

## Socfin’s response to the Open letter to Socfin dated 29th April:

*“We demand justice and safety for workers on Socfin’s rubber/oil palm plantations during the Covid-19 pandemic”*



Hand washing point, Safacam, Cameroon

Socfin received by e-mail from Synaparcam on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2020 a letter with subject above; this letter is allegedly from a group of NGOs as mentioned on page 3 of that letter, but with no evidence that these NGOs have been involved in its writing or are supporting it (there is no name of any representative and no signature).

The letter says: “we hear worrying reports from Socfin’s various plantations from both workers and affected communities” with reference to the Covid19 pandemic.

We would like to inform that responsible proactive measures have been taken by all Socfin subsidiaries to mitigate the potential negative impacts on the health of the workers, their dependents, and the local communities.

**Socfin has followed – and sometimes was ahead of – the guidelines formulated by the respective governments.**



Hand washing point, Safacam, Cameroon



50 million fCFA contribution to Cameroon funds to fight Covid-19



Donation of sanitary kits to neighboring villages, SOGB, Côte d'Ivoire

**Here is below the non-exhaustive list of the measures taken in our plantations:**

- Covid19 response team put in place;
- Restriction of movement and strict control of people and vehicles entering and leaving the operating sites;
- Prevention campaigns covering workers, their dependents, visitors, local communities, sometimes using local radios to broadcast sensitization programs;
- Training of staff, workers and third parties on safety measures;
- Purchases of necessary equipment (buckets, soap, hand sanitizers, facemasks...);
- Donation of equipment to local communities;
- Donation of equipment or financial support to governmental authorities;
- Installation of hand washing facilities to cover all offices and operations;
- Disinfection of buildings, vehicles, marketplaces;
- Closing of schools, entertainment centers, sporting activities;
- Dedicated equipment for the medical centers and specific training for medical staff to handle suspected cases;
- Contact tracing and isolation procedures for suspected cases;
- Purchase of gun thermometer to check temperatures of staff, workers, visitors;
- Purchase of food items in anticipation of possible price increase or food shortage;
- Social distancing at work;
- Social distancing in workers transport by reducing seating capacity, together with other safety measures such as wearing of masks and washing of hands;
- Help given to local authorities through donation of safety equipment, food items or use of company facilities;



*Relief materials donated to members of Ofunama Community, Okomu, Nigeria*



*Social distances between workers, LAC, Liberia*



*Medical check-up with authorities after Khmer New Year, Cambodia*



## Media review

National March 27, 2020

### Socfin Cambodia donates essential medical supplies to help combat COVID-19

Som Kanika / Khmer Times / Share: f t o



Dr Bun Sour receives thermometers from the staff of Socfin. Supplied

### Lutte contre le Covid-19 : une autre entreprise citoyenne s'engage

Par Hugues Marcel TCHOUA – 23 Avril 2020 14:00 – 0 Likes



### Côte d'Ivoire – AIP / Covid 19 : Des kits sanitaires offerts aux populations des villages de Grand Béréby

ABIDJAN © 28/04/2020 à 12:33



- March 27, 2020: « Socfin Cambodia donates essential medical supplies to help combat Covid-19 »  
<https://www.khmertimeskh.com/706303/socfin-cambodia-donates-essential-medical-supplies-to-help-combat-covid-19/>
- April 23, 2020: « Le groupe Socfin offre 50 millions de FCFA pour lutter contre le Covid-19 »  
<https://ecomatin.net/le-groupe-socfin-offre-50-millions-de-fcfa-pour-lutter-contre-le-covid-19/>
- April 23, 2020: « Lutte contre le Covid-19 : une autre entreprise citoyenne s'engage »  
<https://www.cameroon-tribune.cm/article.html/32022/fr.html/lutte-contre-le-covid-19-une-autre-entreprise-citoyenne-sengage>
- April 28, 2020: « Côte d'Ivoire - AIP / Covid 19 : Des kits sanitaires offerts aux populations des villages de Grand Béréby »  
<https://aip.ci/cote-divoire-aip-covid-19-des-kits-sanitaires-offerts-aux-populations-des-villages-de-grand-bereby/>
- April 28, 2020: "Okomu Oil Palm donates food items to 21 communities in Edo"  
<https://www.sunnewsonline.com/covid-19-okomu-oil-palm-donates-food-items-to-21-communities-in-edo/>
- April 29, 2020: "Socfin & Kissy Industry Boost COVID-19 Fight"  
<https://www.globaltimes-sl.com/socfin-kissy-industry-boost-covid-19-fight/>
- May 4, 2020: "Kissy Industry & Socfin donate to EOC"  
<https://sierraexpressmedia.com/?p=93058>

