

education

research



*Towards a socially just
and equitable society!*

ERA

CONSUMER MALAYSIA

Education and
Research
Association for
Consumers,
Malaysia



era consumer malaysia

Profile

Education and Research Association for Consumers, Malaysia [ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA] is a voluntary, non-profit and non-political civil society organization. It was founded in the state of Perak in 1985 and subsequently expanded into a national organization, now based in Kuala Lumpur. ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA is a registered membership organization under The Malaysian Societies Act of 1966.

Insight

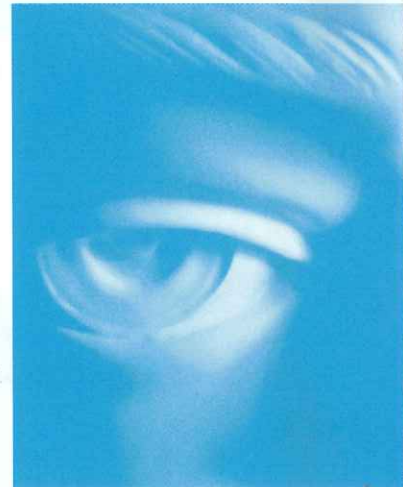
The present development influenced paradigm in Malaysia is based on growth by rapid industrialisation. Due to this capital centred development model, tremendous socio-economic, ecological degradation impacts and affect the vulnerable and rural communities. The impact of capital centered development on the people is affecting their lives, livelihood and propelling a development that is non-sustainable and destructive.

Vision

ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA envisions a self-reliant, empowered community based organisations and grassroots community actively participating in protecting and asserting themselves as consumers, practising sustainable livelihood and consumption and participating equitably in the governance process.

Mission

ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA acts as a research, education and advocacy group. It builds linkages and works in partnership with community based organisations and grassroots communities to strengthen their capacity and empower them to participate through initiatives in socio-economic, accountable governance, sustainable agriculture and ecological endeavors.



Focus

ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA's programs are designed and implemented to nurture alternative people centred development initiatives at the community level through participatory accountable governance, socio-economic, sustainable agriculture and ecological endeavors to facilitate access and management of resources for people to develop their full potentials and expand their choices in accordance with their needs and interests.

Since its inception, ERA Consumer's focus has been:

- **RESEARCH:**

It is a community based think tank to generate knowledge, information and innovation to support consumer information, education, protection and sustainable people centred development process.

- **ADVOCACY:**

Campaigns through policy inputs, seminars and media dissemination for consumer protection legislation, strengthening the position of women and children and sustaining the environment.

- **EMPOWERMENT:**

Developing projects in partnership with vulnerable communities such as workers, farmers, indigenous, children and women. Our current empowerment agenda focuses on The Self Reliant Community Project for rural poor farmers, consumers, indigenous communities on sustainable livelihood and consumption with equitable access to basic needs through health, consumer education

programs. The project further seeks to enhance accountable governance through peoples' active and equitable participation in the decision making process of development.

- **NETWORKING:**

ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA networks with a wide range of organizations at the local, national, regional and international level to build and enhance solidarity in the social development arena.

- **SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES:**

Promoting sustainable lifestyles through sustainable livelihood and consumption of rural and vulnerable communities to strengthen access to credit, adequate, safe and nutritious food and able to manage natural resources in a sustainable manner.

- **DOCUMENTATION:**

Publication of books, reports and articles relating to Consumer Laws, Trade, Food Security, Accountable Governance and Human Rights to be used as reference and lobbying tools.



Consumer Research, Education And Protection

ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA undertakes independent action-oriented research on contemporary consumer problems and on various government policies affecting consumers. The organization also initiates consumer advice programs for individual and collective actions.

ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA is also working hand in hand with a number of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in taking up major consumer and development issues that affect consumers. Among the issues are national policies on women, children, the elderly, the disabled, environmental issues, standards affecting consumer products, food and services.

ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA also monitors consumers' confidence and satisfaction of services provided by public and private utilities providers such as telecommunications, energy, health, education and transport. Recently, ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA 'adopted' a permanently disabled community who are in need of assistance to have physical access to public transportation and waivers for telecommunication facilities.

