

**kumacaya**  
Independent monitoring by local people

**Lessons from two years of bridging  
civil society and businesses**

**Bridging the trust gap**

[www.kumacaya.org](http://www.kumacaya.org)



# discover kumacaya



**A lack of mutual understanding and trust too often defines the relationship between civil society and private companies.** This is unfortunate, as companies with commitments to reduce their environmental and social impacts could benefit from civil society observations on the ground. At the same time, civil society could be more effective if their concerns were heard clearly by companies that could address them. **Seeing the powerful potential for change, Earthworm Foundation created a mechanism called Kumacaya that helps to bridge this trust gap.** “Kuma” comes from Bambara Mali, that means to talk and “caya” comes from Bahasa Indonesia, percaya means to trust.

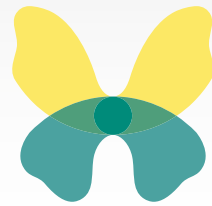
By supporting local civil society, “eyes on the ground”, **we enable constructive dialogue between the private sector and civil society organisations.** We aim to increase civil society’s potential to positively impact supply chains, while helping businesses proactively meet their commitments. This document details our journey of two years. It sums up our learnings, experiences and the gaps that we have identified working with civil society and companies. We will also share with you the next phase of development of the platform.

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The Earthworm logo features the word "Earthworm" in a bold, red, sans-serif font. To the left of the text is a stylized red icon of an earthworm.

Earthworm Foundation is a non-profit organisation built on values and driven by the desire to positively impact the relationship between people and nature.






**Kumacaya's vision is to amplify  
the voices of local people  
in providing reliable monitoring  
information about key sustainability  
issues in sourcing regions.**



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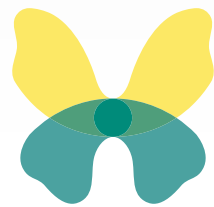
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# mission

Commodity-based agricultural and extractives companies and civil society organisations (CSOs) are often perceived to be antagonists. But this does not need to be the case. As multi-national companies increasingly commit to ridding their supply chains of deforestation and exploitation, they will need to collaborate with CSOs **to understand how those commitments are being implemented in remote sourcing areas.**

## mission



It is especially important for businesses **to hear from those connected to and living in areas where agricultural commodities are produced.** Not only does this give businesses a unique insight into local contexts and issues, but it also allows them to proactively address environmental and social issues within their supply chain.

Kumacaya recognises that local CSOs – who work at the frontier of forest loss, community and social issues – are often the first to notice and raise alarm about key sustainability issues. But their voices are often unheard. We believe that if we can amplify their voices, and connect them directly to global company actors, **we can improve company responsiveness and facilitate a greater sense of trust** between CSOs, companies, and the people who live and work in commodity sourcing areas.

Kumacaya believes that independent monitoring and verification conducted by local CSOs **can provide unique insight for companies on the delivery of their commitments where it counts most** – in places abutting remaining forests and in communities where farmers live and grow their crops. This information can help companies with often vast global supply chains **to choose how best to focus their efforts to bring positive change.**

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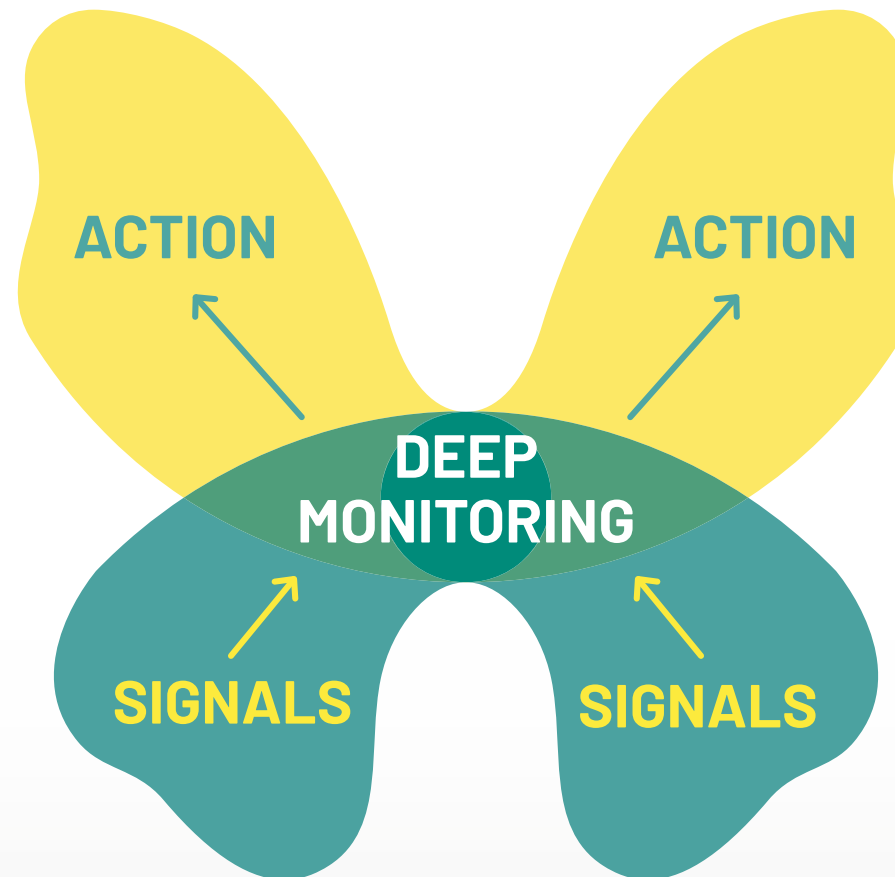




