

Cover story

# Who will supply protective gear to oil and gas industry

For clothing protection, there are dust coats, full overalls, cold room overalls and reflective jackets among others. There are other PPEs for areas such as height safety among others.

There is even specialised winter PPEs such as insulated jackets, winter balaclavas among others, for workers on oil and gas projects in freezing temperatures; luckily for Uganda, there will not be need for this due to the equatorial climate gracing this part of the world.

## UPSTREAM, MIDSTREAM

Intense oilfield development to a tune of \$11.5b in the next three to five years will be unleashed on the Albertine region. In this period, about 500 wells are planned for drilling compared to the 20 wells that were drilled in the exploration period. Central Processing Facilities (CPFs), inland pipelines are going to be built. A 1,445 kilometre long East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) pipeline is going to be built. All these projects will require workers.

One of the camps on the export pipeline route will host 1,000 workers. The laying of a pipeline can be dangerous without adequate safety precautions. One can sustain eye injuries while welding, cutting of materials, contact with materials if they do not have the correct safety equipment.

## SAFETY ON SITE

Each construction worker, vendor, supplier and site visitor will be required to undergo a site safety training session before accessing different sites and thereafter wear the protective gear. So if one has a business that supplies safety equipment, get ready for big business.

"Everyone who comes to work on the pipeline project should be able to go back home safe and sound. For this reason, health and safety is the top priority," Mark Lamb, the EACOP's engineering representative told local suppliers at a national supplier engagement in January. Dr Deogratius Sekimpi, the managing director of OSHFA Limited, a firm that provides health and safety solutions, including PPEs says local industry in Uganda does not fully appreciate the importance of PPEs, but reckons that with the strict standards in the oil and gas industry, many will have no choice but to change attitudes.

"Many Ugandans do not take PPEs seriously because of the cost, but thankfully, many international oil players do not compromise on safety so we should be good to go," he says.

For those who appreciate the need for PPEs, often times, ignore an important component of safety, Sekimpi said. Having a helmet on your head alone is not enough, you must have working systems as well.

"PPEs are not entirely new in Uganda; the challenge is the attitude many people have towards safety. They think that once someone has the equipment in place, everything has been covered. Besides PPEs, we should have trained the workers on how to use the equipment correctly, and have the right systems in place to ensure safety."

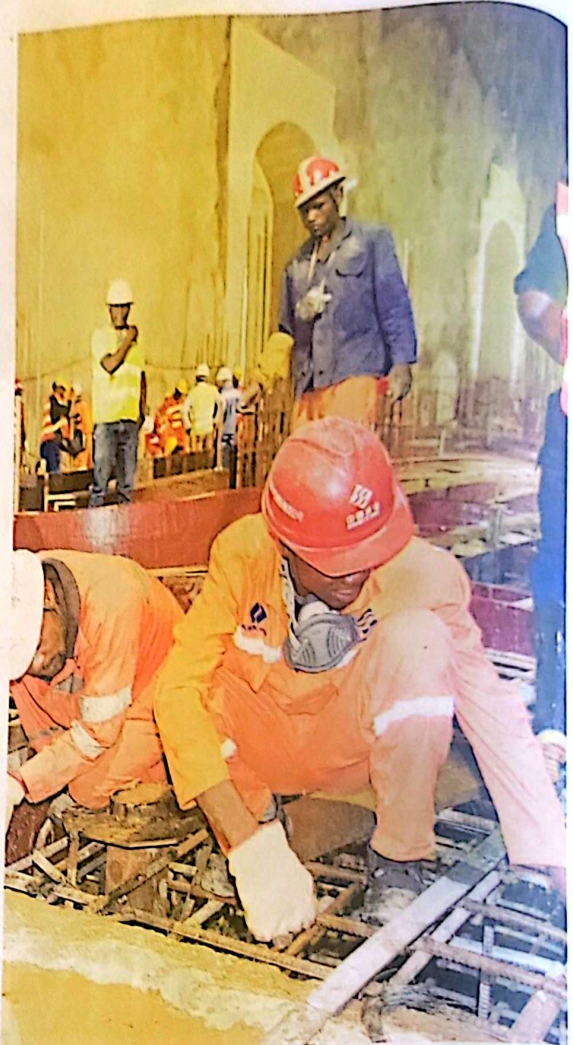
## OPPORTUNITY

Simon Nabeta, a health and safety manager, said, Ugandan firms are not

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**1,000 workers**

will be employed on camp when the construction of the 1,445km export pipeline to the Port of Tanga begins



A worker at Karuma dam welding. Dealers of PPEs have opportunities to make sales if they import PPEs specific to the oil and gas industry



Safety of all oil and gas workers must be a priority

prepared to supply industry specific PPE to oil and gas, but he is confident that as the sector grows to the Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) phase of key infrastructure starts.

"PPEs for oil and gas will have to be imported. The ones that are currently made in Uganda do not meet international industry standards, even for the very basic safety equipment such as helmets," he says.

"Any entrepreneur in this space looking to benefit from the oil and gas business will have no option, but to raise their game and meet the standards. There will be no compromise on this."

Besides the export pipeline, there are other major projects Uganda's oil and gas industry is going to embark on in the next five years that will require PPEs.

Two upstream projects; Tilenga and Kingfisher will deliver oil when production eventually starts. Located on the northern side of the Lake Albert, the Tilenga project will be operated by

Total E&P and covers six oil fields, Jobiri, Rii, Ngiri, Gunya, Kasamene-Warindi, Nsoga and Kigogole—all located in Buliisa and Nwoya districts.

Workers in these oil fields will need adequate PPEs to keep safe from potential risks encountered during work.

"Oil field workers are potentially exposed to undiluted chemicals (for fracture fluid), silica sand, diesel exhaust, moving machinery, confined spaces, naturally occurring radiological material, moving vehicles, etc. while working days extending beyond eight hours," writes Megan Anne Allison, in a paper titled *Occupational hazards in onshore upstream unconventional natural gas*.

The Kingfisher field, spread over a 32 square kilometres area, will have similar needs.

The refinery project, which last week received a major boost with the signing of the project framework agreement (PFA) with the Albertine Graben Refinery Consortium (AGRC), will also have its own challenges that will require PPEs.