably, several IIPFCC recommendations were omitted, including the call for an independent grievance mechanism in Article 6.4 and the involvement of Indigenous voices in design and execution phases. Notably, the consultation stipulation in 6.4 is insufficient, requiring alignment with international norms and ensuring the rights of Indigenous Peoples to FPIC are upheld. The advancement of Article 6 at COP27 has been limited, raising concerns about the mechanisms' capacity to achieve tangible and lasting emission reductions.

**Article 7: Adaptation**

Article 7 emphasises the need to bolster community resilience, lessen vulnerability, and address the repercussions of climate change. It asserts that national adaptation measures should be driven by individual country needs, uphold transparency, and be inclusive. This approach should value both cutting-edge scientific insights and, where relevant, the wisdom of traditional and indigenous knowledge systems. There's an inherent push to weave adaptation strategies into broader socioeconomic and environmental agendas. In line with this, Malaysia's National Determined Contributions (NDCs) should feature strategies that support at-risk communities, such as the *Orang Asli*. Moreover, these actions should resonate with sustainable development objectives, championing the autonomy of Indigenous communities, honouring land rights, and fostering opportunities to enhance the livelihood and welfare of Indigenous youth.

**Article 9: Climate Finance** Developed countries' financial support to assist developing nations is a crucial aspect of the Paris Agreement. Malaysia can use these funds to implement climate projects that directly benefit the *Orang Asli*, including youth empowerment initiatives, education, and capacity-building programs focused on climate resilience and sustainability.

**Article 12: Education and Awareness** Enhancing climate change education, awareness, and public participation are vital components of the Paris Agreement. Malaysia can leverage these principles to raise awareness among *Orang Asli* youth about climate change and its impacts. Education programs tailored to Indigenous communities can empower youth to actively engage in climate action and advocate for their rights.

## 5.2 Opportunities for Reparations at COP28

As COP28 approaches in the UAE, its leadership emphasised the paramount importance of Indigenous Peoples' rights in climate negotiations<sup>52</sup> at an address at UNPFII by introducing the potential establishment of a climate reparations fund. Such a move could empower Indigenous People globally to affirm land rights and actively influence environmental and climate policies.

## 5.3 *Orang Asli* youth experience: Loss and Damage

"Loss and damage" refers to the harm experienced by individuals and communities ill-equipped to handle climate change impacts- emerging when communities cannot adjust to these disruptive changes<sup>53</sup>.

The term encompasses both abrupt events like floods and hurricanes, intensified by climate shifts, and gradual issues such as prolonged droughts and rising sea levels. For the *Orang Asli*, the implications are profound. Residing in climate-sensitive areas, they face heightened risks; events like severe floods can devastate their homes, infrastructure and access to essential services and resources.

## Economic Loss

The climate crisis has a measurable economic impact, especially for the *Orang Asli* youth and their communities. Direct financial repercussions manifest in the form of damaged agricultural lands, decreased productivity, infrastructure repairs, and rising healthcare expenses. Additionally, there are indirect economic implications, stemming from interruptions to their customary livelihoods like hunting, gathering, and farming, which are vital to their cultural and economic stability. To counter these losses, there's a pressing need for strategies that diversify income sources, encourage sustainable economic choices, and improve market accessibility.

However, the scarcity of financial resources hampers their efforts to adopt climate resilience measures, pursue sustainable livelihoods, and bounce back from environmental setbacks.

## Non-economic Loss

The climate crisis also brings forth non-economic losses that are deeply intertwined with the cultural identity, spirituality, and well-being of *Orang Asli* youth. These losses may include the degradation of natural landscapes, loss of biodiversity, displacement from ancestral lands, and erosion of traditional knowledge and practices. Non-economic losses can have profound impacts on the mental and emotional well-being of the *Orang Asli* youth and their sense of identity and belonging. Addressing these losses requires safeguarding cultural heritage, strengthening the connection to ancestral lands, and promoting the transmission of traditional knowledge and practices.

# 5.4 The Carbon Market danger

The carbon market is an integral topic in the Paris Agreement, allowing countries to trade carbon emissions. But why does it matter, especially for developing countries like Malaysia? Historically, developed countries have been the main culprits behind pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. With their significant financial clout, they now buy carbon credits or "carbon space" from less developed nations<sup>54</sup>. Essentially, they're paying to offset their carbon footprint. The study below presents the viability of the Carbon Market as a solution to combating long-term carbon emissions;

## Malaysia's Stance on the Carbon Market

Malaysia, a developing country, stands at a crucial juncture. The nation aims to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050<sup>55</sup> and has committed via its NDC to reducing its CO<sub>2</sub> intensity by 45% come 2030. Malaysia is also exploring a carbon pricing system through a potential carbon tax. The challenge? Balancing economic growth with environmental conservation, fairness, and poverty alleviation. There's also talk about rationalising targeted or phasing out of fossil fuel subsidies to give sustainable energy sources a fighting chance.

## Challenges and Opportunities Ahead

The carbon market isn't just about trade; it's about the lives and futures of communities, especially in developing nations. While it can open doors for profit and environmental mitigation, it also runs the risk of exploiting native communities and sidelining their rights. As observers delve deeper into the intricacies of the carbon market, it is imperative to stay alert of its wider environmental and social repercussions. The goal? Crafting solutions that are both sustainable and fair.

