

## Humans & Wildlife in the Sabah Landscape:

### From Conflict to Coexistence via community-based strategies

#### **Problem :**

The Malaysian State of Sabah is one of the biggest palm oil sourcing regions in the world, and is also home to the endangered **Bornean Pygmy elephant**. Conversion of the local ecosystem to **large-scale agriculture** in the last decades contributed to the elephants' habitat loss and fragmentation. Today, only an estimated 2,000 Bornean Pygmy elephants remain in the wild, mostly found in Sabah. The small remaining habitat area for elephants results in Human – Elephant Conflict (HEC), which sees humans compete with elephants over limited resources and the animals foraging and migrating through smallholder and company estates, therefore damaging crops. The **lack of coordinated actions** has exacerbated elephant extinction risks, smallholders' economic vulnerability, and businesses' operational challenges.

#### **Proposed solution:**

At Earthworm, we developed the [Landscape Programme](#) to complement our existing projects on key topics such as building multi-stakeholder governance, restoring ecosystems, upgrading farming, and empowering workers, households, and communities. In our **Landscapes**, we collaborate to regenerate nature and improve people's lives, creating replicable cases of **holistic change**.

We believe that **empowering local communities to lead [mitigation strategies](#)** for Human Elephant Conflict (HEC) in the Sabah Landscape is a **key component in conserving wildlife and forest in the landscape**. In Sabah, we established the **7Team**, a group of citizens from the HEC-affected communities who volunteered to monitor the friction between humans and elephants and implement mitigation actions such as integrated fencings, wildlife corridors, and coordinated patrolling. Our core idea is to transform the 7Team into an **in-person and virtual peer-to-peer platform** where smallholders and businesses can share knowledge on strategies for coexistence with wildlife. The 7Team can therefore represent a **hub for participatory/coordinated actions**.

#### **What would make your innovation successful and how would you measure this:**

Our innovation will build upon Earthworm's permanent **field presence** in the Sabah Landscape, proven capacity to formally engage with key global and local companies, and **strategy for upscaling**. We will measure the impact of this innovation against our **proprietary Global Impact Framework**. To collect, manage, store, and analyze land and resource data we will use state-of-the-art tracking platforms.

#### **Why should this innovation receive a place in the Innovation Fair at the Sustainable Palm Oil Dialogue:**

Our innovation showcases the possibility of **harmonizing** sustainable economic development in a palm oil sourcing region, forest conservation, human-wildlife coexistence, and resilient livelihoods for communities, anchored in a farmer-centric landscape model.