Labour Challenges among Small Producers

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Wild Asia
Wild Asia believes that an understanding of social and environmental issues is fundamental to sustainable developments.

Our mission is to inspire businesses to improve their social and environmental practices to meet and exceed global standards. We aim to create change from within the industry through direct engagements with businesses which have an impact on our environment and people.
Common Labour Challenges among Small Producers
Hiring Legal Workers

• Small producers are often burdened by bearing the high costs to agents and bearing the risk of workers absconding
• Lack of valid work documents
• Stricter regulations and often workers are vulnerable to authorities
• Often without written contracts
• Often use “casual” workers – informally recruited, door to door, referrals, etc. Do not use legal contracts or other formal employment methods
• Common practice for small producers to bring their families to help with the farms
• Small producers typically hire workers who have families – prevalent in Sabah, although this is against National Law. If workers are hired as family units; often only the men are paid
• Proof of age is seldom documented
• Children often follow to the farm and may help out with light work
• Foreign children could not go to school in Malaysia (unless there is a HUMANA school nearby)
Poor Living Conditions

- In rural areas, lack of access to clean water and sanitation
- Basic housing, often DIY maintenance. Sometimes not provided at all, and workers build shacks.
- Far from towns and shops – limited access to food
- Lack of proper domestic waste disposal
Health & Safety

• Generally low awareness on health & safety
• Basic PPE or none at all
• Often lack formal training or support
The Labour Supply Chain in Malaysia
Where does labour come from?

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Agent Recruitment

Employer engages with a recruitment agency

Recruitment agency approach local agents, usually from the workers’ home country

Local agents look for labour

Workers may come en masse, or as per the national quota.

Red flags may be raised here, where workers have claimed to pay a ‘fee’ for their process to be expedited, or where false promises or different job expectations are made.
Thank You!

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