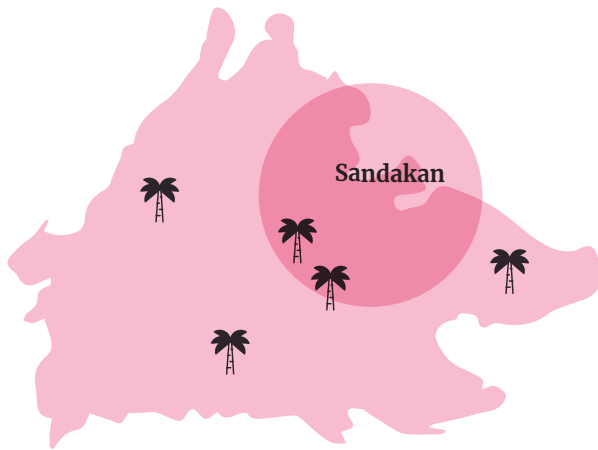


Background



Sabah is a strategic location to address the issue of children and young persons affected by palm oil operations, given the **tens of thousands foreign workers' children** living in the Malaysian state. In support of industry-wide efforts to strengthen children's protection and well-being, a consultation workshop on children in plantations was organised by The Forest Trust (TFT), Nestlé, Archer Daniels Midlands (ADM) and Wilmar. The workshop, held September 5, 2017 in Sandakan, Sabah, was attended by about 50 participants from small, medium and large companies – mostly plantations and mills operating on the east coast of Sabah.

"MSPO (Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil) standards require companies to not employ and exploit children, and companies must also comply with local, state and national legislations."

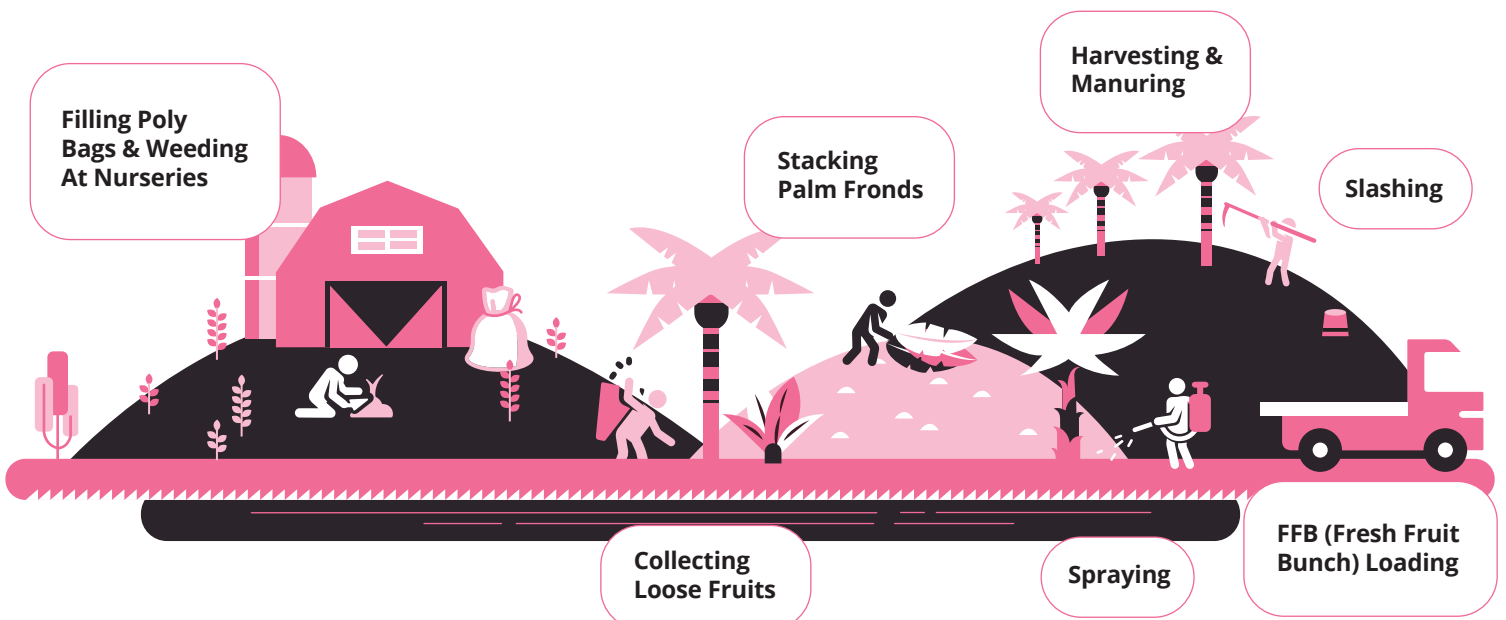
Chong Wei Kwang
Senior Manager – Plantation Management
Malaysian Palm Oil Certification Council (MPOCC)

"Employment of children may have negative consequences for their health and development. For instance, children working in dangerous conditions may develop bone deformities, muscle fatigue and developmental disorders. Meanwhile, children working under pressure can suffer headaches, insomnia, dizziness, memory problems, tachycardia and negative effects to their nervous system."

Jodelen Mitra
Technical Officer
International Labour Organization (ILO)

Key workshop findings

Participants shared that some children and young persons are involved in:



"Nestle does prohibit, in its strongest term, the use of child labour in its business operations and its supply chains. Strengthening workers' engagement, enhancing health and safety practices, and increasing children's access to education would prevent child labour incidences."

Emily Kunen
Global Responsible Sourcing Leader, Palm Oil & Seafood
Nestlé

"Factors contributing to children's participation in plantation work may include poverty, remoteness of location, gaps in national laws and policies, weak enforcement, informal workforce and lack of educational facilities."

Irene Leino
Corporate Responsibility Advisor
UNICEF

Access to alternative education is key to both a child's well-being and to businesses. **Benefits for businesses** include:



Low employee turnover and reduced abscondment



Building the potential of children, who may be a future source of talent



Compliance with certification standards



Fulfilment of social responsibility

However, businesses face **challenges** in providing alternative education for their workers' children. These include:



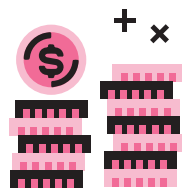
Distance of learning centres from workers' accommodation

High dropout rates



Parents who are reluctant to send their children to learning centres

Some children's preference to work



Additional cost

The risk of arrest by enforcement agencies

Next steps

- 1 Establishing a child-safe plantation framework
- 2 Formalisation of work and empowerment for young persons
- 3 Strengthening awareness-raising and community engagement initiatives
- 4 Strengthening access to education
- 5 Strengthening multi-stakeholder collaboration

"Closer collaboration is required from all stakeholders to formulate practical solutions to address issues concerning children in plantations. Companies must work together to strengthen workers' protection, including taking care of their children's welfare."

Perpetua George
General Manager, Group Sustainability
Wilmar International

For those interested in collaborating on or supporting this initiative, please contact our Respect team in Malaysia at +603 2201 2393 or info@tft-earth.org.