Socfin Group committed to Responsible Management Policy in March 2017 and became Earthworm Foundation (EF) member in April 2017. The EF-Socfin partnership involves conducting visits to Socfin Group's operations in Africa to support the implementation of the Group's Responsible Management Policy (RMP).

Socfin Group has operations in eight countries in Africa: São Tomé-et-Príncipe, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Cameroon & Côte d'Ivoire.

Through this partnership, EF started field visits in 2017 in Cameroon and Ghana with follow up action and visits in 2019.

In 2019 EF conducted series of visits and follow-ups in four countries: Cameroon, Liberia, Ghana & DR Congo.
Global numbers for 2019

**Four countries**
Engaging Socfin team of Four countries Cameroon, Ghana, Liberia, DR Congo.

**11 plantations & 11 mills**
Engaging team of 11 plantations and 11 mills and today all of them have action plan in place for the implementation of Socfin Responsible Management Policy.

**5 CSE Students**
5 students trained as Social Practitioner in our Centre of Social Excellence and all of them have been hired by Socfin (2 in Cameroon, 1 Ghana, 1 Sierra Leone, 1 in DR Congo) to strengthen the sustainability team.

**Human Rights Impact**
Socfin reported 189 worker’s accommodation constructed in 2019 and 174 renovated houses in the 4 countries. Gender committees have been established across the entire operation. Liberia teams have been trained on FPIC and contractors trained in Socapalm and Safacam.

**Forests & HCV**
Socfin has today reported 10'188 ha of protected areas (High Conservation Values) under its management in Ghana, Liberia and DR Congo. Global protected area across all plantations: 18’667.44 ha. Total global planted area: 192’859 ha.
EF has supported the implementation of Socfin Group policy for responsible management through assessment visits or follow up visits, workshops and training, and

- Strengthen the sustainability team with Social Practitioners trained by the Centre of Social Excellence
- Carry out a self-assessment questionnaire based on Socfin Group policy for responsible management with all the subsidiaries in order to:
  - Share their understanding of RMP,
  - Identify gaps in terms of implementation of the RMP,
  - Develop action plans to address priority gaps.

**11 Plantations & 11 Mills visited**

Support the implementation of the Responsible Management Policy (RMP) in plantations and mills

**People - Workers**

Impact through the implementation of the Responsible Management Policy on 7134 Permanent workers and 8165 Casual workers working for Socfin’s operations visited by EF in 2019

**Chain Reaction**

Support Socapalm in the sites of Edéa and Kienke to continue identifying the boundaries of their concessions including the encroachments (road construction, small farmers, etc.). This approach was later scaled up by Socapalm in all the sites and the process is still ongoing.
A follow-up visit of 5 days was done in September 2019 in Socapalm Mbambou and Mbongo and another follow up of 4 days was done in October 2019 in Socapalm Dibombari. During those visits, EF had three meetings with Synaparcam one in Mbambou, one in Mbongo and one in Dibombari. EF also had a meeting with RADD based in Yaoundé. The objectives of those meetings were to get in touch with the representatives of Synaparcam and RADD, listen to them, talk to them about the grievance mechanism, discuss with them on how to engage them in a transparent and constructive dialogue with Socapalm.

A workshop was done with 17 contractor companies in September 2019 on the Responsible management policy.

After 4 months of training from September 2018 to December 2018, the CSE trainee was deployed into Socapalm for 5 months internship. A mid-term follow up visit was done in April 2019 to review progress made and coach the CSE trainee to better handle professional challenges. The oral defense was successfully conducted by the trainee in December 2019.
Key Achievements

- Waste sorting and compost systems are in place in most of the plantation visited.
- Socapalm has established a partnership with the Catholic University for the study the lagoon system to improve effluent management.
- HCV assessment to identify forest and areas for conservation over 13'339 ha has started and due for completion in 2020.
- Identification of cornerstone on different concessions boundaries is ongoing.
- Work has started with regards to both the identification and enhancement of cornerstone in areas on the concession where unclear.
- Workplace accident insurance is being extended to subcontractor workers.
- Employee transportation conditions have improved with the provision of new trucks by the service providers, separation of workers and tools during transport.
- No discrimination/harassment/abuse policies are in place and communicated in all the sites.
- Gender committees have been established across the entire operations.
- There is an ongoing process for renewal and renovation of worker’s accommodation.
- All the sites visited have log book and grievance management procedure in place.
- The construction of washing facilities and changing room for workers in charge of chemicals application is ongoing.
• A follow-up visit of 3 days was done in July 2019 in Safacam. During that visit, EF had workshop with 25 contractors companies on Responsible management policy.
• A training was done in July 2019 by EF on the management of chemicals.
• After 4 months of theoretical training from September 2018 to December 2018, the CSE trainee was sent in Safacam for internship during 5 months. A Mid-term follow up visit was done in April 2019 to coach and appreciate the professional progress made by the CSE trainee. The trainee oral defense was successfully done in December 2019.
Key Achievements

