

February 2025; Issue 2

EMPTY PROMISES? WHERE ARE THE OIL INDUSTRY JOBS FOR THE ORDINARY UGANDAN?



Uganda Petroleum Institute Kigumba's (UPIK) pioneer graduates at UPIK's first graduation ceremony held on November 30, 2018 at the college campus Photo courtesy: UPIK website

In this newsletter:

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- Pictorial of our activities
- Lobbying
- In the media
- Upcoming events

Editorial

Dear reader, welcome to AFIEGO's February 2025 newsletter. In this issue of our newsletter, we look at the plight of Ugandan youth who studied petroleum courses but have failed to find jobs.

Excited by big talk about how the oil sector would create over 160,000 direct, indirect and induced jobs, many a youth undertook the arduous task of studying oil and gas courses.

As parents in Uganda are wont to do, the youth's parents sold crops, sold land and engaged in trade among others to pay school fees and ensure that their children amassed the qualifications they needed to acquire oil sector jobs.

Come graduation and the attendant job searches thereafter and the cold, hard truth hit the youth: it is not easy to come by oil and gas jobs. Available information indicates that over 18,000 Ugandans have oil and gas qualifications in the engineering, welding, as well as health and safety among other sectors.

According to the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU), as of December 16, 2024, the country's oil and gas industry was employing only 15,169 people directly. Of these, 90% are reportedly Ugandans.

The Ugandan workforce largely works as an unskilled labourforce with 99% of unskilled people working in the oil and gas sector being Ugandans. PAU further notes that Ugandans take up 64% of management roles and 85% of technical ones.

While sounding impressive, the question one would ask is if the above status quo exists, why are many oil and gas degree, diploma and certificate graduates complaining about being unemployed? The current development phase is after all meant to be the busiest, employing the biggest workforce according to the Industrial Baseline Survey (IBS) of 2014 that had indicated that at its peak, the oil and gas sector would employ over 160,000 Ugandans.

That Baseline Survey was sponsored by the oil

companies and endorsed by the government of Uganda. They indicated that after the development phase, available jobs are expected to reduce.

What can youth do to gain employment? In this newsletter, we share voices of oil and gas graduates that AFIEGO interviewed. The graduates remain jobless despite their endless applications for employment in the oil industry. We recommend that youth pursue jobs in sustainable green industries, while engaging policy makers to increase investments in green economic sectors for further job creation, and improved livelihoods.

Indeed, while jobs in the oil and gas sector have been overly discussed, the job creation potential of the sector cannot be compared to green economic activities such as agriculture, tourism, natural resources management and others.

These have been identified in Uganda's Green Growth Development Strategy (UGGDS) as having the potential to create way more jobs (nearly 4 million) while contributing to efforts to address the climate crisis.

Away from the above, in this newsletter, we bring you our **pictorial** section. Through this section, we share the activities that we and our partners implemented in January and February 2025.

In the **lobbying** section, we share some of the lobby and advocacy materials that we disseminated in January and February 2025.

Finally, in **in the media section**, we share some of the newspaper articles written by our staff and partners that were published in the leading newspapers in January and February 2025. We hope you enjoy the newsletter.

Editorial team: Diana Nabiruma Rachael Amongin Jane Apio

Word from CEO

EMPTY PROMISES: JOBLESS PETROLEUM INDUSTRY GRADUATES SHARE THEIR FRUSTRATIONS WITH THE JOB MARKET

The discovery of commercial deposits of oil and gas in the Albertine region of Uganda in 2006 was celebrated as a major milestone in the country. This is because it was argued that the exploitation of the oil and gas reserves would result in benefits such as job creation, a bigger economy, as well as quality education and health services among others.

To skill and enable Ugandans to work in the industry, a number of laws and policies including those on local content were put in place, while training institutions were strengthened.

Vocational training institutions such the Uganda Petroleum Institute Kigumba (UPIK) and the Uganda Technical College, Kicwamba had their capacity enhanced to provide technical skills to Ugandans.

Further, both government owned and private universities introduced new degree programmes targeting the petroleum industry.

In April 2014, the joint venture (JV) partners, then including China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), Total E&P (now TotalEnergies) and Tullow released a study they had sponsored called

the Industrial Baseline Survey (IBS).

The IBS assessed the quantity and quality of goods and services that would be required for oil and gas projects as compared to the existing human and productive capacity of the Ugandan market.

The survey showed that the Lake Albert Basin Development Project would create over 160,000 direct, indirect and induced jobs at peak. The direct jobs would be between 11,000 and 15,000, the IBS said.

Further, the survey noted that while 13,000 workers would be required in the construction phase, the number would drop to 3,000 permanent jobs in the production phase.

As noted in the editorial of this newsletter, while the above figures may seem exciting and increased expectations among Ugandans, experiences of people who studied oil and gas degrees, diplomas or certificates show that oil jobs are like the proverbial needle in a haystack: they are hard to come by.

