Part III. The proposed Uganda–Tanzania crude oil pipeline project will be one of the world’s longest heated pipelines. It is a feasible venture given prospects of more hydrocarbon in the region. However, for the two governments, the tests are quite immense, including balancing several interests as Frederic Musisi writes.

Sixteen years ago, long before Uganda’s oil deposits were deemed commercially viable, a World Bank–United Nations Development Plan co-funded study reckoned that in the near future, the world will need more cross-border pipelines for oil and gas. A study titled; “Cross-Border Oil and Gas Pipelines: Problems” published in 2003, revealed that one of the reasons for the assumption was that oil and gas reserves close to traditional markets are getting depleted and newer ones are in remote and many landlocked territories thus requiring pipeline delivery.

The proposed East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), running from mid-western Uganda to Tanga in Tanzania, fits into that storyline. If the cards are played well, the pipeline could as well transport crude oil from neighbouring DR Congo and South Sudan to the international market.

When the idea of a pipeline was conceptualised, first in the commercialisation framework signed in February 2014 between government and the oil companies—Tullow, Cnooc (Total E&P, it seemed vague; then the oil companies—Tullow, Cnooc) before we can start on EACOP will thus be the longest electrically heated pipeline in the world. Mr Maxim Marchenko, the EACOP project director, said the Holma-Tanga route was selected because it avoids the most environmentally sensitive areas—forests, swamps and rivers, and what are the safeguards, especially in Uganda where regulations face implementation challenges.

During the second Uganda-Tanzania Civil Society summit on EACOP recently, civil society groups led by Oxfam expressed concern that given the project fast-track mode—as declared by Tanzanian president John Magufuli—it is likely that the timelines would be at odds with the time needed for consultation and meaningful participation on key issues, ranging from environment to communities.

Mr Gerald Byarugaba, the Oxfam-Uganda’s extractives industry coordinator, told Daily Monitor that one of the critical aspects is the environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) process undertaken with adequate consultation and participation of host communities.

“In our previous engagements with the ESIA consulting team, it appears the community level consultations undertaken during the process were inadequate; they keep saying they talked to the village leaders mainly, yet on one hand, these consultations were undertaken before local council elections, so it is not clear whether those consulted were legitimate community leaders,” Mr Byarugaba said.

He added that it is also critical that the ESIA report be “publicly shared in an “accessible and user-friendly manner to enable meaningful input” of all stakeholders, and the National Environment Management Authority (Nema) to ensure that consultations “are not merely box-ticking exercises but rather where community participate better.”

He added that as a regulator, they would be most interested in the mitigation measures offered by the project developers.

“The main risks really associated with the pipeline is either bursting or people tampering with it; other than that, there isn’t much,” Mr Ernest Rubondo, the executive director of the Petroleum Authority of Uganda, however, said the oil spill contingency plan is “under preparation but noted that the ESIA helps to develop management plans for the different aspects, for the environmental and social aspects.

The ESIA is not one-time document; what might be done now could change later, so the ESIA is a living documents, they are monitored and updated,” he said.

Can Uganda -Tanzania pipeline project

Community Safety

A 2017 study titled ‘Safeguarding People and Nature in the East Africa Crude Oil Pipeline project’ by a coalition of civil society organisations led by World Wide Fund (WWF) for Nature raised, among others, risk of oil spill and blowouts from the pipeline, which constitutes a major health hazard; worse still, Uganda lacks an oil spill contingency plan. Mr Ivan Amanga Ruhanga, the WWF’s extractives manager, indicated that nearly 2000 square kilometre of the protected wildlife habitats are under threat. “In environmentally protected areas, we cannot treat it as a Sunday; so many things can go wrong,” he said. Mr Ernest Rubondo, the executive director of the Petroleum Authority of Uganda, however, said the oil spill contingency plan is “under preparation but noted that the ESIA helps to develop management plans for the different aspects, for the environmental and social aspects.

The ESIA is not one-time document; what might be done now could change later, so the ESIA is a living documents, they are monitored and updated,” he said.

Completed. In Tanzania, ESIA study was completed and a report submitted last December to the country’s environmental watchdog—National Environment Management Council.
Consultations. "...It appears the community level consultations undertaken during the process were inadequate; they keep saying they talked to the village leaders mainly, yet on one hand, these consultations were undertaken before LC I elections," Gerald Byarugaba, Oxfam-Uganda's Extractives Industry Coordinator

pass environment test?

as possible, an impact was no longer ranked as significant. Any effects left after mitigation are called residual impacts,” the study indicates. For example, on bio-diversity, the ESIA details that the pipeline's area of “influence is mostly in habitats which have been changed by humans, but with some natural habitats inside and outside areas protected by law.” Habitats of conservation importance within the pipeline’s corridor include semi-evergreen forest and riverine and swamp forest (wetland forests), which are categorised as “highly threatened and unique eco-systems” as defined as the International Finance Corporation.

“Connected forest habitat within and between Budongo, Bugoma and Wambabya forest reserves is also of conservation importance for the habitat itself and owing to the presence of threatened plants and animals such as chimpanzees,” the report notes. Likewise, 10 plants of conservation importance were studied within the areas affected by the pipeline.

296km
Distance, Uganda’s section of the pipeline—from Hoima to Mutukula. The 24-inch-diameter duct will be buried for security reasons and safety.

2,000 sq.km
At risk. Mr Ivan Amaniga Ruhanga, the IWWF’s extractsive manager, indicated that nearly 2,000 square kilometre of the protected wildlife habitats are under threat.

20 workers housed.
ment will be stored and construction facilities, and four main camps and roads for getting to construction roads. 8.3km of new and temporary includes 6.8km of new and tarmacked distance. Mr Ivan Amaniga Ruhanga, the IWWF’s extractsive manager, indicated that nearly 2,000 square kilometre of the protected wildlife habitats are under threat.

Preparing for the unknown
The report also indicates that the pipeline area of influence includes permanent and seasonal water-courses and wetlands belonging to Lake Albert, Victoria Nile and Lake Victoria basins, which are subject to regional political interactions and thus require thoughtful management.

Mr Ernest Rubondo, the executive director of the Petroleum Authority of Uganda, the oil sector regulator, said government institutions would look at the ESIA to determine whether the project developers’ proposals are “appropriate or not; if not, we will get back to them to do reassessment.”

"It is also worth noting that this is not going to be the first swamp crossed by the pipeline all over the world; what is important is to ask, what happens when pipelines go through swamps, and that is what we are studying," Mr Rubondo said.

“The ESIA was given to Nema: PAU was given a copy, and we are going through it. We shall give our comments to Nema. It is a large project, even when Nema has developed an opinion on it, we will go back to the public through the public hearings and they will have an opportunity to respond,” he added.

In Tanzania, ESIA study was completed and a report submitted last December to the country’s environmental watchdog— National Environmental Management Council (NEMC).

Mr Stan McBride, the Total East Africa BV’s environmental manager, indicated that as part of the ESIA, they are required to do certain types of monitoring on wildlife, water extraction, land, among others, and even after the project takes off, they are required to submit bi-monthly reports to NEMC.

Mr McBride acknowledged that the project being located in East Africa, renowned for its biodiversity, makes it complicated, but notwithstanding, they will comply with available—local and international-standards.

Mr Marchenko said they have risk management plans in place.

In our last part tomorrow, we explore the prospects for employment and lucrative tenders on the pipeline.