# *strategy*



We work to accomplish our mission through **two major data-gathering channels: signals and deep monitoring**. We then seek to **translate data into actionable recommendations** and transmit those recommendations to those who can implement them.







# SIGNALS

**Kumacaya has developed an online platform that allows CSOs and community members to anonymously report 'incidents' – good or bad – that they encounter on the ground.** Several criteria must be included for the signal to be taken into consideration. These include a description of the incident, the topic (*e.g. workers' rights, deforestation, etc.*), the related commodity (*e.g. palm oil, pulp and paper, etc.*), a GPS point, and evidence (*e.g. a picture or voice recording, timeframe or other documentation*). These data points enable Kumacaya **to track trends and understand where further investigation is needed.** We began developing the signalling platform in June 2019 as a way to empower civil society to guide the theme (*e.g. worker welfare, deforestation, land rights issues, water pollution, etc.*) of deep monitoring projects, which had previously been set by companies. To date, we have gathered more than 1,000 signals in the pilot area of Riau, Indonesia. The work is now poised to expand to East Kalimantan and Aceh provinces in Indonesia, with further expansion to Liberia, Ivory Coast and Ghana slated to start in 2020.

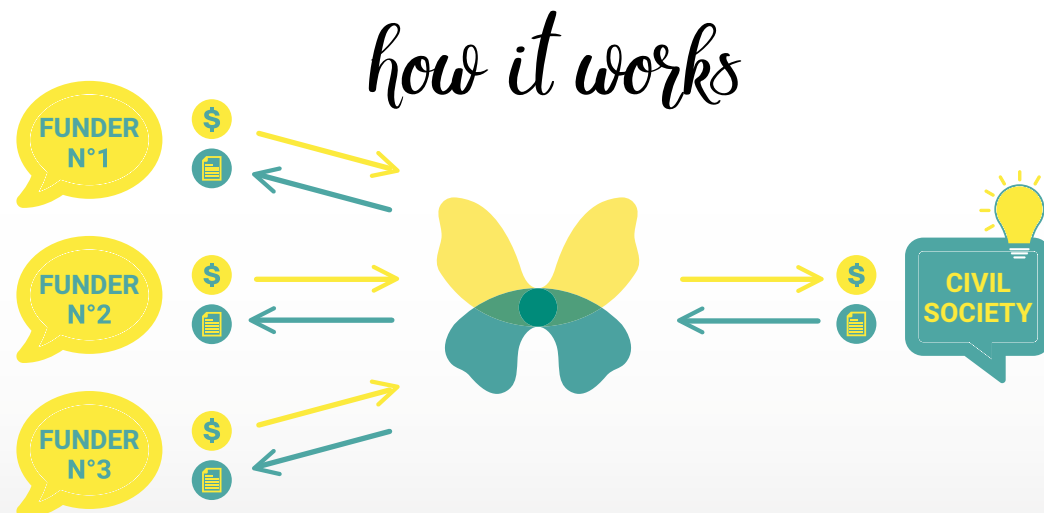
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# DEEP MONITORING

