

SUSTAINABILITY BRIEF

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN OIL PALM PLANTATIONS AND BEYOND

Wilmar's Holistic Approach to Safeguarding Children Within and Beyond Its Operations



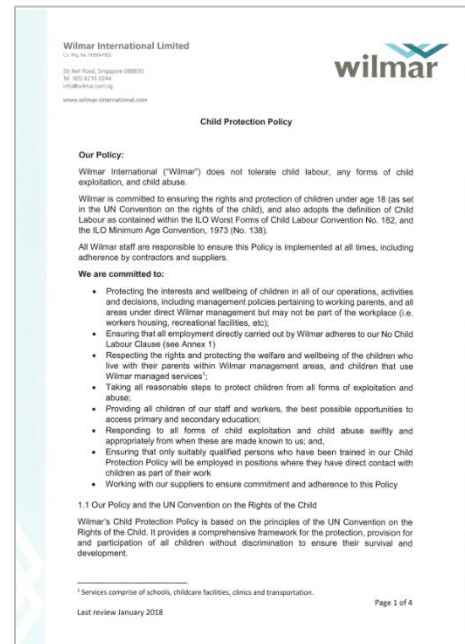
Children in agricultural communities often face barriers to education, healthcare and essential services. These usually stem from remoteness, economic pressure and gaps in enforcement, leaving many children vulnerable and without adequate support.

Recognising these challenges, Wilmar set out to safeguard children's rights by ensuring that child protection, which is embedded into our core business practices, extends beyond policies to create a material impact on the ground.

A COMPREHENSIVE CHILD PROTECTION INITIATIVE

Wilmar's journey began with the launch of our [Child Protection Policy](#) in 2017 which set the foundation for protecting children's rights throughout our global operations and supply chain. Our approach is structured around three key areas:

1. **Implementing child protection in Wilmar's operations:** Ensuring children's rights are safeguarded across all Wilmar-managed plantations.
2. **Empowering children through education and awareness:** Supporting education programmes and initiatives that help children understand their rights.
3. **Extending child protection measures across the supply chain:** Guiding suppliers and industry players towards similar initiatives through engagement and capacity-building programmes.



We align our initiatives with internationally recognised frameworks, including:

- The Children's Rights and Business Principles (developed by UNICEF, UN Global Compact and Save the Children).
- The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
- RSPO's Guidance on Child Rights for Palm Oil Producers.

Our commitment extends beyond Wilmar's own operations. We actively work with our suppliers to enhance child protection across the palm oil industry.

In 2020, we developed the [Child Protection Implementation Manual \(CPIM\)](#) for Indonesia in partnership with international non-profit, [Business for Social Responsibility \(BSR\)](#). The CPIM is a practical guide that helps Wilmar's suppliers and contractors implement child protection measures effectively and create a safer environment for children in palm oil communities, with the broader aim of encouraging the adoption of child protection principles and practices in the agriculture industry. This effort was supported by industry leaders, including Colgate-Palmolive, Nestlé, Procter & Gamble, PepsiCo and Neste, among others, demonstrating a collective dedication to safeguarding children in palm oil communities.

Continuing our collaboration with BSR, we subsequently developed a CPIM for [Malaysia](#) together with [Earthworm Foundation](#), which also addressed region-specific challenges.

To empower suppliers in implementing their own child protection initiatives that align with international frameworks mentioned above, we have made our CPIM resources publicly available. These include the [Training Manual](#) which provides clear guidance on facilitating child protection sessions, and the [Training Deck](#) which outlines key risks, international frameworks and best practices for identifying and addressing children's rights violations.

ENHANCING CHILD PROTECTION THROUGH EDUCATION

At Wilmar, we recognise that education plays a pivotal role in breaking cycles of poverty and child labour. Through targeted initiatives, we ensure that children in plantation communities have access to education while addressing broader child protection concerns. To provide young children with a strong educational foundation, we have established kindergartens and learning centres in our plantations.

Understanding the critical role of parental involvement, Wilmar has also introduced family literacy programmes that encourage learning at home, reinforcing education as a tool for long-term child protection. Our efforts have helped mitigate learning loss and reaffirmed our commitment to upholding children's rights to education, particularly in times of crisis.

During the COVID-19 lockdowns, for instance, Wilmar ensured continued education for over 9,000 children across our plantations in Indonesia, Malaysia and Ghana, despite school closures. We deployed innovative solutions, including:

- Radio-based learning programmes in Ghana to reach students in remote areas with no internet access.
- Providing laptops and mobile-based lessons for Indonesian students to facilitate virtual learning.
- WhatsApp-based student-teacher interactions to ensure uninterrupted communication and support.
- Home-delivered worksheets for children in areas without digital infrastructure to prevent learning disruptions.



In addition to these initiatives, Wilmar funded school buildings, schooling materials, scholarships for underprivileged students and other operational costs to improve educational access and quality for children of migrant workers within our operations. We also made a concerted effort to provide transportation and nutrition programmes to improve accessibility and support their growth.

SUPPORTING GROWTH AT HOME

As of 2023, Wilmar operates 154 crèches within our plantations globally, providing care for 4,120 children from newborns to children up to four years old. We have also established 13 schools in East Malaysia serving over 1,000 children, and upgraded 15 schools in Indonesia as well as six primary and secondary schools in Nigeria's Cross River State under our global school redevelopment programme.



Beyond education, our child protection efforts encompass health and overall well-being, ensuring that children in our communities grow up in safe and nurturing environments. Recognising the importance of early childhood health, we conduct regular check-ups and screenings in our crèches and schools to monitor children's growth and detect potential health concerns early. In Indonesia, our collaboration with the government also enables us to implement nutrition programmes, ensuring that children receive essential nutrients for healthy development.

In addition, Wilmar facilitates immunisation programmes to protect children from preventable diseases and runs maternal and child healthcare awareness campaigns to equip families with knowledge on hygiene, nutrition and early childhood care.

By addressing both education and health, we are taking a holistic approach to child protection and creating an environment where children can thrive academically, physically and socially.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND THEIR PERSONAL RIGHTS

To ensure that child protection is embedded within the broader community, our child safety programmes extend to training caregivers, teachers and plantation workers and staff.

Beyond formal education, Wilmar is committed to raising awareness among children about their personal safety and rights. We have developed targeted programmes to educate them on body autonomy, protection from exploitation and recognising abuse.

In Malaysia, we introduced the “[Good Touch, Bad Touch](#)” initiative (Sentuhan Selamat, Tidak Selamat) through Women Working Groups to educate children on sexual harassment awareness and personal safety. This programme was implemented across our plantations and schools, using songs, quizzes, storytelling and role-playing exercises to create an engaging and age-appropriate learning experience. This helped children recognise inappropriate behaviour and equip them with the knowledge to seek help when needed.



Besides that, we also introduced workshops on gender-based violence prevention and safe reporting mechanisms for children who may be experiencing harm. The programmes ensured that children in plantation communities not only understand their rights but also know where to seek support when necessary.

By fostering a culture of awareness and accountability, we are strengthening long-term safeguards to protect children from exploitation and harm.

EXPANDING CHILD PROTECTION EFFORTS

With the support of industry leaders, civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations, Wilmar looks to drive long-term transformation in the palm oil sector, ensuring that children's rights remain a top priority for the industry and beyond.

The path forward for us at Wilmar is clear: effective change happens when companies take responsibility beyond basic operations and drive collective action to protect children in the supply chain.