## The Issue of "Carbon Colonisation"

A concerning aspect of the carbon market is what some term "Carbon Colonisation." For many Indigenous communities, the carbon market spells the loss of their ancestral homes, often situated within forests. The reason? These forests become prized assets for carbon absorption. However, for businesses, banking on forests for carbon sequestration might not be the long-term answer.

## 5.5 The gender and women empowerment

Established in 2014, the Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG) seeks to embed gender considerations within the actions of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement. At COP25, the programme broadened its scope, identifying five key areas: capacity-building, promoting gender balance and women's leadership, ensuring coherence, enabling gender-responsive actions, and enhancing monitoring and reporting<sup>56</sup>.

These measures recognise the unique challenges faced by women and girls due to climate change and aim to bolster their roles in the UNFCCC process, while also championing their leadership roles in the climate transition. Training initiatives, encompassing webinars and on-site sessions, have been launched for women delegates, with an emphasis on younger, Indigenous, and local women. Complementing this, the Glasgow Work Programme on Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE)<sup>57</sup> is being implemented with an ethos of human rights, gender equality, and the empowerment of women, underpinning the essence of human rights in its action plan.

Figure 8.1



Diana and Eliana representing Weaving Hopes for the Future at COP27

Despite Malaysia's step in adopting CEDAW, the nation confronts certain challenges. The lack of gender-disaggregated data and a gender-responsive budgeting approach for climate initiatives makes it tough to assess the distinct climate impacts on various genders. Furthermore, a distinct role for gender equality frameworks in executing NDCs is currently absent, which deviates from decision 3/CP.25<sup>58</sup>. Additionally, Malaysia stands apart from some of its Southeast Asian peers, having not nominated a National Gender & Climate Change Focal Point under UNFCCC or engaged in its gender-focused initiatives. A notable mention from COP27 includes the inaugural participation of *Orang Asli* young women, with two Jakun Indigenous youth leaders actively engaging and contributing to the Indigenous forum. Regrettably, their contributions were not formally recognised, and they lacked support or engagement in preparatory discussions from Malaysia's government concerning COP27.

## 5.6 Bridging Indigenous Communities and COP

Diana Tan, a Youth *Orang Asli* Representative through the Weaving Hopes for the Future program<sup>59</sup>, recounted her experiences at COP26 in Glasgow and COP27 in Egypt. She shared insights into her journey representing the *Orang Asli* community of Peninsula Malaysia on the international stage. The images presented in this section are sourced from Klima Action Malaysia's official Medium account<sup>60</sup>.

### Pandemic-Induced Creativity:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, travel restrictions posed challenges, prompting innovative approaches to activism. To address these constraints, the project focused on weaving crafts using *Mengkuang*, reflecting deforestation in their patterns.

A documentary team worked together to capture the impact of the climate crisis and the story behind the woven crafts, despite limited mobility during the pandemic:

Figure 8.2



Weaving hopes exhibition

Figure 8.3



Weavers behind the four-tile exhibition piece



*During the Covid pandemic, we couldn't travel anywhere. So, we thought about sending woven crafts. Weaving is closely associated with the Jakun community. We used Mengkuang as the weaving material because Mengkuang is becoming scarce. The story behind the weaving reflects the situation of destroyed land, and you can see the area where deforestation occurred in the patterns. The Sungai Buloh team\* was very creative in incorporating the story into woven mats. We also had a documentary team; We wanted to record the issues, learn how to use cameras, and we learned on our own. There were four of us working together, handling editing and capturing footage. However, our movement was restricted, so we could only work in nearby villages.*

## Empowering Indigenous Women:

The Weaving Hopes for the Future project's involvement in climate conferences, starting from COP26, primarily emphasised the participation of Indigenous women. These women played a pivotal role by venturing into forests to gather materials for bark clothing, demonstrating their dedication to the cause. They also created the bark clothing and documented the climate crisis, becoming storytellers who shared the effects of climate change on their communities.



*“Involvement in the project from COP26 until now has been primarily focused on women because women in the villages actually experience the most significant impact, and their involvement touched me deeply. They were willing to enter the forest to find materials to make bark clothing for me to wear at COP. So, they produced the bark clothing themselves and sewed it for me, and we wore it during COP27 last year. They also helped because we sent video documentation. They became the storytellers, and they took us to their gardens to see the effects of the climate crisis. This year, the involvement of young women has been very helpful to me because these stories were collected from them.”*

*“My panel at that time was in the Indigenous Pavilion, where Indigenous People from all over the world gathered, including Taiwan, Bangladesh, India, and others. I remember the opportunity given to me; I appreciated it because I spoke in Malay with an interpreter. They nodded their heads, showing that they cared about the story I told. I was deeply moved because the issues faced by Orang Asli are similar in other countries. We face discrimination, so through these panels, we can share and think about how to address indigenous issues. Eliana, the other Indigenous youth representative, gave a talk about youth and children. We talked about indigenous people in the Peninsula, how they die from elephant stamping or tiger attacks.*

*These cases are important to be known because people outside, even Malaysians themselves, are not aware that these things happen to Indigenous communities. On the other hand, for example, in cases involving animal protection, they blame indigenous people for killing elephants, even though the actions are for safety reasons. So, in that panel, we could share the real and harsh situations of failures in sustainable land use and conservation. There was no sugar-coating.”*

\* Pictured in **Figure 8.3** are Hanim Apeng and her sibling Marini Apeng, belonging to the Jakun-Jah Hut tribe, who have formed a group that includes various family members from the Temuan tribe. This diverse group comprises skilled weavers, such as Norlila Alias and her daughter Noraini Hempit, along with Norlila's granddaughter Norlinda Abdullah and daughter Norita Azeela.

