

Title	Raising the Unheard Voices: Participation of the Immigrant Children & Young Persons in Oil Palm Smallholding Activities in Lahad Datu, Sabah
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Executive summary

Children should be given the opportunity to learn, play, grow healthy and enjoy their childhood, and should be protected from any form of exploitation including being subjected to child labour. In reality, however, children and young persons across different cultures, social strata and income levels are participating in various economic activities. Although national legislation often allows for access to employment under specified conditions, the reality is that some children and young persons can be found working "informally", and hence being deprived of their childhood and dignity, and harmful to their physical and mental development. The "local" perception of children and young persons' participation specifically in agricultural work is the subject of cultural and social differences. Many societies including in Malaysia perceive children working as "acceptable" - especially in the context of family farming. To a certain extent, children working alongside their parents are deemed to be an essential element of their socialization and "learning" process. There are approximately 60,000 Indonesian children and an unknown number of the Filipino and stateless children living across Sabah, many of whom are working "informally" and/or assisting their parents in oil palm related activities. They live in poverty (some in extreme poverty) with poor access to formal and quality education and national identity. This study aims to understand the nature, extent, root causes and consequences of immigrant children and young person undertaking oil palm smallholding activities in several rural villages located in Tambisan, Lahad Datu, Sabah. Tambisan is a small township in Lahad Datu, and the most eastern part of Malaysia, closer to several small islands of the Philippines. This study employs a human rights-based approach (HRBA) and a critical ethnography method in order to understand and reflect the voices of children and young persons in the oil palm smallholding in Sabah.

Publication: