

# Hoima-Tanga pipeline: How safe is River Nile, Lake Victoria?

As the pace of oil activities increases in the western arm of the Rift Valley, environmentalists are worried about possible resultant social and environmental consequences. They say the construction of the 1,443km oil pipeline expected to start next year could have devastating effects if serious monitoring to identify possible danger areas is not carried out, writes GERALD TENYWA

Sitting on a wooden stool at Kabaale village, Kizirafumbi sub-county in Hoima district, Dennis Kiiza Abwoli, looks pensive, fearing a second displacement. The first was by the refinery and now, the pipeline in the place where they shifted to.

His challenge is that the Government compensation for his ancestral land that was taken by the refinery, meaning another displacement would wipe out the meagre resources he is surviving on. Besides, it takes a long time to settle down in another place with limited resources, he says.

Kiiza, who lives in Kizirafumbi where the pipeline from Kabaale is expected to pass, says he lost his social network in Kabaale.

Kiiza represents the social impact of the pipeline and experts are warning of possible environmental impacts as well, unless meticulous measures are taken to forestall them.

"The severest risk is on Lake Victoria," states a new study carried out by a number of environmentalists, commissioned by the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF).

"More than 500km of the 1,443km pipeline is in the catchment of Lake Victoria basin, which means any spill could contaminate any tributary of Lake Victoria, leading to disastrous consequences for its population and natural resources," the report stated.

The report titled, *Safeguarding people and nature in the East African crude oil pipeline project*, notes that the Kagera River is the largest water body flowing into



Oil spills from pipelines can have a negative impact on the entire ecosystem

the lake and the oil pipeline is expected to cross it.

The researchers included Robert Damulira, the Africa Energy coordinator under WWF, Edward Muyambi, energy officer of WWF, Roy Namgera, extractives manager under WWF-Tanzania, Paulo Tibaldeschi, senior advisor on environment and development under WWF-Norway. Others from Uganda are Onesmus Mugenyi of Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE), Gerald Byakagaba of Oxfam, Paul Tweba of Pro-Biodiversity of Uganda and Henry Bazira of Water Governance Institute.

"We had a discussion with the oil companies and government officials, and they said they were

## Feared impacts of oil pipeline

- Social, economic retardation due to displacement of people because of delayed compensation.
- Contamination of water bodies in event of spillage which would affect human health, animal population and natural resource.
- Destruction of forest cover.
- It could prompt illegal logging, charcoal burning and draining of swamps for cultivation by job seekers in the oil areas from other regions of the country.

to avoid areas that will result in serious social and environmental impacts," Mugenyi told *Business Vision*.

Uganda and Tanzania are in advanced stages of constructing the 1,443km crude oil pipeline

from Hoima to the sea port of Tanga.

Mugenyi says inevitably, some environmental resources will be compromised during the project. He says strips of land in the chains of forests that are part

of migratory corridors for wild animals such as chimpanzees in western Uganda will have to be cleared to accommodate the oil pipeline.

He named Bugoma Forest as one of them. Mugenyi also says Murchison Falls National Park, where huge oil discoveries have been made, is another area because a network of oil pipelines will have to be built there to evacuate the oil crossing River Nile.

Other rivers that the pipeline will cross include Kagera River which pours its water collected from Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania into Lake Victoria.

"We face risks of oil spillage and if this happens, River Nile and Lake Victoria will be in big trouble," said Mugenyi, adding that the water and fish will be polluted as well as affecting wildlife adversely.

But that is not all. The environmentalists fear that the passage created for the pipeline in Bugoma Forest could become an avenue for illegal logging and other vices against the environment.

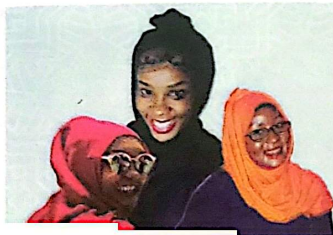
This becomes real given that settlers from different parts of the country attracted by prospects of oil jobs may turn to this area if they fail to get the jobs.

They could go into charcoal burning, illegal logging and draining of swamps for cultivation.

However, the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) says there will be measures to forestall the feared effects. Patience Nsereko, NEMA's environment monitoring officer (oil and gas) admits that there will be impacts during construction of the oil pipeline because of the massive excavation. But she adds that the pipeline will be underground, minimising disruption of overground daily activities.

She told journalists recently that the excavated soil will be placed back to allow crop cultivation, though planting of trees on top of the pipeline will not be allowed.

"We do not anticipate big environmental problems after construction of the pipeline," Nsereko said.



## Proud Muslimah Affair

A SASSY AND CLASSY HIJAB EVENT

To Empower Muslimah through networking

To Provide a platform for Muslimah to acquire / share educational and inspirational talks and

To Position the Muslimah amongst successful mindsets

FEATURING  
Panel of celebrated Muslimah, interactive and informative discussions and so much more

GUEST OF HONOR  
Hajjat Janet Mukwaya, Minister of Gender & Social Development

FOR MORE INFORMATION: 0750684029, 0758994818

50k VIP 100k  
29 July 2017  
Kampala Serena Hotel  
5PM

Bukedde 1

vision

Housing Finance Bank

Café Javas

Kampala Serena

Kampala Serena