Figure 8.4



Diana presenting her experiences at the Indigenous Pavillion

## Global Indigenous Solidarity:

Participating in a panel at the Indigenous Pavilion during the conferences, the speaker emphasised the shared struggles faced by Indigenous communities worldwide. It underscored the importance of addressing indigenous issues and sharing unfiltered stories to raise awareness about the real challenges of sustainable land use and conservation. The focus was on presenting the harsh realities without sugar-coating.

## Ensuring Safety and Collective Action:

Ensuring the safety of Indigenous women attending these conferences was a critical concern, given potential threats upon returning to their home country. The need for financial support and group representation was emphasised, as attending as a group can amplify the impact of their issues. Navigating the conference was challenging, especially with limited access to negotiation rooms.



*“In terms of safety, because we are women, those of us who are going need to think about our safety during the conference. We don't want to face threats when we return to Malaysia due to our involvement in these issues. For funding, we should definitely get support because this is a civil society need. When we look at COP, most Indigenous People participated as groups while in Malaysia, there's only one person representing Indigenous People. Our movements are limited, and one person has to do and represent everything. If we go as a group, our issues can be more effectively raised, and a group movement, I believe, is stronger, and people take it more seriously.*”

*It was very challenging to go to the zones as we had to chase panel sessions and discussions on the ongoing issues. There are so many panels and rooms, government representatives, NGOs, and many others discuss various topics. With just an observer badge from AIPP and not as state delegate, I am unable to enter these negotiating rooms. If we could get entry under a government badge, we would be free to navigate in these rooms to hear directly what was being discussed.”*

Figure 8.5



Diana recording footage for the Weaving Hopes documentaries

## Bridging the Gap Through Storytelling:

The role of the speaker included bridging the gap between the complex concepts of climate change and the limited understanding of Indigenous communities. Traditional knowledge and modern understanding were integrated to prepare for environmental disasters. Traditional signs like *Kubang Celor* and the behaviour of specific birds were highlighted as valuable elements in adapting to the climate crisis



*“In terms of safety, because we are women, those of us who are going need to think about our safety during the conference. We don't want to face threats when we return to Malaysia due to our involvement in these issues. For funding, we should definitely get support because this is a civil society need. When we look at COP, most Indigenous People participated as groups while in Malaysia, there's only one person representing Indigenous People. Our movements are limited, and one person has to do and represent everything. If we go as a group, our issues can be more effectively raised, and a group movement, I believe, is stronger, and people take it more seriously. It was very challenging to go to the zones as we had to chase panel sessions and discussions on the ongoing issues. There are so many panels and rooms, government representatives, NGOs, and many others discuss various topics. With just an observer badge from AIPP and not as state delegate, I am unable to enter these negotiating rooms. If we could get entry under a government badge, we would be free to navigate in these rooms to hear directly what was being discussed.”*

## Advocacy and Its Limitations:

Despite submitting demands on behalf of Indigenous People and civil society during the conferences, it was noted that these discussions mainly occurred within the Malaysian pavilion. Upon returning to Malaysia, the hope was for ongoing discussions and government-initiated solutions. However, limited changes were observed, and some representatives lacked critique, emphasising the need for more comprehensive engagement.

Figure 8.6



A dialogue between Weaving Hopes for the Future and representatives from the Malaysian national delegation