Standards development and monitoring of consumer products and services is another area which ERA CONSUMER is actively involved. ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA provides up to date information on current trends in standard making and implementation. ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA conducts training programs periodically for various target groups on standards and Codex Alimentarius (Food Code).

ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA was instrumental in

providing inputs for the parliamentary debate on the formation of the Consumer Protection Act in 1999 and is now currently monitoring its implementation and effectiveness. ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA has also conducted various consumer researches in view of providing inputs for legislation review. Currently, ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA is conducting a review of the Direct Selling Act 1993 in view of new technologies in marketing trends and schemes. Other studies include the review of the Housing Developers Act of 1966 which is currently not in favor to consumers' interests. The results of the studies will be submitted to the government for policy changes.

ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA has been actively involved in programs concerning the environment ; such as aerial spraying; elimination of the use of CFC ; One of the most recent successful activity spearheaded by ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA was the campaign to save Bukit Larut, Perak which is the oldest hill station in Malaysia from environmentally unsustainable development through a signature campaign from the residents and commissioning a biological management study of Bukit Larut of its flora and fauna.

ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA has established CORPORATION WATCH to monitor the impacts of corporate globalisation that Transnational Companies (TNCs) have unleashed on the vulnerable communities in Malaysia. The power and control of TNCs over livelihoods and consumption affect people centred development for social and environmental justice. Therefore there is an urgent need to ensure and commit TNCs to corporate governance in order to protect consumers.

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- **Representation** - Under the Consumer-REP division, ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA is active in various committees and networks which, inter alia are :
 - ☛ Member of Industry Standards Committee for Consumer Products, Personal Safety and Services, SIRIM
 - ☛ Represents consumers in the National Codex Committee, Ministry of Health
 - ☛ Member of Asia Pacific Research Network (a network of leading research Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Asia Pacific)
 - ☛ Member of Consumers International (Associate)

Sustainable Development : Food Security And Sustainable Agriculture

The Sustainable Development (SD) Division aims to promote agriculture that is sustainable, that ensure household food security and develops the rural sector to become economically and a viable self-reliant community. Self reliance in this context does not mean subsistence farming but more the ability to ensure adequate production and sustainable consumption for a sustainable livelihood with the capacity to negotiate with other communities on more equitable terms.

Specifically, the SD Division is working towards:

- ☞ Promoting closer dialogue and understanding among vulnerable groups in rural areas.
- ☞ Facilitating the experiences and insights on local productivity system development, rural enterprises and farmers network building and strengthening.
- ☞ Uplifting the quality of life of communities and to strengthen its social resiliency and its capabilities to absorb better changes and opportunities in accelerated development.
- ☞ Developing approaches to sustainably manage natural resources in farm area to be replicated through farmer to farmer exchange.
- ☞ The sustainable agriculture, food security and sustainable development program is a vital component of ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA in working on the nexus of food, agriculture, trade and economics. The SD Division seeks to ensure food security through sustainable agriculture based on fair trade that achieves economic justice

for actors involved in the formal and informal agriculture economy.

- ☞ The SD Division also seeks to link actions and concerns of consumers and farmers to issues relating to food safety.
- ☞ The SD Division is currently examining and regional and international trade policies such as ASEAN Free Trade Area Agreement (AFTA), Agreement on Agriculture (AOA), Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its impact on rural poor farmers and consumers as regards to access and control over essential drugs, land, seeds, indigenous knowledge and water.

• **Representation**

Under the SD Division, ERA Consumer is currently represented in networks such as :

- ☞ Vice-Chair and National Member of the Southeast Asian Council For Food Security and Fair Trade (SEA Council)
- ☞ National Co-ordinator of the Malaysian Committee on Food Security and Fair Trade.
- ☞ Member of Asian Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia (ASIADHRRA)

Consumer Research, Education And Protection

- ✎ Biological Management Report on Bukit Larut and Its Surroundings - 1998
- ✎ Direct Selling Review: Consumers' Perspective - 2001
- ✎ TRIPs and Pharmaceuticals : Impact on Malaysian Consumers -2001
- ✎ Housing Developers Act Review: Consumers' Perspective - 2001
- ✎ Know Your Rights on Standards - 2001
- ✎ Consumer Education Module (joint publication)- 2001
- ✎ Consumers' Response to Third Outline Perspective Plan (2001-2010)- 2001