On basis of the signals, **Kumacaya launches calls for 'deep monitoring' projects.** In response to the calls, CSOs submit applications that are anonymised immediately. An independent panel of experts then selects the best of these anonymised proposals to receive Kumacaya funding. The funded CSO begins monitoring, **spending a minimum of 6 months working in the area, building trust with the locals, triangulating information and ground-truthing the signalling data, and analysing the drivers of any challenges.** CSOs submit monthly reporting, with a longer final report at the end containing suggestions for improving practices. During the reporting process, Kumacaya's field experts are available to help CSOs when needed to improve their reporting capacity and their ability to make actionable recommendations. Anonymised reports are submitted to investors who can then act on them.





strategy



# DEEP MONITORING



For the past three years, deep monitoring projects have been going on in three countries. So far, we have supported a total of **13 deep monitoring projects covering Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), worker welfare, and deforestation impacts on wildlife and communities.** Future deep monitoring topics will be based on data generated from the signalling platform in target regions.



**FREE, PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT (FPIC)**

**6 projects**  
(2 in Liberia, 4 in Indonesia)



**WORKER WELFARE**

**4 projects**  
(Indonesia)



**DEFORESTATION IMPACTS ON WILDLIFE AND COMMUNITIES**

**3 projects**  
(2 in Indonesia, 1 in Malaysia)

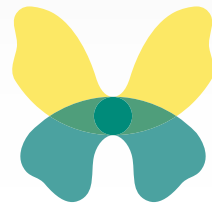


## ACTION

Looking ahead, **we envision supply chains where companies and civil society organisations work and take action together.** We know that improving this relationship can help unlock immense – and currently untapped – potential to protect and enhance people’s lives and the surrounding environment. To that end, **Kumacaya is working to operationalise and expand a network of international CSOs that can also respond to deep monitoring reports and seek to implement solutions,** as well as to form stronger linkages via the Earthworm Foundation to companies seeking to rid their supply chains of deforestation and exploitation. **The objective of this third pillar is to translate data into actionable recommendations** coming up from CSOs themselves or co-created with CSO with support of EF.

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# lessons learned

The path to launch the signalling platform and operationalise deep monitoring has not always been straightforward. But the last two years have allowed the Kumacaya team to glean key learnings for how to speed up and scale our impact going forward.

These include:

- **Lessons for working with local CSOs and communities,**
- **Lessons for working with international companies,**
- **Lessons for Kumacaya's structure and organisation.**

lessons learned...



## ... working with local CSOs and communities

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## Lessons learned working with local CSOs and communities



- **Local actors suffer from 'NGO fatigue' and are often not prepared to trust international non-governmental organisations (NGOs).** Commodity sourcing regions have, especially in recent years, been the focus of much attention from international agencies with varying priorities. Meanwhile, communities have not necessarily seen a benefit from interacting with international NGOs. As a result, many communities and local CSOs were initially skeptical of the value in partnering with Kumacaya. **Overcoming this initial distrust has been one of the more time-consuming necessities of the work,** and Kumacaya expects that we will continue needing to earn trust as we expand to new geographic regions.
- **The distrust between local NGOs and companies is particularly acute,** and runs deeper than expected. It was not unusual for local CSOs to raise concerns that receiving funding from companies – even through the anonymous mechanism of Kumacaya – **would be a corrupting influence on their independent reporting.** Some were even concerned that Kumacaya would change their findings before transmitting them to companies. Both of these were critical concerns to overcome.
- **Drinking a lot of coffee is important.** As with all work in differing cultural contexts, **the formation of local networks is critical.** The social element of this is non-negotiable – the efficacy of an hour of socialising was often more profound than a week of workshops. A day spent drinking coffee with villagers is thus not a luxury, but rather a necessity to lay the foundation upon which any effective project can be built. This is made all the more important due to the existing atmosphere of skepticism and mistrust. **It is essential therefore that project planning allow the time for Kumacaya field staff and any collaborating local CSOs to build social connections in these regions.** CSOs not building such time into their proposals are less likely to achieve their ambitious goals.