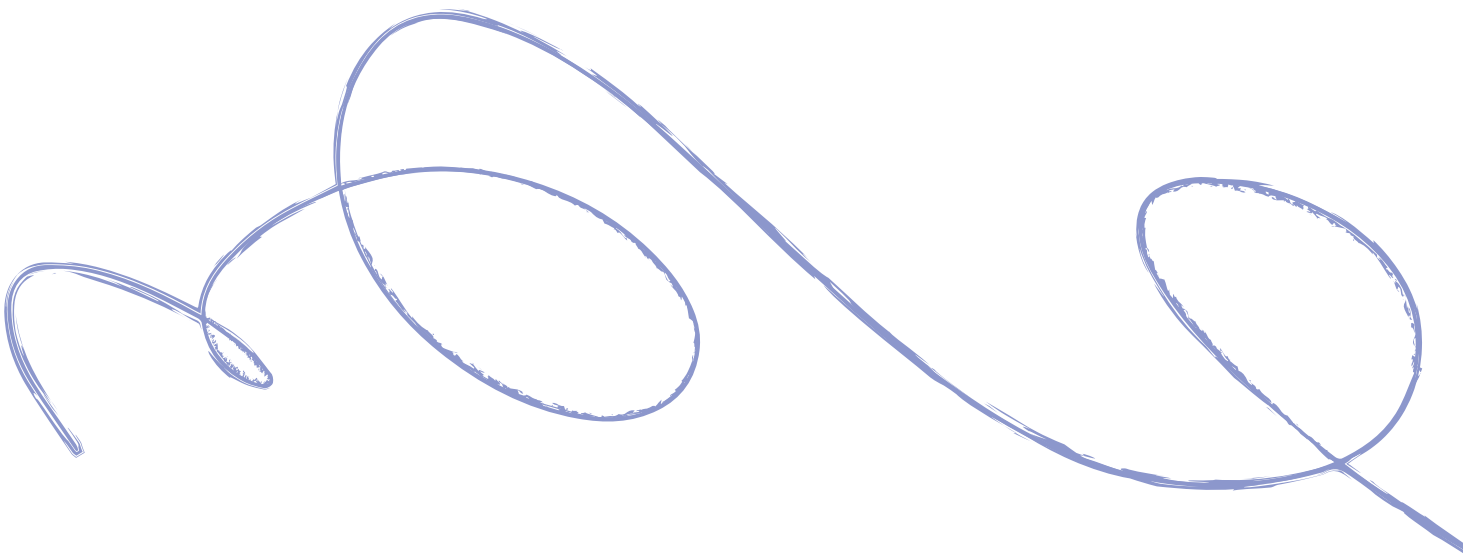


The importance of COP conferences was underscored, as they provided a platform to address climate change, primarily affecting Indigenous communities who rely on their natural surroundings. It is essential to share these stories globally for collective action and reducing the impact of ongoing issues:



*“After returning to Malaysia, we had hoped that discussions regarding the issues we had brought up at the Malaysian Pavilion would be continued, and that perhaps the government had found some solutions in addressing them. However, nothing really changed and in the end, we didn’t really get any answers. When we made our demands, we just stated what we wanted, and they listened. But there were other youth representatives who only shared positive perspectives of the government’s stances without much critique; there was no opposition.*”

*I think COP is important since it was introduced to me in 2019. As a youth and a woman, I understand climate change and the crisis faced by Indigenous communities. COP is important because most of the crises affect Indigenous communities first, as they rely on the land, rivers, and the environment. So, it’s essential because as an activist and a young woman, I see my mother and aunt using the land for farming, but the conditions are changing, and the land is getting drier with droughts. So, it’s important for us to share this information so that people worldwide can take care of each other and reduce the impact of the ongoing issues.”*



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Dreams to Reality

Based on the insights gained from the *Orang Asli* youth contributors and SUHAKAM's 'Report of the National Inquiry into the Land Rights of Indigenous Peoples, this report proposes a set of recommendations to empower Indigenous communities, safeguard their land rights, and enhance their resilience to the following stakeholders: Government entities, media, Institutions like Universities, Think Tanks and UN bodies, the Private Sector and Civil Society Organisations.

## Government as duty bearers

The following are recommendations for federal and state governments, ministries as well as their respective agencies in **Table 9**:

TABLE 9

### Recommendations for Malaysian government and state agencies

Recognise, Safeguard and preserve Customary Land Rights

- Recognise and protect the customary land rights of Indigenous communities through legal and policy measures as recommended by SUHAKAM Inquiry
- Ensure security of tenure for Indigenous communities aligned to the Malaysia's SDG agenda and sustainable development
- Improve definition of customary land tenure aligned with human rights obligations
- Establish mechanisms for restitution in cases of non-recognition of customary lands.
- Adopt a human rights-based approach to development by developing FPIC legal framework and grievance mechanisms aligned to UNDRIP

Meaningful Collaboration and Advocacy

- Facilitate open dialogues between government bodies and Indigenous communities to gain a deeper understanding of their specific needs and challenges
- Recognise and acknowledge Indigenous leadership and their traditional knowledge in environment conservation and climate governance
- Ensure transparent data sharing, especially for development projects, under the upcoming Freedom of Information Act to build trust.
- Climate information should be translated into community languages, with technical terms simplified for better accessibility.

## Finance

- Develop financing mechanisms that prioritise the needs of Orang Asli youth, especially young women. This includes exploring avenues for international funds, grants, and investments that can be channelled towards climate and community resilience projects benefiting the Orang Asli youth.
- Expand financial literacy programs to empower the *Orang Asli* youth to effectively manage and utilise available resources.

## Indigenous Youth Representation

- Rejuvenate youth organisations to increase youth engagement in decision-making processes.
- Advocate for Indigenous representation in government bodies and the youth parliament, with adequate quotas, to amplify Indigenous voices and effectively champion community interests.
- Safety of youth participating
- Enable political participation among Indigenous youth to elevate their voices in policy-making processes.
- Creating platforms for youth to connect, share experiences, and receive mentorship is essential to overcoming this challenge and fostering a sense of belonging within the larger movement.

## Participation in policy making processes and implementation

- Create safe and enabling conditions for the *Orang Asli* youth in decision-making processes to ensure their perspectives are considered when developing climate policies and just transition strategies such as on discussions on Loss and Damage, NDC Roadmap and the National Adaptation Plan, and participation in UNFCCC processes including COP.

