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## **Allegations of children rights and human rights violations by British American Tobacco**

British American Tobacco has set their goals to be the leading company in the industry, knowing that, they have to be able to select and apply the best business strategies. But being one of the leading tobacco firms in the UK, British American Tobacco is known to purchase tobacco from Indonesia, where they can not guarantee that the tobacco is not made from child labor.

Although that every tobacco firms in the world have the responsibility to monitor and investigate on how their tobacco is harvested in their farms, they still can not control on the actual process applied in the farming. According to independent.co.uk, Human Rights Watch have conducted research in 2014 and 2015 ini tobacco farming in Indonesia where they interviewed more than 100 children under 18 who work there. These children are risking their health and wellness working harvesting tobacco by hand, said the Human Rights Watch. Many of these children have in fact suffered from nausea and vomiting due to being around tobacco so much. Children are known to work through long hours in these farms, without even wearing any protective garments while handling these tobacco. These surely sound terrible, especially when it is the company's responsibilities to make sure that no child under the age of 18 work in direct with tobacco.

British American Tobacco is one of the multinational companies that have committed to the International Labour Organisations (ILO) right conventions. These companies in the conventions have agreed that the minimum age for children to work is 15 years old, whereas the minimum age for the hazardous work is 18 years old. Yet they still can not guarantee, because they claim to cannot be "everywhere at once". British American Tobacco mentioned that their subsidiary, Bentoel, takes the child labour issue very seriously. "We do not employ children in any of our operations worldwide and make it clear to all of our contracted farmers and suppliers that exploitative child labour will not be tolerated. In Indonesia, however, children often participate in agriculture to help their families, and to learn farming methods and skills from their elders" BAT said. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) also knows that working while the children are in school can be a normal part of growing up in poor communities, because of the rural environment they are in.

British American Tobacco is said to be working with the Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco growing foundation (ECLT) to tackle extreme child labour in these areas in Indonesia. Not only in Indonesia, British American Tobacco has also vowed back in 2016 to investigate some of its farms located in Bangladesh after Swedwatch, a Swedish campaign group uncovered the truth that the farms use could workers to grow and process tobacco, carrying loads, cutting the

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stems, and cure the tobacco. These children are reportedly being pulled out of school to work in the farm for as long as 16 hours a day. These working activities surely grows out the risk of health for these children, because they are very much exposed to tobacco plants, the dust, and the smoke. Group Head of Corporate Affairs at British American Tobacco, Simon Cleverly has told that the company has in fact investigated the report's findings but found no evidence of children rights and human rights violations. He also claimed the British American Tobacco were consistent with the findings of these studies held by themselves to look into tobacco growing and farming process and found that the company has a positive impact on the socio-economic area in Bangladesh.

Up until now, British American Tobacco is still very much sure that they have not done anything wrong in the process of harvesting their tobacco in these countries, and that they believe that they have mutual benefits with the countries they have been working with for years.

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