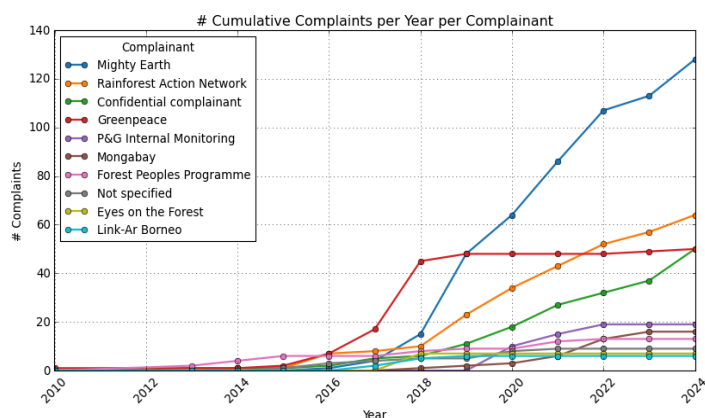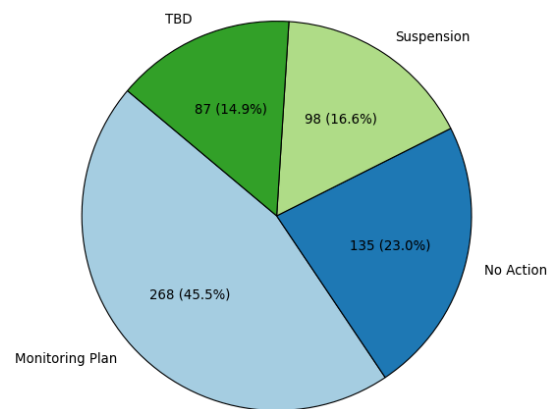The production of palm oil has significant environmental and social consequences, including deforestation, land dispute conflicts, and human labor exploitation. While environmental issues are well-documented, human rights violations often go unnoticed. Inclusive Development International and the University of Chicago's Data Science Institute aim to tackle this by integrating human rights violations into PalmWatch, a web tool tracking palm oil grievances.

The team enhanced the data extraction pipeline from 9 grievance sources, ensuring streamlined data curation and enhanced consistency for the eventual integration to the PalmWatch tool. The pipeline generates both location-specific and consolidated grievance CSV files for all sources. This was done by integrating additional metadata, leveraging Large Language Models (LLMs) to classify grievance types and extract key details, and also ensuring grievances were accurately categorized by country, region, and subregion.

From the 9 sources, 592 total grievances were compiled, with 324 entries from Indonesia, followed by Malaysia at 74. The team found sharp increases in filed grievance reports (Figure 1), with 188 of these cases relating to human and labor rights violations. Alarmingly, it was found that suppliers only remedied 16.6% of all cases (Figure 2), underscoring PalmWatch's role in demanding corporate accountability in palm oil production practices.

Figure 1. Cumulative number of grievance reports by year, grouped by reporting organization.

Figure 2. The outcome of grievance cases across 592 total reports.