## Raise Awareness, Education and Skills

- Develop education programs at school, university and community level to inform Indigenous youths about the climate crisis and their environmental rights, available resources, and build capacity in disaster risk reduction management.

## Promote Gender Equality

- Create enabling conditions for women leadership within key organisations like MBOA and POASM
- Inclusion of *Orang Asli* women's needs via Gender Responsive Budgeting
- Prioritise collection of disaggregated data to further inform climate policies based on statistical evidence
- Address gender disparities by promoting inclusivity and empowerment of youth, particularly women.

## Sexual Reproductive Health Rights

- Establish mini-clinics in vulnerable areas before the flood season to ensure health care remains accessible to Indigenous populations.
- Provide emergency prenatal and postnatal care
- Include sustainable menstrual product such as reusable cloth pads or collaborate with local businesses that produce feminine products
- Introduce professional 'Listening Ears' within communities to address women's mental health needs or domestic safety issues
- Set up family-planning workshops and meaningfully explaining the use of contraceptive medications

Disaster Risk  
Reduction  
Management

- Establish strong ties with *Orang Asli* groups to facilitate swift aid delivery. For women, addressing specific needs is vital. This encompasses timely support for mothers, ensuring young women have access to sanitary products, addressing essential clothing needs, and guaranteeing prompt food aid.

Political  
Representation

- Representation of *Orang Asli* youth, especially women in Malaysian parliament or state level to ensure robust Indigenous voices.

## Corporations

Corporations, including GLCs and in the private sector have a significant role to play- by fulfilling their due diligence and corporate responsibilities. In **Table 10**, we look towards pathways for meaningful collaboration and due diligence of technical processes:

TABLE 10

### Recommendations for Corporations

Consultation and  
FPIC

- Develop consultation processes with Indigenous communities, involving youth and women.
- Adhere to the principles of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), in line with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
- Ensure full transparency and accessibility to data.
- Provide access to remedies, especially for youth and young women.

Disclosure of Land  
Rights disputes

- Emphasise disclosures addressing climate risk and a broader spectrum of Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance (ESG) risks.
- Recognize the significance of political, reputational, operational, and legal risks.
- Assess the involvement of listed companies in potential infringements of land rights and Indigenous peoples' rights.
- Acknowledge that companies involved in land rights violations tend to underreport the risks associated with such actions, which can impact investors.
- Understand that these risks span legal, reputational, and financial dimensions.
- Recognize that neglecting land rights and human rights of Indigenous peoples can lead to project setbacks, terminations, environmental degradation, climate change acceleration, and increased social conflict and violence.

Investment in Well-  
being

- Invest in essential infrastructure, such as healthcare, education, and social services for Indigenous youth and women.
- Provide training programs in sustainable farming, eco-tourism, and practical skills like financial literacy to enhance self-reliance.
- Share business expertise, resources, and market access to expand economic opportunities for Indigenous communities.

## Environmental Stewardship

- Emphasise meaningful collaboration with Indigenous communities in environmental stewardship efforts.
- Include Indigenous communities in co-designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating environmental initiatives.
- Engage in joint projects with Indigenous communities, such as reforestation, wildlife conservation, and sustainable resource management.
- Recognize the valuable insights and knowledge of Indigenous communities, particularly the youth, in environmental initiatives.

# Institutions like Universities, Think Tanks and United Nations bodies

As tabulated below in **Table 11**, the wider academic and international network has an abundance of opportunity in their capacity for collaboration with *Orang Asli* youth and organisations:

TABLE 11

## Recommendations for universities, think-tanks and united nations bodies

### Universities and think thanks

- Universities should collaborate with *Orang Asli* communities for research on climate change such as on climate vulnerability, local knowledge and Indigenous rights.
- Incorporate academic knowledge and community insight to directly influence and enhance climate policies and advocacy for Indigenous rights.
- Adopt a multidisciplinary approach, partnering with internal departments, think tanks, Indigenous organisations, and student groups.
- Emphasise principles like mutual respect, consent, and preservation of cultural heritage in research.
- Translate and disseminate findings in accessible formats, bridging the gap between research and policy.

### National Human Rights Commission

- Create safe spaces for Indigenous People, focusing on youth and young women, to participate in climate governance.
- Advocate for Indigenous People's Rights within climate governance and monitor government compliance with international, regional, and national human rights and climate change obligations.
- Evaluate government climate policies from a human rights perspective.
- Support reforms like establishing an ombudsman for Indigenous land rights and monitoring businesses for human rights due diligence, disclosure, and corporate accountability.

### United Nations

- Improve Indigenous youth and young women's access to international climate change forums.
- Enhance funding opportunities for grassroots projects led by Indigenous youth and young women.

# Civil Society Organisations – CSOs

In terms of strengthening *Orang Asli* youth voices, **Table 12** provides two key actors who play crucial roles in providing agency and capacity building;

TABLE 12

## Recommendations for civil society organisations (CSOs)

Bar Council	Legal empowerment for Indigenous youth on their legal system, and their rights to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.
NGOs	Environment, Climate, SDG, Women's health and empowerment must platform Indigenous youth and young women's voices. Training, building capacity on complex topics of climate crisis and climate justice.