• The HCV assessment on 17’690 ha is ongoing and due for completion in 2020.
• Employee transportation conditions has been improved with the provision of new trucks by the service providers, separation of workers and tools during transport.
• No discrimination/harassment/abuse policies are in place and communicated.
• Gender committee is in place.
• There is an ongoing process for renewal and renovation of worker’s accommodation.
• A part-time HR Manager has been hired to strengthen the Human Resource department.
• Internal and external grievance procedures and recording systems are available.
• There is an engagement with the National Mapping Institute to provide maps showing the administrative boundaries of division and sub-division.
• The construction of a washing facilities and changing room for workers in charge of chemicals application is ongoing.
Key Challenges to address in Cameroon

- As Socfin progresses in its transformation journey, it remains key to identify and resource key positions to drive changes on the ground. Although they have strengthened global coordinating roles like a clear Head of Sustainability, there still remains a need to strengthen the in-country resources to drive the practices to meet their Responsible Management Policy.
- Although the company has been engaging local civil society, the dynamic of the dialogue on both sides, between company and civil society, are too reactive. There is a need for more open and proactive dialogues, from all parties, regarding the remaining challenges and how best to address these.
- The process of formalizing the concession boundaries in Socapalm is progressing and needs to be finalized in partnership with local authorities and communities as soon as possible.
- There is a need to improve the governance of the grievance management mechanism in Socapalm (Most of the grievances are still handled at the plantation level). Doing so will help foster better coordination of actions at the local and global level within the Company.
The first visit was done in LAC & SRC in April 2019 with the following objectives:

1. Understand the organization and the system in place (operations, HR management, stakeholders’ engagement…)
2. Identify and understand the main challenges (internal and external)
3. Assess the level of implementation of Socfin Group policy for responsible management
4. Investigate on Bread For All allegations
5. Identify opportunities for improvement and develop an action plan

In October 2019 EF conducted a follow-up visit in LAC & SRC with the following objectives:

1. Review progress on key priorities and recommendations
2. Review grievance mechanism
3. Provide orientation on participatory mapping and do a collaborative strategic analysis of how that tool could be used and where

Socfin key activities in Liberia/SRC & LAC

SRC ID: 4’400 ha planted – 736 direct and indirect employees
LAC ID: 12’900 ha planted – 4’292 direct & indirect employees
Key Achievements

- The investigation made by EF on the Bread For All (BFA) report highlighted a series of inaccurate claims made by BFA.

- Internal and external grievance procedures have been developed.

- The LAC sustainability team has developed a proactive approach to create a link with the communities inside and outside the concession boundaries.

- LAC has recruited a sustainability and communications Lead.

- LAC & SRC are aware of the challenges with family labor and the need to quantify and strategize the approach to be implemented and insure mitigation measures are in place.

- LAC has started to identify and fence graves and cemeteries located inside plantations.

Socfin key achievements in Liberia/SRC & LAC
Key Challenges to address in Liberia

- The company acknowledges challenges associated with how it engages contract workers and further efforts are required to ensure consistencies. In particular, the company must ensure that work documents, in-work benefit, and working conditions requirements are also met for the indirect workforce.

- Inaccuracies in compensation need to be addressed to ensure consistencies of approach.

- To ensure systematic monitoring of the age of workers by contractors and the provisions of safe working conditions where families are living on or near the concession.
Key Activities

An assessment was conducted in Brabanta in November 2019, and an action plan was developed for follow-up with the objective of reviewing the action plan’s implementation and to support the plantation management on specific topics.