## Lessons learned working with local CSOs and communities



- The capacity of local CSOs is highly variable: Kumacaya field staff found it **necessary to do more capacity building than initially anticipated** with certain CSOs on areas such as report-writing and data collection, as well as contracting and invoicing systems. The CSOs with better proposal writing skills are often less local, which presents its own challenges, as shown below.
- **There's a difference between "local" and "local"**. In many cases, CSOs applying to deep monitoring calls and presenting themselves as 'local' were based in cities near sourcing areas. In Indonesia, this can present a real challenge, as even the closest cities can be 12-hour drives from sourcing areas, meaning the 'local' CSOs did not necessarily come with community ties (and established trust) necessary to run a Kumacaya project. Making contact with CSOs that are truly on-the-ground was a greater challenge than expected, and often those 'truly local' CSOs required a great deal more capacity building as they were not used to reporting requirements.
- Remoteness of sourcing areas means projects face **frequent delays due to lack of phone coverage, bikes or cars getting stuck in mud and unable to reach project sites, lack of data connection to transmit reports, and other challenges**. Space for the reality of working in rural areas with unreliable infrastructure needs to be built into project planning and deliverable dates.
- Need of a strong selection process in order to identify the right CSOs as we learn that **some are driven with different intention than ours** -such as money or finding dirt instead of finding solutions that help nature and people.
- Often CSOs collect data but have difficulty transforming that into solutions because they lack a global understanding of the issue. Therefore, **changes need to be made to the way data is collected to make it actionable**.



lessons learned...



## ... working with international companies

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## Lessons learned working with international companies



- Though many companies express a desire for good monitoring and verification systems, receipt of monitoring reports is not necessarily sufficient for them to take action. There are many reasons for this:
  - Companies may **not know if a deep monitoring report is indicative of broader regional trends or is just an isolated issue.** Kumacaya's singalling platform is intended to help map trend lines, so that we can indicate the scale of identified issues from deep monitoring.
  - While some growers feel that Kumacaya data collected by CSOs might open up issues that are beyond their capacity to address, brands feel that this information helps them push the local producers **to change their behavior and address the issues raised by international NGOs in campaigns against them.**
  - Companies may **not know what to do in response to data.** As a result, Kumacaya is now working with CSOs to issue recommendations in their final reports. These recommendations draw from the changes local communities are hoping to see in order to resolve identified issues.
  - **Issues that cross multiple companies' supply chains can cause collective problems.** Kumacaya is looking to forge deeper connections with other Earthworm Foundation transformative workstreams, for example those looking to do comprehensive land-use planning in biodiversity hotspots. These solutions can provide impacted companies with a way to channel Kumacaya findings into collaborative projects that provide positive results for communities.
  
- Companies may also **not prioritise action on certain issues.** To address this, Kumacaya is seeking to develop stronger relationships with those that guide company actions towards implementing 'No Deforestation and Exploitation' commitments, both within Earthworm Foundation and outside, to explore how Kumacaya data can better feed into prioritisation processes. Kumacaya is also seeking to expand its network of international civil society organisations that can provide additional incentives for action.



*lessons learned...*



## ... for Kumacaya's structure and organisation

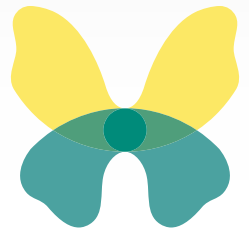
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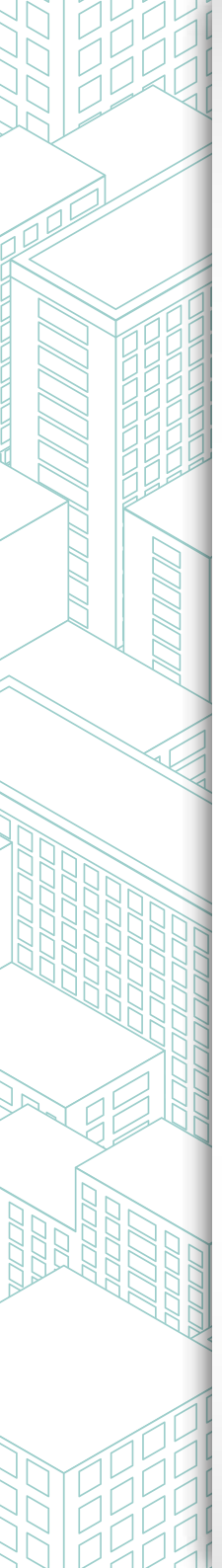
## Lessons learned for Kumacaya's structure and organisation



