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Experts warn on negative impacts of oil pipeline

By Billy Rwothungeyo

After a period of somewhat slow activity, developments in the oil and gas industry are picking pace ahead of the 2020 production year.

Works on key infrastructure such as the refinery, pipelines and storage facilities will have to be done before the production date and with these developments come impacts.

The Government has been advised on dealing with potential negative impacts that will come with the construction of the crude oil export pipeline from the Albertine Graben to Tanga port in Tanzania.

Preliminary findings from a study done by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and Civil Society Coalition, Oil and Gas (CSCO) indicates that the pipeline could affect wildlife protected areas.

Robert Ddamulira, the Africa energy co-ordinator at WWF, has advised the Government to find ways to mitigate the effects of construction of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP).

"We have estimated that about 2,000 square kilometres of protected wildlife areas is likely to be affected by the pipeline project. The impact will manifest in the form of habitat disturbances, habit



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BETWEEN THE LINES:

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fragmentation and increased risk of wildlife poaching," he said.

Speaking during a dialogue and learning event on oil infrastructure organised by the Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) in Kampala on Monday, Ddamulira warned of the increased risk of water

pollution around the Lake Victoria basin, where the pipeline will snake its way through to Tanzania near the lake.

"About 400 square kilometres of the Lake Victoria basin is likely to be at risk. The lake has a direct impact on the livelihoods of around 30 million people around the lake," he said.

"There is no way a pipeline from Uganda can stretch to Tanzania without crossing the Kagera River because it forms the boundary," Ddamulira said.

Onesmus Mugenyi, the deputy executive director of ACODE, said the Government must pay attention to socio-economic issues during the construction

of the pipeline to avert scenarios that could lead to cancellation of funding.

Mugenyi also said the Government should come up with a mechanism to minimise land acquisition conflicts, which have plagued infrastructure projects in the country.

Last year Uganda agreed to build an oil export pipeline through Tanzania. Because Uganda's oil is waxy in nature, the 1,445km long, 24-inch diameter pipeline is going to be the world's longest heated crude oil pipeline.

The final investment decision on this pipeline is expected this month, before construction of the major oil infrastructure starts.