As the assessment and action plan was conducted at the end of the year we will be reporting achievements in 2020.
Key Activities and Achievements

In 2019 EF conducted two visits at PSG with the objective to support the establishment of a Stakeholder platform for the ICLUP (Integrated Conservation Land Use Plan):

• The organization of the Stakeholder meeting for the ICLUP (Integrated Conservation Land Use Plan)
  o The first meeting took place in August 2019 with more than 6 companies coming from the mining, agri and wood sectors. One of the keys objectives of that meeting were to define the roadmap of the ICLUP.
  o In November 2019, the second meeting took place in order to agree on the roadmap and prepare the structure of the steering committee.

• During these meetings, all the companies agreed on the fact that they are facing tremendous challenges related to encroachment and illegal activities both in the areas under the concession agreement and in the protected areas neighboring the plantations. Areas in the concession and in the surrounding protected areas are being actively patrolled by PSG, however patches of forest are still being encroached by groups of people either from the surrounding area or region. Although these are typically more small scale in the individual events they combine to create a more significant challenge that faces much of Ghana and in fact common across much of West Africa. The long term solutions reside in finding strong value propositions with both the local authorities and communities. PSG has an important role to play in working on longer term solutions in the landscape.
Key Messages

Key challenges to address in Ghana

- Illegal logging and mining remains a challenging situation in Ghana generally, and cannot be solved by the company alone. The company can however continue to play an active role in developing a wider set of solutions and is encouraged to continue on the path to get the right people together and work collaboratively to foster solutions.

- PSG should continue to work on its community engagement as it seeks solutions for protection of forest as well as improving the relationship with those communities where tensions remain.
Key Messages

Key successes

• The investment made by the Socfin Group for the training of five social practitioners in our Centre of Social Excellence. Today all of them have been hired by Socfin to strengthen the sustainability team.
• Good progress on houses construction and renovation
• Organization of stakeholders meeting for the ICLUP in Ghana
• Socfin has improved its responsiveness to challenges raised by Civil Society with reports published on their Dashboard answering a number of challenges raised.
• Socfin has committed to achieving RSPO certification to all its palm oil operations and is making progress towards the audits.
• Publishing of the Supplier Code of Ethics

Global challenges

• Continue efforts to ensure the local level aligns operations with the Socfin Responsible Management Policy.
• The company has developed improved processes for Free Prior & Informed Consent (FPIC) and it should strengthen the application in practice of these principles in its engagement with communities.
• Focus on the management plans and the implementation of these in practice to ensure the protection of HCVs identified through the studies completed.
Key Messages

Communities' rights and stakeholders engagement
• Continue strengthening and cascading a formalized community engagement strategy that contains relevant SOPs and a clear implementation plan including the approach under which the company engages both Chiefs and Administration as well as the wider community.
• Subsidiaries report publicly on key challenges, plans to address these and update on progress. This would be a significant step by the company and ensure that global reporting is matched with country specific reporting.
• It remains critical for Socfin to apply a fact based response to criticism. One that diagnoses the issues and facts raised and puts forward clear actions to address core challenges as well as sharing proactive updates on progress.

Contractors
• To ensure the External grievances procedure in place is communicated effectively to inform subcontracted workers of the mechanism and how to lodge any concern they may have.

Worker Housing
• Worker’s living conditions are being improved but further action is necessary including improved housing, improved access to drinkable water and electricity.

Supply chain
• To ensure suppliers comply with Socfin Responsible Management Policy and the Supplier Code of Ethics.
Key Messages

Global challenges

Stakeholders and communities engagement to be widened beyond official and traditional channels (pictures: CSE graduation ceremony Brabanta, above. Community meeting, SRC, bottom)

Following finalization of HCV studies, the HCV management plans will have to be implemented with communities engagement (picture: SAC above, Socapalm bottom)
Workers houses have been renovated in several projects and work continues. (Here above Brabanta)

Transport of workers requires improvement (LAC above) as it has already been implemented in other operations (Safacam below)
Socfin has made clear progress in 2019 with examples like gender committees organized across the entire operations, strong engagement in setting up the ICLUP team at PSG, the improvement of housing at Socapalm and Safacam.

However, Socfin still has a number of challenges that require ongoing and accelerated efforts to bring lasting changes. Although the path ahead is neither linear or simple, we remain committed to the partnership and the changes we can achieve by working together.