Below, we share stories of some of the above people

STORIES

Deogratias Kirungi

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Having been born and raised in Pachwa village, Pachwa sub-county, Kagadi District, Deogratias Kirungi believed that the oil and gas industry was his calling. His home district is not only found in the oil rich Albertine region but also in school, the science subjects were a favourite of his.

"As a Munyoro, I was convinced that if I studied oil and gas, I would be given first priority when it came to hiring workers by the industry since the resource is found in my backyard," says Kirungi.

Unfortunately, the industry has not been as welcoming as he had envisioned when he joined Kyambogo University in Kampala to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Oil & Gas Production degree in 2019.

Since his graduation in December 2023, Kirungi has applied to be hired for a job directly to international oil companies like TotalEnergies and through recruiting agencies like Exquisite Solutions & Avanti, to no success.

"This unemployment is frustrating. Even graduate trainee offers are elusive (yet that is where I would gain the much-needed experience). But I cannot give up because rejections are normal," he adds.

Going forward, Kirungi hopes the Bunyoro Kingdom authorities can intervene by directly appealing to the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU) and the oil companies to hire Banyoro professionals like him as a first priority.

For students eying similar courses, he reminds them that the market not only demands patience but also that the oil resource could be depleted in 30 years' time – hence they will always need a Plan B.

Grace Katusiime



After her dad convinced her that the oil industry offered better opportunities than the teaching profession she was eying, Grace Katusiime from Masindi, applied to Kyambogo University to study for a Bachelor of Science in Oil & Gas Production degree, graduating in 2023.

Today, she remains jobless however, even after numerous applications to recruiting companies like Q-Sourcing and True North plus directly to the oil companies.

"Before considering my application, CPP, the builders of EACOP asked me for a Health and Safety certificate, which I did not have. I had to study for an online one at Makerere but unfortunately I have to pay UGX 1.2m to get my certificate," says Katusiime, who needed a Madhvani Group scholarship to complete her university education after her family ran short of money in her second year.

Part-time jobs are paying her daily bills currently, as she prays for better fortunes through initiatives like the Masindi Graduates Forum and Bunyoro Graduates Forum started by Dr. Florence Akiiki Asiimwe, the Masindi District woman MP, where job opportunities are regularly shared with members.



Grace Atim

An overcrowded legal field convinced Grace Atim to venture into the extractives, graduating with a Masters of Law in Oil and Gas from the Uganda Christian University (UCU) in 2020.

Unfortunately, she has so far not landed a job with the industry directly, which has left her convinced that the jobs are perhaps ring-fenced for a select group after applying countless times to no success. It is why she never felt the need to give the Uganda National Oil Company (UNOC) advert for vacancies a shot, recently.

In the meantime, Atim is teaching mining and petroleum law at Gulu University. Today, Atim is pursuing a Doctor of Law (LLD) in Climate Justice and Renewable Energy from Pretoria University.

Her advice to students is to keep going and remain open to any possibilities, including working outside Uganda, like she is considering.



Elvis Abikoha

When Elvis Abikoha, a Mugungu from Buliisa district saw TotalEnergies setting up shop in his neighbourhood, he knew the oil and gas industry was his calling. Off to the Uganda Petroleum Institute Kigumba (UPIK) he went and in 2019, completed a diploma in Petroleum Engineering. The Covid19 disruptions pushed his graduation to 2022.

Today, Abikoha would not encourage a young student in secondary school to follow in his footsteps however.

"This course is not practical. A lot of us that studied it have not found jobs. The industry wants highly experienced petroleum engineers yet it's fairly new in Uganda. I wish I had done mechanical or electrical engineering after my secondary education," he says.

What is more disappointing for him is UPIK has no arrangement with the industry where its students and graduates can find not only jobs but internships with the oil companies, with Abihoka settling for an internship at Bwendero Dairy Farm.

His only work experience in the oil industry so far sole lasted six months (between November 2023 and May 2024) – a scaffolding job at TotalEnergies' central processing facility (CPF) construction site, having learned scaffolding through apprenticeship and on the job. A welding course at Sunmaker in Bugolobi, Kampala has also come in handy today, albeit insignificantly, as he eats off the petty welding and metal fabrication jobs that come in occasionally.



Martin Ssentoogo

A petroleum engineer by training, graduating in 2023 from Kyambogo University, Ssentogo is so disillusioned by his failure to secure employment in the industry. He is considering doing kyeyo (odd jobs) in the Middle East.

There is no job he has not applied for, always monitoring oil companies' social media pages for job adverts. Originating from Kakumiro district in Bunyoro, he was elated when oil was discovered in his region, so studying an oil course was a nobrainer.

However, today Ssentoogo thinks his course was too theoretical to convince the oil companies to hire him, with the industry preferring experienced engineers. With internships not forthcoming either, even that basic experience is elusive.

Ironically he believes that had he ventured into electrical, mechanical or civil engineering, he would have already found a job in the oil industry since many operations – especially for Ugandan subcontractors – involve construction.

Ssentoogo advises young students to think twice before diving deep into petroleum courses, believing at least 60 petroleumcourses-related graduates are joining the market annually, yet very few are employed by the industry.