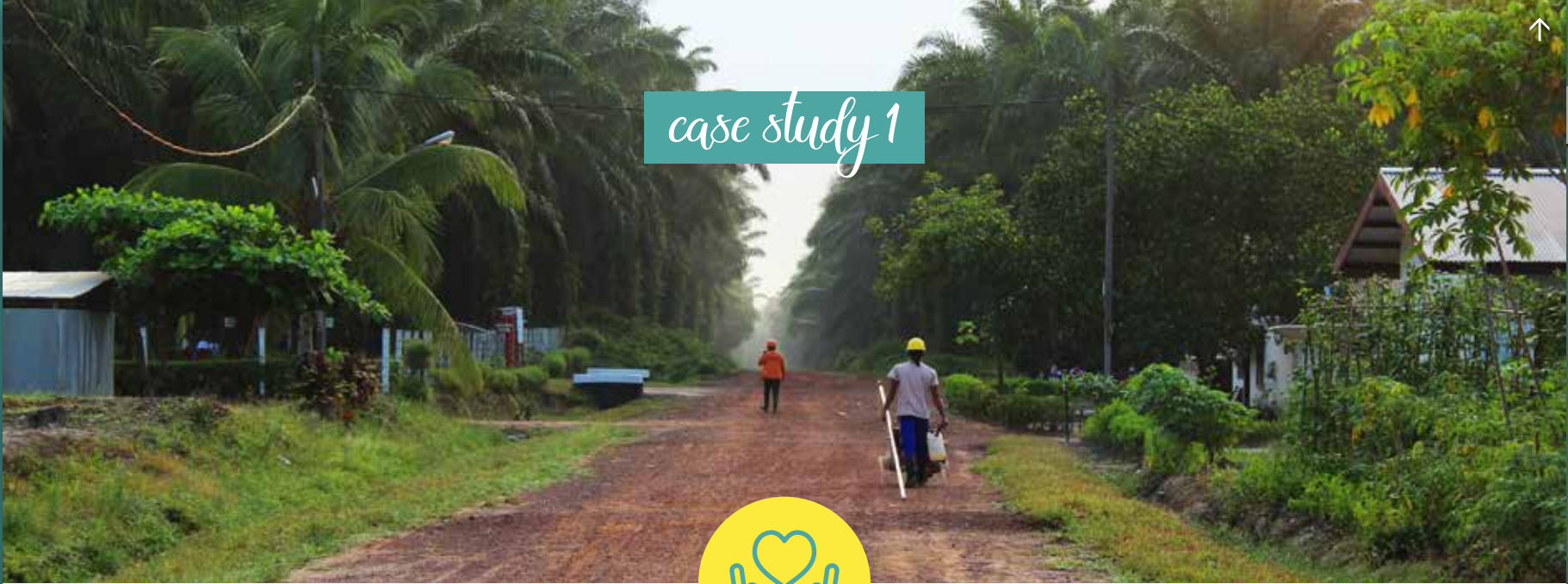
- The independent expert review process for choosing civil society partners for deep monitoring is working well and efficiently, and is enhanced by **a growing diversity of experts in Kumacaya's network**. We intend to continue building this network.
- **The expert review has become an important part of CSO capacity building.** While retaining the anonymity of the review panel, Kumacaya has been able to pass on feedback to selected CSOs; including, for example, suggestions for improved methodology or optimising data collection.
- Kumacaya's financing model for deep monitoring was the occasional cause of competition among local CSOs. The idea of project-specific financing that restarts – and is independently allocated – per deep monitoring project often did not fit well with the building of social ties and trust. CSOs occasionally expected that being selected for one monitoring project meant an ongoing commitment; or were resentful that they were not picked on a previous one. This has underlined **the importance of expectation management, and perhaps to seek additional ways to keep network support ongoing in between monitoring projects.**
- In some places, where local CSO activity is quite limited, Kumacaya's anonymity requirements **may not be sufficient to protect the confidentiality of local partners**. Kumacaya is exploring with other NGOs who have expertise in these areas what additional steps can be taken to protect local partners.
- Technology development has been quite a challenging process as Kumacaya is touching communities and local actors in very remote areas. **We have to constantly adapt our tools in order to touch as many people as possible and make the reporting easy.** This is why the signal platform is currently being reviewed and partnerships with technology organisations adept at building platforms that collate community level data are under study.



# case studies



## case study 1



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# Worker welfare in East Kalimantan, Indonesia

Worker welfare has been a topic of interest for several companies funding Kumacaya. But getting a full picture of the day-to-day lives of workers in plantations can be a challenge. The objective of the monitoring project was to **fully investigate both good and weak company practices at a mill identified by Earthworm Foundation teams as a 'high-impact supplier'**. This means that the company was actively deforesting and had worker

challenges that were either untouched by or non-compliant with 'No Deforestation and Exploitation' commitments. The company had already been suspended by several multinationals including Nestlé and the RSPO (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil), but a clearer picture of its activities was needed to identify opportunities for change.\*

**\*The Human Cost of Conflict Palm Oil**



Kumacaya reporting has yielded unprecedented **detail on the lived experiences of workers in plantations, and highlighted gaps between policy and practice.** For example, the company has committed to providing housing and/or barracks for workers. But the conditions in these barracks vary by estate, possibly indicating discrimination between employees on the basis of ethnic origin. The company does not provide clean water in any of barracks.

