

# AFIEGO's Weekly Energy News Roundup (June 8-12, 2020)

## Oil pipeline: Residents return to earmarked land

Several residents affected by the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project in Lwengo Town Council, Lwengo rural and Ndagwe sub-county have lost patience and returned to the demarcated areas to cultivate crops.

The decision partly stems from the delayed compensation of the affected families and lack of activity on the land because of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID19) lockdown, which has impacted their lives. Yisito Kayinga, the Executive Director of Community Transformation Foundation Network (COTFONE), says majority of the people affected by the pipeline project didn't receive any government relief.

He says this has forced the affected people to return to their land and cultivate maize, beans, tomatoes, sweet and Irish potatoes since they are uncertain when the pipeline activities will resume. Kayinga says it is unacceptable to keep the land and houses idle. Total Uganda contracted NewPlan Limited to carry out the mapping and valuation exercise.

However, government suspended the oil pipeline project in September 2019 following the collapse of the Tullow-Total deal, which slowed the project.

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## Uganda pushes back award of exploration licences

Uganda has pushed back the licensing round for five new oil blocks in the Albertine Graben to September 30, 2020, following low interest from exploration companies.

Six companies had submitted expressions of interest proposals, but there were no detailed bids for the advertised oil blocks by the end of March 2020 as expected.

The postponement will likely affect the scheduled opening of bids and award of licences according to both private and government officials.

"The six were yet to submit their detailed proposals. Once we get all the bids in by September 30, we hope to award the licences by end of this year but more likely in January next year," said Robert Kasande, the permanent secretary at Uganda's Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development.

Mr Kasande told *The East African* that six local and international companies had expressed interest to vie for five oil blocks on offer, but could not give details citing confidentiality rules. He said the postponement was as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic that has shrunk economic activity, curtailed air travel and partly led to the global collapse of the crude oil prices, a situation that is likely to linger until the global economy rebounds. [Read more](#)

## Queen Elizabeth registers increasing cases of poaching in lockdown

Several people have resorted to poaching for survival after losing their livelihoods because of the lockdown.

The management of Queen Elizabeth National park has raised a red flag over the increased cases of poaching in the park since the nationwide lockdown was announced in March this year.

Although Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) stepped up security and foot patrols in the park following the death of elephants, several poachers have been arrested since March.

Pontus Onzima, the Chief Warden Queen Elizabeth National park, says they have registered more cases of poaching compared to the period before the lockdown. Over 60 poachers have been arrested between March and May compared to only 20 in February.

He suspects that several people have resorted to poaching for survival after losing their livelihoods because of the lockdown.

Onzima explains that most of the poachers target small wildlife species for food. He says the animal census scheduled in the next two years will guide the park authorities on the extent of the damage.

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## Rafiki, Uganda's rare silverback mountain gorilla, killed by hunters

Four men have been arrested, and they face a life sentence or a fine of \$5.4m (£4.3m) if found guilty of killing an endangered species. Investigations showed that Rafiki was killed by a sharp object that penetrated his internal organs.

There are just over 1,000 mountain gorillas in existence and the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) described Rafiki's death as a "very big blow". The silverback, believed to be around 25-years-old when he died in the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, was the leader of a group of 17 mountain gorillas. This group was described as habituated, meaning that its members were used to human contact.

Rafiki himself was very popular with people who had come to the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Mr Bashir Hangi of UWA said. He went missing on June 1 and his body was discovered by a search party the following day.

A UWA team tracked a suspect to a nearby village, where he was found with hunting equipment. He admitted that he, and three others, had been hunting smaller animals in the park and that he killed Rafiki in self-defence when he was attacked, the UWA said in a statement. [Read more](#)

## Ministry renews demands for special courts to handle environment cases

The Ministry of Water and Environment has renewed demands to have special courts established to handle environmental cases.

Due to the grave effects of environmental degradation caused by encroachment on wetlands, cultivating along critical shorelines and river banks, and invasion of gazetted forest reserves, the State Minister for Environment, Beatrice Anywar, wants the ministry to be empowered with courts that will address environmental degradation.

According to Anywar, while they intend to safeguard the environment from destruction, their efforts are being frustrated by the ordinary court system under which encroachers take refuge to justify their actions or win arbitrary awards against government.

She explains that the rate at which environment is being destroyed requires specialised courts deployed with people having interests in environmental protection.

Anywar's demands come in the wake of a High Court ruling which awarded DMW Uganda Limited, a sand mining and fish farming company, 181 billion shillings as compensation after government cancelled their operation permit in Lwera Wetland.

Anywar explains that they are now going back to the judiciary and other line ministries to resume the discussions that had earlier been initiated by her predecessor, Flavia Munaaba in 2015.

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## Upcoming events

June 19, 2020;  
Kampala: Hearing of the refinery-affected people's court case

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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