



Next week, NEMA and the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU) will hold **public hearings** on the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) report for the **East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP)**.

The public hearings will take place on October 21, 2019 in Kakumiro district, October 23, 2019 in Mubende district and October 25, 2019 in Rakai district.

In this first of five publications, we highlight gaps in the EACOP ESIA in relation to wetlands and rivers to enable citizens submit comments on the EACOP ESIA during the public hearings.

**The big issue?** The EACOP will affect some of Uganda's most critical lakes, rivers and wetlands. The rivers that will be affected include Kafu, Kibale, Katonga, Nakabazi and Jemakunya. The above rivers are linked to critical wetland systems such as Katonga and lakes such as Victoria.

Millions of Ugandans rely on the rivers, wetlands and lakes that will be affected by the EACOP. For instance, the Katonga wetland system is a major source of water for communities in Gomba, Butambala, Kiruhura and Sembabule districts.

The above districts are often water stressed and in the dry season, the Katonga wetland system saves them by providing water for both domestic purposes and to take care of livestock, a major livelihood source in some of the above districts.

Key to note is that the President's farm in Kisozi parish, Gomba district, is one of the key beneficiaries of the Katonga wetland.

In addition, River Kafu flows through over seven districts and meets the water needs of communities in Hoima, Masindi, Kyankwanzi, Luwero, Nakaseke, the water-stressed Nakasongola and others.

Moreover, the above-mentioned rivers are also linked to Lake Victoria and River Nile which are shared with two and ten countries respectively and on which millions of people rely to meet their water needs.

Any impact on the rivers such as oil spills would therefore have far-reaching impacts on vulnerable communities, wildlife, tourism, fisheries, relations among the Nile riparian states and others.

In addition, the rivers, lakes and wetlands are also necessary for the survival of animals such as the extremely shy and reclusive Sitatunga antelope, elephants,

hippopotamus, black and white Colobus monkeys and others.

**Gaps in the ESIA?** The developers of the EACOP project have proposed to use the open-cut method to cross perennial rivers, wetlands and streams. The open-cut method involves digging a trench of 1.8 m through the water courses. Water will be diverted to enable digging of the trenches in some instances.

The open-cut technique will have impacts such as denying water-stressed communities access to water when water is diverted. Moreover, the open-cut method is notorious for the fact that it increases sedimentation which results in decreased fish, loss of habitat for aquatic life and other impacts.

Considering the importance of the water bodies that will be crossed, the project developer should have considered other alternatives such as Horizontal Directional Drill (HDD), which could minimise harm to communities and aquatic life.

**Recommendation?** Citizens should demand that NEMA rejects the EACOP ESIA report because it fails to protect aquatic life in addition to the livelihood and water needs of already vulnerable communities.