While the company offers health care at an on-site clinic, **employees are reluctant to use it as it often does not have the needed medicines.** Instead, employees must travel to the district health centre and pay for medicine themselves. Some workers have targets for the amount of fruits they must harvest and are meant to be given a premium for exceeding this target. However, whether or not this premium is awarded is said to be a matter of the company's financial capability – an “excuse [that] makes the workers unable to raise objections and keep[s] them working hard,” notes one Kumacaya report. Reports also noted **a lack of contracts for some workers, involuntary passport retention, and shortages on personal protective equipment.**

Monitoring is ongoing, and recommendations for change will be included in future reports. But having this kind of insight into the realities on this plantation **will enable actors like multinationals, the RSPO and others to demand specific transformations** – for example, payment of promised premiums or availability of clean water – as a condition of future engagement. That these reports are directly transmitted to would-be buyers from this kind of high-impact supplier creates a direct link between improving practices and continued business opportunities.



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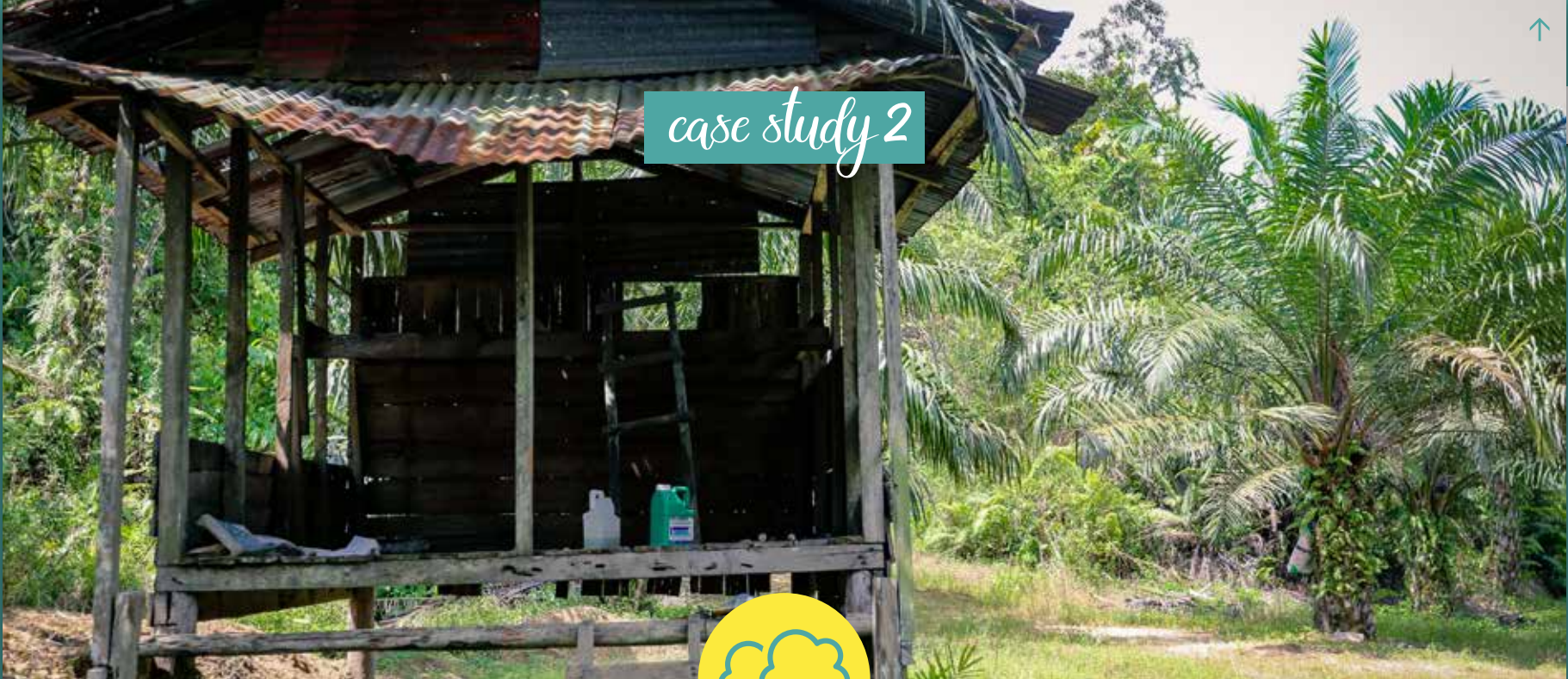
*“However, casual daily labourers are very vulnerable to the threat of dismissal, to an uncertain number of working days, and the inexistence of benefits beyond the basic salary” the local CSO wrote in the report.*

