

## **Heavy rain causes overflow of POME from OPUL's Bbeta Mill**

On Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2020, the effluent ponds of Bbeta Mill, of Oil Palm Uganda Limited (OPUL)<sup>1</sup>, overflowed due to uncharacteristic heavy rain locally, amounting to 310 mm in the first week of May. This amount of rainfall represents what is normally 20% of mean annual rainfall in the Kalangala district, where the mean monthly rainfall is usually 140 mm<sup>2</sup>.

The overflow of palm oil mill effluent (POME) along with the heavy rain caused some localized flooding in the surrounding plantation estate, and also crossed into the neighbouring community. The POME and rain runoff has caused damage to OPUL's internal infrastructure, the connecting road, as well as to some community housing. Due to the location of the Bbeta Mill – which is on higher elevation – the overflow escaped into Kalangala Infrastructure (KIS) water pump, and subsequently into Lake Victoria.

The damage that has been caused due to this accident is very much regrettable, and Wilmar is working with OPUL management to ensure that all obligatory reporting is completed, and measures are in place to fix any issues that have arisen due to the overflow.

With rain curtailing in the last week after the incident, work has already been put in place to construct emergency subsidiary ponds, and to divert the course through which the POME overflow was flowing to the community and external water bodies. Working closely with the KIS team, the water pump has been cleaned, and all erosion soils and POME overflow has been removed, allowing the KIS water pump to return to operating normally. OPUL management has mobilized all equipment to fix the connecting roads which had been impacted during the flood. In addition, OPUL's community liaison officers have identified a total of 30 households in the community that have been directly affected, and the affected community members have been provided with food and household essentials, in addition to assistance with cleaning.

Together with OPUL management we are monitoring the situation closely, to ensure that all steps needed to minimize impact of the overflow and prevention measures are put in place

For further information or clarification in relation to this incident, please directly contact Wilmar Sustainability via [csr@wilmar.com.sg](mailto:csr@wilmar.com.sg)

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<sup>1</sup> Oil Palm Uganda Limited (OPUL) is a joint venture between Wilmar International and Bidco. In this JV, Wilmar holds 39% stake

<sup>2</sup> <https://kalangala.go.ug/lg/overview>

## ANNEX: Photos of mitigation measures taken to date



Figure 1: An emergency pond constructed to receive POME overflow



Figure 2: Overflow of the POME treatment ponds



Figure 3: Mixture of Rainwater & POME in OPUL plantation estate block



Figure 4: Work to divert the course flow of the POME



Figure 5: Damaged parts of the connecting road to the community due to overflow



Figure 6: Regrading efforts to fix the connecting roads



Figure 7: Blocking of the effluent using wheel loader



Figure 8: Ongoing efforts to divert the overflow



## **PUBLIC STATEMENT**

18<sup>th</sup> MAY 2020



*Figure 9: Community members affected by the overflow and flooding being provided with food and provisions*



*Figure 10: Provisions awaiting distribution in the local community*