

Indonesian Mobilization on Asbestos

by Dimu Pratama and M. Darisman

July 2012 has been a productive time for Indonesian ban asbestos campaigners as it provided the opportunity not only to raise public awareness of the asbestos hazard but also to register our protest about the decision of the Quebec Government to fund a new mine which will export thousands of tonnes of Canadian asbestos to Asia in the decades to come.

On Sunday, July 15th 2012, a small team from the Indonesian Ban Asbestos Network (Ina Ban)¹ started the first activity in the “Asbestos Hazard Alert Campaign 2012,” which was held on “Car Free Day” (CFD), in Bandung, Indonesia. For two years, CFDs have been held on Sunday mornings from 05:00 till 09:00 in Dago and Buah Batu, Bandung, the capital of West Java. The public space created has become a focal point for activities mounted by civil society groups. Ina Ban’s campaign had the purpose to give information to Bandung citizens about the dangers of using asbestos.

Our activities on July 15 were held from 7 to 10 a.m. Five Ina Ban representatives handed out brochures, stickers and information about the dangers of asbestos. As this was the first time we conducted such an activity, we wanted to provide basic information and assess citizens’ responses to the issues.

The Car Free Day participants were quite enthusiastic about this campaign. They were very interested to learn about the asbestos hazard from the Ina Ban team. We handed out many brochures about the danger of asbestos; in only one hour we gave out 500 brochures from our total stock of 1000!



Our team members explaining the Asbestos Hazard to CFD visitors

It soon became clear that many Bandung citizens did not know about the asbestos hazard. They listened with interest to the information provided by the Ina Ban team and asked questions about the risks from asbestos dust in their neighbourhoods and work environments and how they and their families could be protected. Public concern regarding the public health and environmental hazard was high especially amongst pregnant women and people who had children.

¹ The activities described in this article were the result of an ongoing collaborative effort by the Indonesia Ban Asbestos Network (INA BAN) and the Local Initiative for OSH Rights and Social Network (LION).



A Pregnant woman seriously listened to the explanation about the danger of Asbestos

Ms. Neneng, one of visitors, said “Oh I just realized this thing (Asbestos) is a danger, Thank God I didn’t use it at home.” The reaction of Rahmat, a visitor who was out for a healthy walk on CFD, was similar: “In my dorm they use asbestos in front of the house, what should I do?” And there were many responses similar to these. We tried our best to explain the danger, appropriate safety measures and how to remove asbestos in order to clean up the environment.

The “Asbestos Hazard Alert Campaign 2012” activity on July 15 was the beginning of Ina Ban’s current three-month CFD program to educate Bandung citizens about the dangers of asbestos. The CFD July 15 Ina-Ban outreach project received a good response from the local press with coverage by Pikiran Rakyat, the leading media group in Bandung. After the Muslim fasting month of Ramadhan is over, in September activities are planned once a fortnight which will alternate between the locales of Dago and Buah Batu.



Car Free Day Dago Activities



Explaining the Toxicity of Asbestos

On July 18, 2012, Ina Ban planned a protest outside the Canadian Embassy in Jakarta. We wanted to deliver a protest letter from Indonesian citizens about the Quebec government's \$58 million subsidy for the bankrupt Jeffrey asbestos mine. In addition to the submission of the letter, we had intended to make a visual manifestation of public outrage at this development and to that end had made protest posters and banners, and written a press release about our demonstration. We were prevented from realizing our goal by the police and Canadian Embassy security guards who chased us away from the Embassy's front yard. Photos we had taken in front of the Embassy were deleted by Embassy Security guards.

An alternative location for the protest was found when Ina Ban protestors held up their signs at an iconic Jakarta landmark.