(Extract from the monitoring report)

Check out more stories about Kalimantan project here



## case study 2



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# Deforestation impacts on communities in Johor, Malaysia

This project was established after several months of socialisation with local actors including activists, students, consultants and local NGO's. The CSO conducted monitoring for six months in villages close to deforested areas identified by Earthworm Foundation's

satellite monitoring tool, Starling. **The objective of this monitoring was to identify the drivers of deforestation and its impact on community livelihoods, in particular the livelihoods of indigenous communities living nearby.**

[starling-verification.com](https://starling-verification.com)





The CSO mapped the communities located near deforested lands and then conducted a survey. Overall, **200 people from eight villages were interviewed to better understand their employment status, lifestyle, social environment and their concerns about pollution or other land degradation issues.** As with other Kumacaya projects, this study required a lot of trust-building with communities from several villages in Johor.



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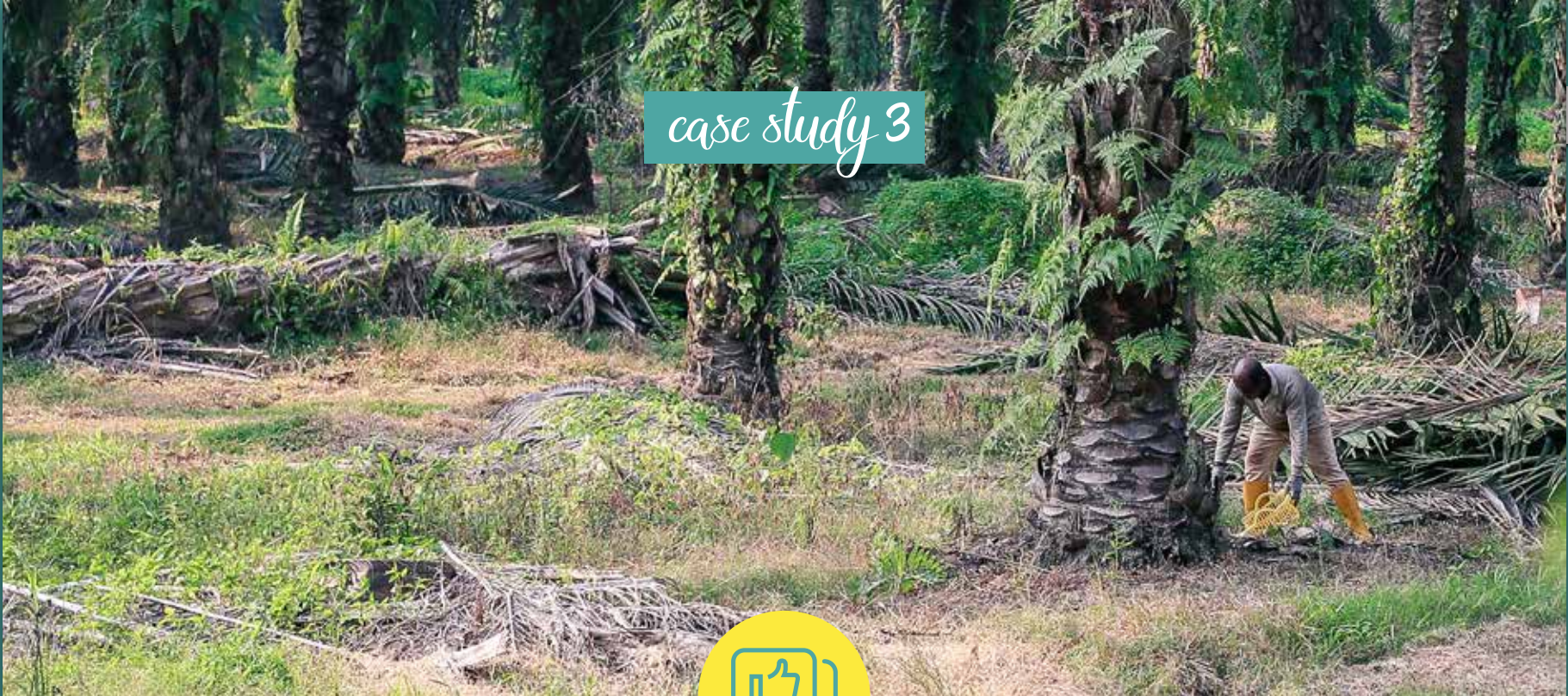
The monitoring project established that deforestation had been ongoing for the past 10 years. Communities had been provided eight hectares of land to pursue their livelihoods, but the increased cost of living drove villagers to expand their farms. The monitoring determined that this is the main cause of current deforestation, with government resettlement programmes and road development also having an impact. It was also found that illegal logging was happening, but this was caused by villagers planting oil palm, rubber and other agricultural crops.