### Concerning the specific accusations:

- Sierra Leone: the SAC management team is always in liaison with the governmental authorities with respect to measures taken to limit the spread of the Covid19 and will always act in its operations according to agreed governmental actions. SAC is actually helping the government to control the movement of people between chiefdoms by putting in place checkpoints. One of the particularities of SAC is that since workers are housed either in the Company villages or the community villages within the concession, there is no need to transport workers from home to work and back; the only exceptions are for the chemical weeders who are transported with their PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) and spraying equipment to the field in controlled numbers and the mill workers who are transported by bus from the Company village; special safety measures have been taken for these transports.
- Cameroon: Socapalm and Safacam fully respect the local labor legislation; they also ensure that the contractors they employ do the same with their employees and in case of any identified non-compliance, corrective action is immediately taken as this was done recently when a contractor made an administrative error regarding the payment of some of his workers whose contract had been stopped; Socapalm and Safacam have taken special measures concerning the transport of workers in dedicated transport by reducing the seating capacity of each vehicle; as for all Socfin businesses they control very strictly the movement of people entering or leaving the plantations.
- Liberia: the decision taken to close down SRC is purely related to the economic circumstances that have prevailed for the last 5 years with a very low rubber price, compounded by the fall in rubber demand volume from the tire makers companies in the last few months; all workers impacted by the closure of the operations have been treated in full respect of the legislation, according to the Decent Work Act of Liberia and in full agreement with the local unions and local authorities; it is important to note that contrary to what the open letter suggest, no employee was made redundant during the Ebola crisis in 2014/2015; the decision to stop the tapping activities for the year 2016 is related to the economic circumstances and the very low rubber price prevailing at that time. At LAC plantation people are still working as there is no governmental measure stopping agricultural businesses to operate.
- Ghana: as with all other Socfin operating businesses, PSG has put in place a set of measures which include social distancing; the transport of workers with dedicated vehicles has been adapted to ensure social distancing by reducing the seating capacity with as a consequence a related increase in the daily number of vehicles' trips; hand washing and sanitizers have been provided at all necessary points in the Company.

It is therefore surprising to read the allegations contained in the open letter which reflects a lack of knowledge of what happens on the ground. While the current context doesn't help NGOs to verify on site the measures taken, Socfin welcome NGOs to check the information they receive by contacting the management of the respective Socfin subsidiaries.

The appendix shows some of the actions the Socfin subsidiaries have taken in relation to the Covid19.

## Appendix: actions taken by our subsidiaries (non-exhaustive)

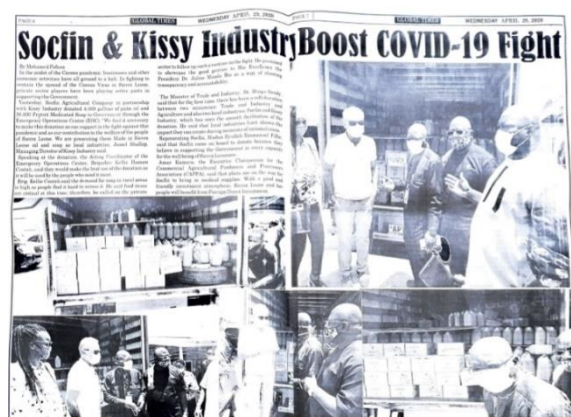
→ Sierra Leone:



SAC morning musters in respect with social distances



Banners placed at workshops & operations sites by SAC in collaboration with the Ministry of Health



Extract from Global Times Newspaper in Sierra Leone



→ Cameroun:



Hand washing point and awareness campaign



Donation of hand washing point at Socapalm



50 million fCFA contribution to Cameroon funds to fight Covid-19



→ Liberia:



*LAC Hospital gate with thermometer*



*Hand washing point at LAC*



*LAC hospital quarantine center*



*Social distances between workers*



*Distribution to local communities of 300 faucet buckets and other items*



→ Côte d'Ivoire:



*Awareness and prevention campaigns at SOGB*



→ Nigeria:



*Covid-19 donations from Okomu*



*Purchased thermometers to screen workers and visitors*



*Relief materials donated to members of Ofunama Community*



*School disinfecting*



*Awareness campaign*



→ Cambodia:



Visit by UNICEF and Health Department of Socfin Cambodia



Awareness information at the office



Awareness meetings in villages