

AFIEGO's Weekly Energy News Roundup (13-17 April, 2020)

Geothermal drilling suspended over oil spill

Uganda has suspended geothermal drilling activities in the Albertine Graben following a spillage thought to contain components of crude oil.

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals says it has taken the decision to halt drilling activities until a comprehensive Environmental and Social Impact Assessment is conducted in accordance with the new National Environment Act No.5 of 2019 to which the Ministry commits to resolve any conflict borne out of this incident.

Last year, Uganda awarded a Shs2.3b contract to a local firm, Royal Techno Industries Ltd, to drill eight temperature gradient holes to exploit geothermal energy at the famous hot springs. Geothermal locations are at Kibiro in Hoima district, Panyimur in Pakwach district and Buranga in Bundibugyo district. The spillage occurred in Kibiro.

“Unfortunately, as a project challenge, during the drilling of the eighth and last well on the night of March 29th, 2020 a blow-out happened which resulted in an uncontrolled discharge of gas, drilling fluids, geothermal fluids and sediments,” he said.

“A limited oil sheen was observed on sediments. The discharge caused public concern ...”

Kasande said they were unable to quantify the materials discharged into the environment at Kibiro given the length of time during which the incident occurred – for about nine hours. He acknowledges, however, that significant quantities of materials – natural gas, clay, water, drilling mud and limited traces of oil -were released into the environment.

It is noteworthy that Ministry of Energy made a public statement explaining how the spillage occurred and the contents of the spillage following civil society organisations [demanding](#) for the same.

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The time is now for solar at African health centers

We are still in the midst of the crisis but today I wanted to take a positive angle and look at the future. Researchers are now working day and night to develop a cure and eventually a vaccine. And it is reasonable to expect this vaccine will be available in the medium term.

The virus knows no borders and in order to be efficient it will need to be available globally, even in the most remote parts of Africa. This may be challenging as vaccines require to be refrigerated and the WHO estimates that only 28% of African health centers have access to reliable energy.

Luckily, simple solutions already exist to provide basic electricity, hence refrigeration, to health centers. Several organizations have already been working for a long time to bring this much needed electricity to health facilities. Sun Transfer Kenya with the support of the Solar Energy Foundation installed solar for lighting and vaccines refrigeration at 10 clinics in Kenya, significantly improving the conditions for mothers to give birth and increasing vaccination rates within the community.

In Kenya again, the private clinic network Tunza Family Health has installed solar+storage systems at their 23 clinics with the financial support of local Population Services Kenya offering a 24-month loan plan. This access to reliable energy has improved the quality of service at the clinics and increased patients visits and business.

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The impact of COVID-19 on the off-grid energy sector

With the on-going pandemic, COVID-19 around the world, it is evident that one of the most effective ways to curb the spread of the virus is to maintain social distancing.

Social distancing is best done by enforcing lockdowns and stay-at-home measures just like some countries have done.

But some people staying at home do not have access to reliable electricity supply, have to work from home, entertain their children, bond with their families and more during this period. So, what do they spend time doing at home without access to reliable electricity? [Read more](#)

European politicians, CEOs, lawmakers urge green coronavirus recovery

European politicians, companies, lawmakers and activists called on Tuesday for green investment to restart growth after the coronavirus pandemic, saying fighting climate change and promoting biodiversity would rebuild stronger economies.

The European Union is headed for a steep recession triggered by the outbreak, but divided on how to finance economic recovery, with the ailing south advocating issuing joint debt against the opposition of the fiscally conservative north.

With EU leaders due to meet next week to discuss the recovery plan, a group of 180 political decision-makers, business leaders, trade unions, campaign groups and think tanks urged the bloc to adopt green stimulus measures. "After the crisis, the time will come to rebuild," they said in a letter.

"The transition to a climate-neutral economy, the protection of biodiversity and the transformation of agri-food systems have the potential to rapidly deliver jobs, growth ... and to contribute to building more resilient societies."

Signatories included ministers from 10 countries from Italy to Luxembourg, 79 EU lawmakers, and chief executives from L'Oreal's (OREP.PA) Jean-Paul Agon to IKEA's Jesper Brodin and Danone's (DANO.PA) Emmanuel Faber. [Read more](#)

Upcoming Events

April 20, 2020; Kampala: Support cross-border communities from the DRC to undertake media engagements to increase their participation in oil activities in Uganda

Coronavirus: AFIEGO continues to call on communities and stakeholders to stay safe through following the Ministry of Health and World Health Organisation's guidelines.

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