

## Case Study and questions



A family lives and works on a palm oil plantation. The parents are seasonal workers, earning money based on the amount of palm fruit they harvest. They live in basic accommodations. They have young children, and the mother has a 14-year-old brother who also lives with them. This scenario is very common on the plantation. Most of the people working have a similar family situation.

Wages are low. The minimum wage in the country is below a living wage; in addition, the company does not pay overtime because there is a lack of

adequate oversight mechanisms. The family cannot afford to pay school fees. Children between the ages of 14 and 15 work to help their parents or older siblings. In their work they have to use sharp tools and are exposed to pesticides, often without using protective equipment such as masks, boots and gloves.

There is a small supermarket on the plantation for basic necessities, but due to its distance from town, prices are much higher. Families cannot afford to buy everything they need.

The mother of the family is not paid if she does not work, so when she was pregnant, she worked until she gave birth and returned to work too soon, only two weeks after giving birth. She did not receive maternity leave. When she returned to work, she had to find someone to care for her child, as there is no daycare on the plantation. Women cannot breastfeed their babies and, out of necessity, feed them water and coffee with powdered milk when they are thirsty. Families with young children cannot afford infant formula because it is too expensive.

Outside of the plantation, communities living nearby are experiencing other impacts. One community that depends on the river near the plantation for fishing, cooking and bathing has noticed that the color of the water has changed, and the fish are dead. They say they have seen that the plantation deposits its waste in the river, but other nearby plantations and factories also do this. Now they cannot use the river for their daily activities and must buy water, which is very expensive. Another community, which is an indigenous community, complains that the plantation owner has displaced them. The indigenous community would have had to leave their ancestral land due to the arrival of the company, with no consultation nor consent.

When a large international buyer of palm oil from this plantation learns of these problems, the company decides to take action. They ask an independent organization to conduct an impact assessment to investigate the impacts of their operations on children. The organization recommends the company to implement mitigation measures.

## **Group 1 + 2**

### **Questions for the palm oil importing company (Chief of Human Resources and Chief of Sustainability)**

1. What are the issues and rights impacted on this case?
2. Who are the stakeholders that have to be consulted or interviewed during the HRIA?
3. In your opinion, which are the impacts that have to be mitigated first, according to their severity?<sup>1</sup>
4. Who, in your opinion, are the duty-bearers in this case?
5. Who in your company is responsible to address each impact identified in question 1?

## **Group 3 + 4**

### **Questions for a group of workers in the palm oil plantation (women, men and children)**

1. What are the impacts that affect you, your colleagues and their families? What are the rights impacted?
2. With whom should the HRIA team consult to know how you are impacted (actors within and outside the company)?
3. How should the HRIA consult with you?
4. Who are the duty-bearers in this case?

## **Group 5 + 6**

### **Questions for members of the communities living close to the plantation**

1. What are the impacts that affect the communities? What are the impacted rights?
2. With whom should the HRIA team consult to know how you are impacted (actors within and outside the company)?
3. How should the HRIA consult with you?
4. Who are the duty-bearers in this case?

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<sup>1</sup> Gravity = scale + scope + irremediability

- Scale = seriousness of the impact
- Scope = number of people affected
- Irremediability = possibility to remedy a negative impact