Accountable Governance And Human Rights

- ✎ Malaysian Charter on Human Rights - 1999
- ✎ Forum On " Understanding the Human Rights Act 1999: 27th May 2000
- ✎ Training Workshop on " The Role of NGOs in the Investigative Function of the Human Rights Commission in Malaysia : 27-30th July 2000
- ✎ National Consultation on " SUHAKAM After One Year - Has the State of Human Rights improved in Malaysia : 5th May 2001

Translations in Bahasa Malaysia:

- ✎ Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- ✎ Covenant on Civil & Political Rights
- ✎ Covenant on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights
- ✎ Convention on Rights of The Child
- ✎ Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination



Sustainable Agriculture, Food Security And Rural Development

- ✎ National Consultation on Food Security in Malaysia - 1998.
- ✎ Proceedings of The Conference on People's Response to Food Security Crisis in South East Asia-1999
- ✎ National Agriculture Workshop - for a successful food production in Malaysia - 2000.
- ✎ Workshop on Agreement on Agriculture (AOA) in Malaysia - 2000.
- ✎ What is Biotechnology? - defined - 2001.
- ✎ Report on AOA research and its impact on women in Malaysia - 2001.
- ✎ Food security Village Assessment- Micro Study of 24 Villages in Malaysia - 2001.

Accountable Governance And Human Rights

The promotion of human rights is indivisible to the pursuit of a holistic and just development. In a developing country like Malaysia, recognition and respect of rights to political, social, cultural and economic self-determination of all peoples are fundamental to the protection of our dignity, equality; justice, peace and freedom. In order for a civil society to exist, to assert and defend their fundamental rights which have been impinged by capital-centred development, people can only be empowered through human rights education.

The need for human rights education has been emphasized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international documents and treaties.

ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA has been mandated to be the National Coordinator for the Human Rights Education Programme in Malaysia through a national Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) consultation held in 1999. Thus, the Human Rights (HR) Division in ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA conducts various activities and programs in order to promote human rights education in Malaysia. These include:

Human Rights Training Programs (H RTP)

H RTP is one of our major programs throughout the year. The HR Division conducts 8 to 10 training programs every year targeting youths aged between 17 to 35 years. Most of the training programs are concentrated in rural areas/outskirts as less or no attention at all is given to the vulnerable communities in these areas. The H RTP focuses on improving knowledge and information on fundamental rights such as freedom of expression, economic, social & cultural rights, human rights abuses, laws & treaties, powers of police and building on documentation skills.

Education Program on National Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM)

ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA conducted together with other Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) a Campaign on

National Human Rights Commission in 1999 when the government of Malaysia announced its proposal to establish a National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). Since then, the HR Division has been monitoring the establishment and activities of the NHRC now known as SUHAKAM. ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA has been conducting national seminars and workshops to promote the functions of SUHAKAM to the civil society.

Besides that, ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA is working closely with SUHAKAM especially on education as it is a member of the Subcommittee on the Working Group for Education in SUHAKAM.

Representation

Under the HR Division, ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA is currently active in various coalition and networks. Among them are:

- Member of Concerned NGOs on Bakun Dam -1996
- Member of People's Manifesto Initiative (coalition of NGOs formed during Malaysian General Election in 1999)
- Member of Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum-Asia- a regional human rights network) -2000
- Secretariat for the Malaysian Working Group of an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism -2000
- Member of the International Network for Economic, Social & Cultural Rights (ESCR- Net)-2001

Publications - Translation of International Human Rights Treaties

The HR Division has been translating and published various International Human Rights Treaties adopted by United Nations into the national language; Bahasa Malaysia. The translations are done to ensure that grassroots communities, peoples organizations are able to understand and use the instruments in furthering their development work with the rural poor and vulnerable groups.

HR Division is currently working on some of the other treaties to be translated.

quotes

"Consumers, by definition, include us all They are the largest economic group, affecting and affected by almost every public and private economic decision. Yet, they are the only important group whose views are often not heard."

- John F. Kennedy

"Governance, if it is to promote human development, has to be not just pro-people or people centred. It has to be owned by the people."

- Mahbub ul Haq

"The world has enough food. What is lacking is the political will to ensure that all people have access to this bounty, that all people enjoy food security."

**- Kofi Annan,
UN Secretary General**

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