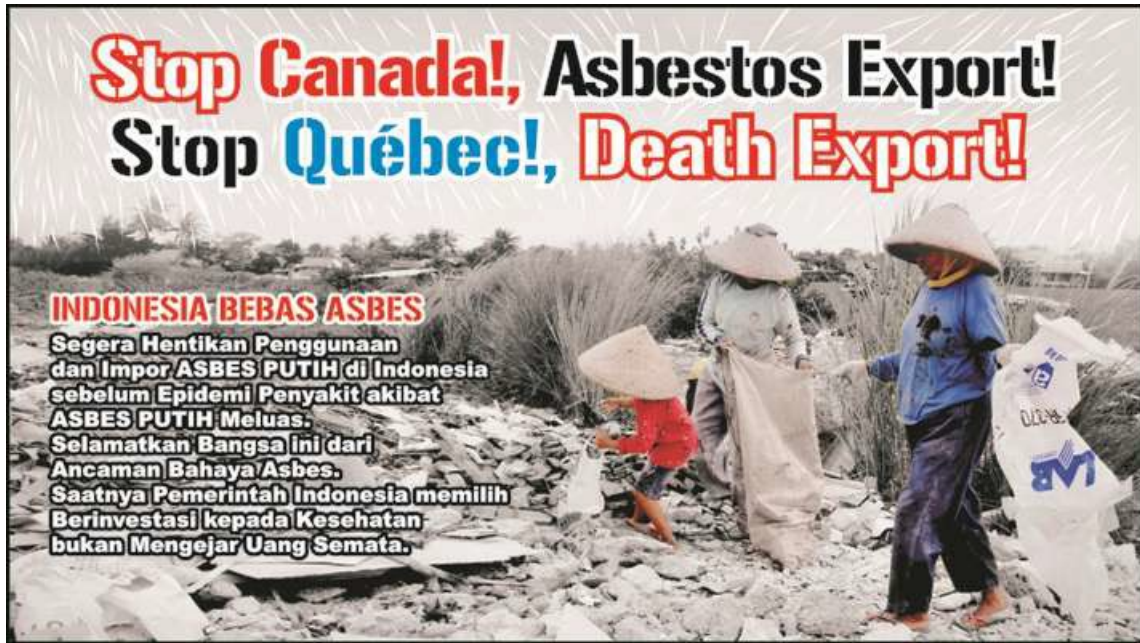


Ina Ban demonstrators in HI Circle, Jakarta's most iconic landmark

Having had our original plans frustrated by the authorities on July 18 it was spontaneously decided to mount a protest two days later in Bandung in front of the Governor Palace's (called the Gedung Sate) the center of the West Java Government. The well-supported event provided public space and time to highlight the hazards of ongoing asbestos use in Indonesia and publicize the duplicitous actions of the Quebec Government in supporting decades more asbestos exports to Asia.



Our Protest in Gedung Sate



Protest Banner (see translation below)

Stop Canada!, Asbestos Export!
Stop Quebec!, Death Export!

Indonesia Asbestos-Free
Stop Importing and using white asbestos in Indonesia,
before the epidemic of disease caused by
white asbestos grows. Save this nation from
the asbestos threat.

Now it's time for the Indonesian government to invest in people's health and not
chase money.



Poster 1



Poster 2 (see translation below)

Asbestos-Free Indonesia

Inhalation of Asbestos Dust can Cause Lung Cancer, Mesothelioma, and Asbestosis.



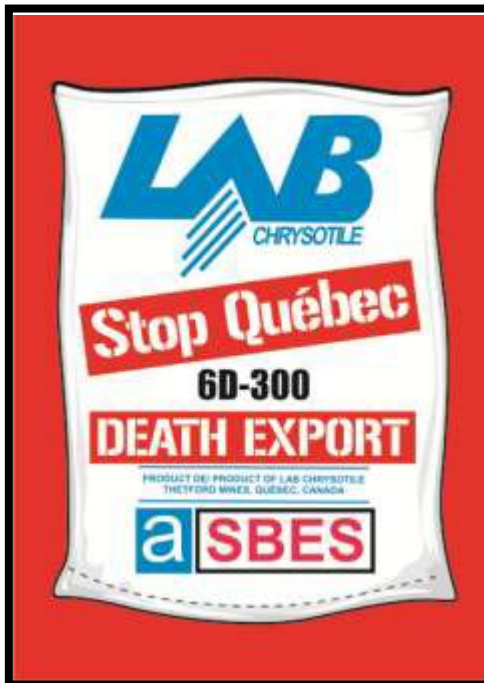
Poster 3 (see translation below)

Stop Using Asbestos Right Now

Inhalation of Asbestos Dust can Cause Lung Cancer, Mesothelioma, and Asbestosis



Poster 4



Poster 5



Poster 6



Poster 7



Poster 8



Letter to Canada Prime Minister in Poster Version



Banner (see translation below)

Stop Asbestos Using Right Now

Inhale Asbestos Dust can Cause Lung Cancer, Mesothelioma, and Asbestosis.