

SUSTAINABILITY BRIEF

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO EDUCATION DURING COVID-19 *Case studies in Wilmar's Operations in Ghana and Indonesia*

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In June 2020, we published a case study¹ on the interventions and adaptations in place in Malaysia, where the student base in our estates are predominantly non-Malaysian students attending Wilmar sponsored schools run in partnership with either the NGO Humana, or the Indonesian Consulate. These schools are effectively privately run international schools, with teachers sourced from outside of Malaysia.



Examples of efforts to continue engaging and teaching children in Wilmar's estates in Malaysia

In this current case study, we cover the children studying in Wilmar sponsored schools in our estate operations Ghana and Indonesia, who are local children.

¹ [Supporting Children's Right to Education during COVID-19: A Case Study of Wilmar's Operations in Malaysia](#)

For the more than 9,000 children of school going age who live in our upstream oil palm estates, it has been almost a full academic year since the Covid-19 pandemic closed schools and turned to virtual classrooms as the main mode of conveying lessons. This has required a lot of adjustments and troubleshooting to enable access to education for our children is maintained. For our estates in Ghana, Indonesia, and Nigeria, as an example, these adjustments are not just about whether classes can just switch online, there are compounding factors:

- ↪ **Stable and reliable internet connectivity is not sufficiently available.** For our operations, broadband cabled services either do not exist or are very limited. As such our estate-based offices have relied on expensive satellite internet services. The cost prohibitive nature and limited bandwidth make this impossible to offer outside our own offices. While mobile internet data has become more available, the network coverage does not sufficiently cover all our estates which tend to be in very rural and underdeveloped areas in the country
- ↪ **There is a lack of computers in households.** Most of the population in our estates rely on basic smart phones for their internet connection. This is consistent with data from the ITU, the UN specialized agency for information and communication technology data showing respectively percentage of households with computers in 2019² as follows: Ghana (22.5%), Indonesia (18.78%), and Nigeria (2.46%)
- ↪ **The cost of mobile internet data is unaffordable for regular video streaming for virtual classrooms.** Relying on data for day to day video classroom access – which needs a lot of data and is very costly - is just not feasible. This is consistent with data from ITU, that shows in 2019 that the comparative cost (measured in % Gross National Income per capita) for ICT basket of minimum 5GB of data as follows³: Indonesia (8.69%); Nigeria (25.2%). Compare this to the cost in USA (0.83%), France (0.79%), and UK (1.28%)
- ↪ **National school systems have not introduced support for the switch to virtual classroom.** Instead the onus is on the individual school and to a certain degree the individual teacher to make their own adjustments. As a consequence, schools and teachers in rural areas are more likely to have insufficient ICT know-how to transfer programmes online, and the lack of financial means to access paid for applications for online classroom platforms

To help maintain education in Wilmar plantation estates, the company has adopted the following guidelines during school closure in the Covid-19 pandemic period:

- ↪ Continue to shut schools following government guidelines and directives. No physical classroom learning is in place, until new government rulings are received. Where official online or televised programmes are in place, we work with the teacher to help ensure maximum usage for our children via most accessible means.

² <https://www.itu.int/net4/ITU-D/icteye#/topics/1104>

³ <https://www.itu.int/net4/ITU-D/ipb/> - note data for Ghana was not available within this dataset

In Ghana, we held radio broadcasts of educational programmes to supplement the official televised government school programmes.

**DISTANCE LEARNING TIME TABLE
FOR KG TO PRIMARY THREE
MAY 2020**



	MORNING (AM)				EVENING (PM)		
	KG 9:45 - 10:20	PRIMARY 1 10:20 - 10:55	PRIMARY 2 10:55 - 11:30	PRIMARY 3 11:30 - 12:05	PRIMARY 1 1:50 - 2:25	PRIMARY 2 2:25 - 3:00	PRIMARY 3 3:00 - 3:35
MON	ENGLISH	ENGLISH	ENGLISH	MATHS	MATHS	MATHS	
TUE	MATHS	MATHS	MATHS	ENGLISH	ENGLISH	ENGLISH	
WED	ENGLISH	ENGLISH	ENGLISH	MATHS	MATHS	MATHS	
THUR	MATHS	MATHS	MATHS	ENGLISH	ENGLISH	ENGLISH	
FRI	ENGLISH	ENGLISH	ENGLISH	MATHS	MATHS	MATHS	

 Ghana Education Service (GES)
  Ghana Broadcasting Corporation

info@ges.gov.gh
[@gheduservice](https://www.facebook.com/gheduservice)
[ges.gov.gh](https://www.facebook.com/ges.gov.gh)

BOPP COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL BROADCAST TIME TABLE

	LOWER PRIMARY	UPPER PRIMARY	JUNIOR HIGH	SENIOR HIGH
TIME	7:00- 7:30	7:35-8:05	8:10- 8:45	8:45-9:30
MONDAY	ENGLISH	MATHEMATICS	SCIENCE	SOCIAL
TUESDAY	MATHEMATICS	SCIENCE	SOCIAL	ENGLISH
WEDNESDAY	SCIENCE	SOCIAL	ENGLISH	MATHEMATICS
THURSDAY	SOCIAL	ENGLISH	MATHEMATICS	SCIENCE

Examples of television and radio broadcasts time tables for educational programmes in Ghana

Where possible, we enabled access to televisions for official educational programmes available in both Ghana and Indonesia.



Using radio and television to ensure children have continued access to education in Ghana



In Indonesia educational television was used to supplement regular lessons

In Indonesia some of the schools were able to offer online lessons, and we supported this through making laptops available where possible.



Online lessons conducted in Indonesia using laptops provided by Wilmar

In both Ghana and Indonesia, there was a reliance on social media and group chat functions (E.g., WhatsApp) as a less data heavy way to conduct lessons. Group chats were also used as a means to connect with parents on school work and lessons.



Lessons and teacher-student interactions using group chat apps in Ghana and Indonesia

- We work with schools and teachers on developing new SOPs for when school lessons can resume physically. Wilmar will assist with the provision of disinfectants, hand sanitizers and other PPE for children and teachers.



Regular disinfecting of schools and classrooms continue even during school closure, as teachers in Indonesia were still required to report for duty

- 🔗 We provide assistance to teachers to facilitate access to homework, worksheets and reading materials by either printing it at our offices or by providing readily available activity books. Additionally, learning materials are distributed to children in our estates through the cooperation with teachers, members of our Women Working Group and as well as our estate staff.



Homework checks and evaluation by teachers and Wilmar employees

- 🔗 We maintain open communications with teachers to help monitor the situation and provide assistance where possible, such as with homework checks and evaluations, as well as by providing supplies and other types of help needed.

By and large, while ICT solutions have been limited, the prevalence of applications like WhatsApp and other group chat platforms have really provided a much needed more efficient means of creating virtual classrooms. We have found also that simpler and more basic approaches, like using our estate audio system to deliver “school radio” has also been a readily available and cost-effective way to ensure education is able to continue.

The internal “school homework delivery service” created through the network of teachers, parents, and management has also been very effective across all our operations. This network works through first teachers informing of homework via group chat channels, then enabling the pickup of completed work at a specified time, and once completed with grading returned to the children with additional check ins by the teachers.

These simple solutions have meant that access to education can still be provided and protected even in the pandemic and despite the limitations to connectivity and ICT infrastructure.



Reporting and regular progress updates submitted to management by teachers or schools

We continue to provide as much support as possible and to look at other simple solutions to ensure education can continue in our estates. We continue to monitor the situation of the schools and engage more proactively with teachers and parents.