## Media organisations

Lastly, the media has a large role to play in not only providing fair coverage of issues faced by *Orang Asli* communities as denoted in **Table 13**:

TABLE 13

## Recommendations for Media

Collaborative Narratives and Diverse Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collaborate with Indigenous Members of Parliament, scholars, and activists to amplify Indigenous concerns.</li><li>• Partner with diverse voices, including Indigenous women and youth, to promote interviews and discussions that provide a comprehensive understanding of Indigenous issues.</li></ul>
Awareness and Information Dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Utilise diverse media platforms, including alternative outlets, to raise awareness about Indigenous issues and disseminate essential information to Indigenous youth.</li><li>• Conduct live broadcasts, interviews, documentaries, and online articles to support this awareness campaign.</li></ul>
Support for Alternative Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognise the role of alternative media outlets like Radio Asyik in providing a platform for Indigenous voices and perspectives</li><li>• Support and promote such outlets as valuable contributors to the discourse on Indigenous issues.</li></ul>
Access to Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work towards improving access to information, particularly in remote areas. Ensure that information is accessible to Indigenous communities through innovative means.</li></ul>

# KEY FINDINGS

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The climate crisis in Peninsula Malaysia is revealing a complex pattern of systemic injustice that weighs heavily on Malaysia's people and its land. At the heart of this storm are the *Orang Asli* youth, facing the impact of the crisis, from socio-economic repercussions to environmental threats that jeopardise their livelihoods, and challenge their Indigenous rights to land. The findings of this report detail:



*Orang Asli* youth are not strangers to this reality as shifts in weather have adversely impacted their communities. The increasing frequency of these climate disasters has in recent times caused grave concern for high mortality rates, the destruction of personal belongings and community infrastructure. This present reality emphasises the critical need for improved collaboration among agencies such as the National Disaster Management Agency (NADMA) and Department of Wildlife and National Parks (PERHILITAN). There is a gap in coordination and delayed responses to emergencies that have resulted in mortality and prolonged cycles of poverty within these communities. Conflicts have arisen from multiple fronts, human wildlife conflicts that are suspected to be linked to the destruction of wildlife habitat near *Orang Asli* villages. Instances of inefficient responses (via material aid, emergency evacuations, safety control) by authorities even after formal reports have been submitted.



External encroachment such as legal logging and expansive timber monocrops into *Orang Asli* territories has intensified the irreversible environmental degradation of their lands are profound. Soil erosion, for instance, triggers landslides which obstruct access to neighbouring townships, hindering medical treatments, financial services, and disrupting telecommunications. Additionally, sand, mineral, and rare earth mining have reportedly contaminated rivers with sediment and fertilisers, potentially posing long-term health risks, particularly for the youth and young women. Based on the shared experiences of *Orang Asli* youth contributors, it can be argued that the energy transition into renewables and development of mining for rare earth minerals is not solving the distributive injustice in the current energy systems and the transition costs are born by the marginalised people living in sacrificial zones. This was highlighted by the development of mega-dams posing risks to the disappearance of historical sites of spiritual significance and disregard of Indigenous self determination over their territories.



*Orang Asli* youth have drawn the connection of Indigenous Rights and their involvement in climate governance— aspiring to play active roles in stakeholder discussions and decision-making processes that affect their communities. According to The Aboriginal Peoples Act 1954 (Act 134), the current legal status designates the *Orang Asli* as mere tenants of their lands, with the well-being of their communities and ancestral territories directly contingent upon the performance of the state government and related agencies. Through the region, *Orang Asli* youth activists have encountered numerous barriers and discriminatory practices. Insufficient government intervention and mediation and land acquisitions frequently force these communities to relocate, resulting in the loss of their ancestral lands and a disruption of their traditional practices and livelihood. Such displacement carries significant social, economic, and educational consequences upon the survivability of their cultural identity, which is closely tied to their ancestral forests.



*Orang Asli* youth and young women in Malaysia actively engage in grassroots organisations like JKOASM to assert self-determination rights and address land disputes. They collaborate across states and partner with political youth groups to advocate for climate policies and Indigenous rights. Student-led organisations provide spaces for promoting cultural identity, while independent women and feminist collectives challenge patriarchy and amplify women's voices through creative documentation and legal empowerment education. Grassroots civil-led actions involve protests, awareness campaigns, and participation in the COP UNFCCC process to highlight the impacts of climate inaction on Indigenous rights. Through these efforts, *Orang Asli* youth shape

public discourse and mobilise for meaningful change. Contributors specifically highlight the significance of *Orang Asli* women, young and old, at the frontlines of the climate crisis, who play crucial roles in adaptation and mitigation, demonstrating resilience and resourcefulness. In their family and communities, Indigenous women shoulder significant care work. The increased care burden can lead to physical and emotional stress, impacting their overall well-being. Despite facing various challenges, they exhibit strong leadership qualities within their communities; taking the lead in initiatives related to climate adaptation, resource management, and community resilience, contributing significantly to their communities' well-being.