The effects of large-scale deforestation driven by industries in the past were still being felt. **A major and unexpected finding of the report was that villagers recognised that large-scale deforestation in the past had affected their supply of clean air, and caused erosion and water pollution; all issues that need urgent action.**

*“Generally, all deforested locations as identified from the satellite data are agreed by the villagers as cleared forests. It was also informed by the villagers that the gazetted forest reserve of Johor National Park is also being logged illegally. In terms of the drivers of deforestation, small scale clearance is believed to be performed by the villagers for planting oil palm trees, fruit trees and for building houses. Large scale logging is also still taking place by some unknown sources.”*

(Extract from deep monitoring project)

## case study 3



©Courtesy of Earthworm Foundation.

# FPIC in Grand Kru & Maryland, Liberia

**This project began in response to tensions between several communities in Grand Kru and Maryland living and working along concessions granted to a major oil palm producer in the region.** Kumacaya engaged a local CSO to better understand the drivers of this tension; in particular how the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process to engage local communities had unfolded. The oil palm company had undertaken an FPIC

process voluntarily. **But Kumacaya findings showed that communities felt promises made during the FPIC process had not been honoured as the community had expected.** Promises included provisions that the company would undertake tangible development projects such as building roads, water pumps and schools, as well as offering employment to community members.

**The CSO further identified a series of pathways the company could take to improve relationships and noted that it is in their interest to do so.** This is because the communities have the right to invoke a Land Rights Law and seek renegotiation of the concessions granted if they continue to be dissatisfied.

In a series of recommendations for the company, **the CSO laid out a plan for the company to improve the situation** by engaging community representatives regularly, working on their public outreach to the communities,

and following through on development projects that are important to communities.

**This information has been conveyed to the company, which has shown willingness to listen. In this way, Kumacaya was able to act as a bridge.** Its reporting will hopefully ease tension in this area and pave the way towards a more cooperative and mutually beneficial future for both the communities and the company.

©Courtesy of Earthworm Foundation.



*“FPIC processes were initiated in both Maryland and Grand Kru Counties, but some aspects of the FPIC processes are weak in their implementation. However, the expressed willingness of the affected communities and agribusiness companies to address the weaknesses provide opportunity for improvement.”*

(Quote from local CSO contracted in 2019)

# what's next?

A core focus of Kumacaya's work is building trust with local partners and the creation of a solid network to monitor supply chains. **Kumacaya is growing everyday, and more and more civil society actors now count on us to help share their monitoring data up and down the supply chain.**

The signal platform is growing and we have more and more people sharing data. The first signal pilot in Riau has helped us prove that the signals concept works. **We are now targeting civil society groups in other countries; expanding our signal projects to other parts of Indonesia, as well as Liberia, Ghana, and the Ivory Coast.** These signal projects will help guide the development of deep monitoring projects that specifically investigate issues highlighted in the data from the signals.

**We also have good interactions with the companies whose impacts are being monitored.** We are helping them trace the information and CSO recommendations back through their supply chain to align company

operations with good NDPE (No Deforestation, Peat and Exploitation) practices. This information is being used to work with suppliers and CSOs to find solutions collectively and change practices in the supply chain.

**In the next phase, we are looking forward to engage more company and donor support for both signal and deep monitoring projects, and encourage companies to continue listening to issues being raised by civil society monitors working on the ground. We are also developing capacity building efforts and new technologies to further improve monitoring.**

## ***The Kumacaya team.***

*"The power of Kumacaya is not in the technology, but rather the capacity to engage people."*

(Charlotte Goubin)



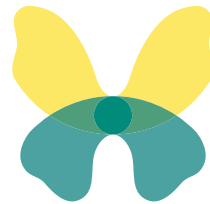
Check out our projects at:

[www.kumacaya.org](http://www.kumacaya.org)



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