In Malaysia, the climate and sustainability policies appear to overlook environmental rights, even though the UNGA acknowledges that a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment constitutes a human right. Challenges persist with the inclusion and meaningful participation of the *Orang Asli* People, especially its youth and young women. These policies, managed by various governmental bodies, frequently sidestep the rights and viewpoints of the *Orang Asli*. For example, The National Energy Policy 2022-2040 does not adequately address the potential benefits for the *Orang Asli* youth. Furthermore, forest management tools often ignore *Orang Asli* land rights, posing threats of deforestation. Inclusion of *Orang Asli* youth in climate and environmental governance aligns with Malaysia's commitment of human rights and sustainable development agenda for a balanced and responsible approach to environmental and economic development that is both socially just and inclusive. *Orang Asli* youth and young women participation in the development of the National Adaptation Plan is crucial, ensuring it is more comprehensive, implementable on the ground and culturally sensitive. They should be actively engaged in shaping the upcoming Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) Roadmap and the Climate Change Act.



Their input on climate mitigation and adaptation measures, especially those relevant to Indigenous territories, can enhance the equity and effectiveness of the country's climate commitments. Integrating *Orang Asli* youth into the implementation of the National Environmental Transition Roadmap (NETR) essential to realising a responsible pathway towards an energy system that is equitable. Amendments to The Aboriginal Peoples Act 1954 (Act 134) to rectify discriminatory provisions and grant *Orang Asli* rightful ownership of their ancestral lands. This includes recognising customary land rights and preventing the conversion of *Orang Asli* territories into government, Malay, or monarchical reserves, which currently threatens their empowerment and displacement. Legal mechanisms should be established to empower *Orang Asli* communities, in alignment with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), ensuring full recognition, protection, and rights over their lands and resources. Implementing the 18 key recommendations by the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) is crucial to address land rights issues and promote a rights-based approach to development and governance for the *Orang Asli* of Peninsula Malaysia.





# CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the *Orang Asli* youth in Peninsula Malaysia face a myriad of challenges induced by the climate crisis, which threaten their socio-economic stability, environmental integrity, and inherent land rights. The devastating impact of climate disasters calls for concerted emergency responses from the local to national level. The infringement upon their land for external gain not only aggravates environmental harm but also highlights the need for fair transitions in energy policy that respect Indigenous autonomy. Regrettably, the *Orang Asli* are relegated to tenants on their own territories, a designation that leaves them exposed to displacement and its consequent socio-economic and cultural detriments. In the face of this, they demonstrate resilience, championing their rights through grassroots activism, legal channels, and global climate forums like the COP UNFCCC. Young *Orang Asli* women are especially integral to fostering community resilience and managing the increased care responsibilities that arise from these climatic adversities. *Orang Asli* youth seek to play active roles in climate governance, recognising the connection between Indigenous rights and their involvement in decision-making processes.

For Malaysia to adhere to its climate and sustainability commitments, it must reorient its policies to affirm the environmental rights of its citizens, including the *Orang Asli*, by integrating their voice into the fabric of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and the Climate Change Act, among others. Any design and implementation of transition pathways such as through the National Environmental Transition Roadmap (NETR) must be inclusive of their views, just as the enactment of SUHAKAM's proposals is critical for redressing land rights issues. The country's current NDC has been subject to critique for its preferential emphasis on mitigation rather than adaptation, notably for sidelining community engagement. Prioritising the input of the *Orang Asli* in climate adaptation measures must be acknowledged. Proactive involvement of *Orang Asli* youth is indispensable in devising robust, fair, and all-encompassing climate strategies that secure a more equitable and just future for all, respecting their rights and autonomy and embracing their contributions.

# BERENGYAG (MERINDUI - LONGING)

*Relacep relacep engrok pitak cep*  
(In the forest, I hear the cheeping of birdsong)

*Huper en bi beryel ya rengnyah engrok cep*  
(As I awaken to nature's morning orchestra)

*Ma be engrok hat e rengnyah humakan en eng kus tok perlu bi beryel ya mai*  
(Their joyful cacophony, my gentle morning call)

*Kus ju danak en eng ert nu tew jerog*  
(From slumber to the river's edge, I shall tread)

*E tew e loq e merlong bulih hineng pitak kak*  
(To the crystal waters where fishes dance in the sun's embrace)

*Jug ju manuh tew jerog en cip sambil eng hihong*  
(After bathing in the river's purity, I return, with a merry tune upon my lips)

*Ki poi ya pinui e sengeic loi jaag*  
(A cool breeze then passes through my very soul)

*Ajih ceritak senayet en manah huwat eh semuak ya tiktok*  
(A tale from a forgotten past, now lost to time's swift current)

*Pitak-pitak cep ya tok ma be engrok tah belok ma ert kemoh ya tiktok nunoh*  
(Silenced are the birds, their fate a mystery- perhaps they've taken their final flight)

*Tew jerog kek merlong ya ki jadik kereh*  
(Once-clear waters, now veiled in mysterious sediment)

*Pitak kak guc ma dat nikor pern tok hi neng*  
(Lifeless streams, no more fish within my sight)

*Pinui kek sengeic ki jadik gerahup*  
(Cool winds have surrendered to the blazing sun)

*Ya jarag Ki poi bengket e rasak*  
(In its absence, the relentless heat scorches my skin)

*Riyag, riyag, riyag hat ajie de bulih eng surih*  
(In my heart- longing, longing, only a deep longing remains)

*En bulih eng cet bak tapik tok laluk eng cet jeoi*  
(We may plant rice, but receive a meagre harvest)

*Agok lantak yal ha kenira jerengkeh bak ku ladag jadik yas cep*  
(Let us not be blinded by wealth to nature's need, as the rice in the field, for the birds becomes a feast)

Written by N'Dang' Seliman (2023)

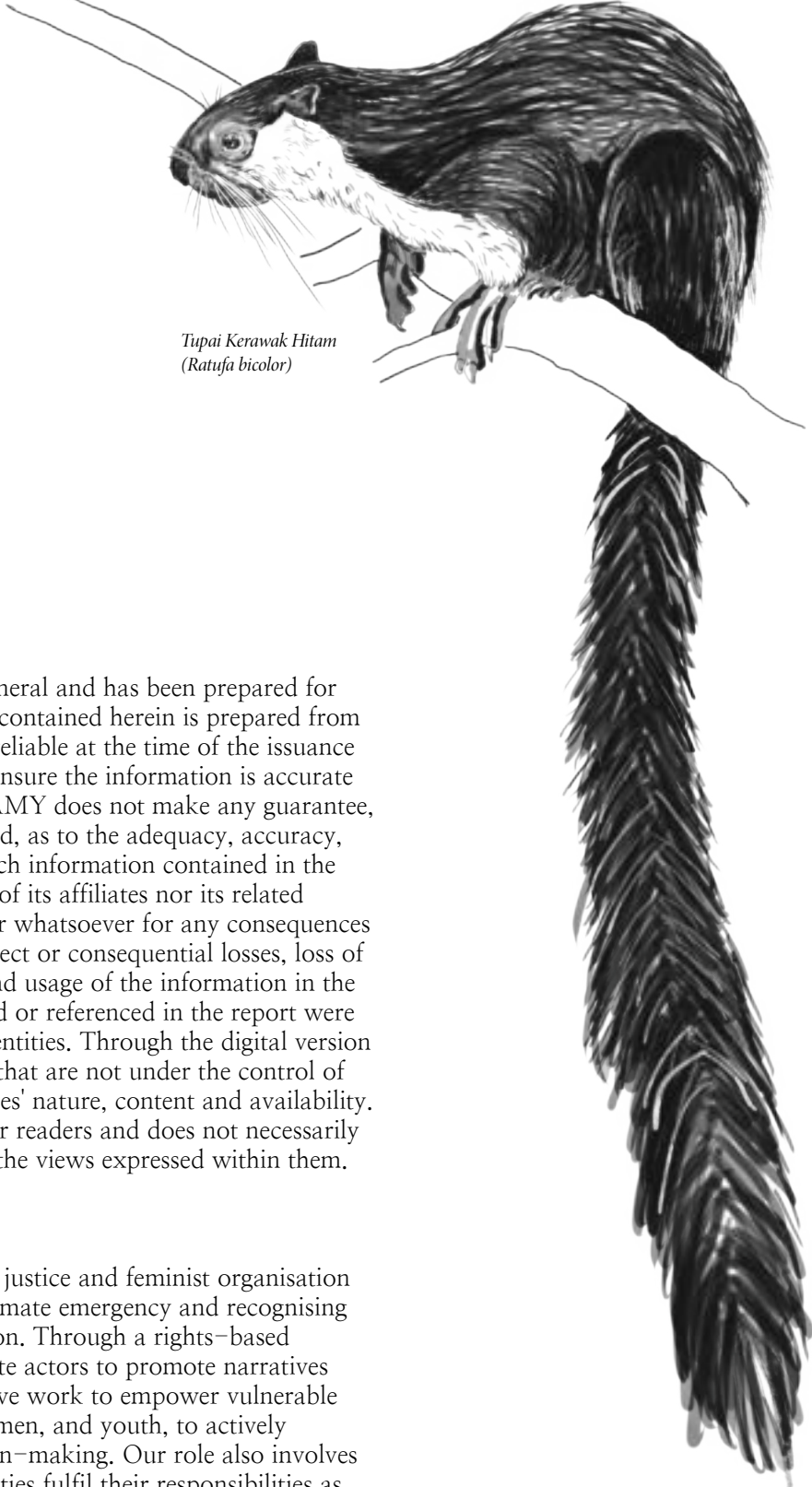
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*Tupai Kerawak Hitam  
(Ratufa bicolor)*

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**About Klima Action Malaysia (KAMY):**

Klima Action Malaysia (KAMY) is a climate justice and feminist organisation advocating for Malaysia's declaration of a climate emergency and recognising environmental rights in Malaysia's constitution. Through a rights-based approach, we engage both state and non-state actors to promote narratives of a just and equitable world. Furthermore, we work to empower vulnerable communities, such as Indigenous People, women, and youth, to actively participate in climate governance and decision-making. Our role also involves ensuring that businesses and government entities fulfil their responsibilities as duty-bearers. Additionally, we are dedicated to coalition-building, fostering knowledge and resilience.

<https://www.klimaaactionmalaysia.org/>



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