"Under the Society of Petroleum Engineering, Uganda Chapter, to which I belong, we often wonder who is being hired. Even when graduate trainings are advertised by the oil companies, none of us is taken on yet we apply," he says.

CONCLUSION

As demonstrated by the above stories, despite flowery declarations about oil jobs, these jobs are hard to come by. On the other hand, through the Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy, government has indicated that nearly 4 million jobs would be created if investment in agriculture, tourism, natural resources and other green economic sectors were increased. Youth should engage the Ugandan government and other relevant stakeholders to increase investments in green economic sectors for job creation.

By CEO

Pictorial of our activities

AFIEGO HOLDS BEGINNING-OF-YEAR PLANNING RETREAT



On January 15, 2025, AFIEGO held a planning retreat at Esella Country Hotel in Kira.

During the retreat, staff discussed innovative ways that they would implement in various projects for the common good.

Staff also discussed and adopted the organisation's 2025 annual workplan.

AFIEGO SUPPORTS COMMUNITY-LED RADIO TALKSHOWS TO DISCUSS OIL AND FOREST ISSUES



On January 30, 2025, AFIEGO held radio talkshows at Spice FM and Kazi Njema in Hoima district.

During the talkshows, AFIEGO and women affected by the EACOP as well as the destruction of Bugoma forest discussed the impact of oil projects on women, as well as the impact of deforestation on women.

The women called on relevant authorities to address the gendered impacts of oil projects while stopping destruction of Bugoma forest.

AFIEGO DISCUSSES SETTING UP OF A CLEAN ENERGY HUB BY OIL-AFFECTED WOMEN



On January 30, 2025, AFIEGO met with youth and women from Buliisa district that are affected by TotalEnergies' Tilenga oil project. The meeting took place in Buliisa.

During the meeting, the women and youth discussed the green economic activities that they would like to engage in, as well as how they could set up a clean energy hub to increase clean energy uptake in their communities.

AFIEGO SUPPORTS EACOP-AFFECTED WOMEN TO DISCUSS JOINT ADVOCACY AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PLANS



On February 18, 2025, AFIEGO supported women affected by oil projects from Hoima district to convene a meeting in Hoima.

During the meeting, the women discussed coming together to form a women's taskforce to address oil threats. The women elected leaders for the taskforce.

The women also discussed ways they can support themselves to engage in livelihood and environmental conservation efforts such as setting up of nursery bed enterprises. The women agreed to set up the enterprises.

AFIEGO SHARES LITIGATION UPDATES WITH GREATER MASAKA EACOP-AFFECTED PERSONS



On February 13, 2025, AFIEGO organised a series of meetings with EACOP Project Affected Persons (PAPs) from the Greater Masaka sub-region. The meetings took place in Masaka district.

During the meetings, AFIEGO shared updates on the status of court cases that AFIEGO supported the people to file.

AFIEGO also discussed campaigns such as REPower that are aimed at promoting renewable energy access for EACOPaffected communities.

AFIEGO SUPPORTS EACOP-AFFECTED WOMEN AND YOUTH FROM GREATER MASAKA TO DISCUSS ADVOCACY PLANS



In February 2025, AFIEGO supported EACOP-affected women and youth from the Greater Masaka sub-region to convene two sets of meetings in Masaka district.

During the meetings, the women and youth discussed the work that they could jointly undertake to address the EACOP project impacts on women and youth.

AFIEGO SUPPORTS LAWYERS, EACOP-AFFECTED PERSONS AND YOUTH TO ATTEND EACOP CASE HEARING IN KIGALI, RWANDA



On February 24, 2025, AFIEGO supported EACOPaffected persons, youth and our lawyers to participate in the hearing of the EACOP appeal case that we and our partners filed at the East African Court of Justice (EACJ). The hearing took place in Kigali, Rwanda.

During the hearing, our lawyers argued against the dismissal of our case that was filed in November 2020 at the First Instance Division of the EACJ. The case was dismissed by judges at the First Instance Court, who argued that it was filed out of time.

AFIEGO and our partners appealed against the ruling. It is this appeal that was heard by the EACJ in Kigali, Rwanda.

If our appeal is successful, the case we filed at the First Instance Division will be heard on its merits.

AFIEGO'S LEGAL TEAM MEETS TO DISCUSS STRATEGY IN ONGOING CASES



In January and February 2025, AFIEGO's legal team and external lawyers met weekly in Kampala to discuss strategies for prosecuting the over 21 court cases that AFIEGO and our partners are litigating.

The cases are aimed at promoting human rights observance, environmental conservation, climate action, an open civic space and others.

AFIEGO CONVENES IGEN-EA STRATEGIC MEETING



On February 21, 2025, AFIEGO organised a strategic meeting for our partners under the Inclusive Green Economy Network-East Africa (IGEN-EA).

The meeting took place at Esella Country Hotel in Kira division. During the meeting, IGEN-EA members reflected on implemented activities for 2024, planned for 2025, reviewed proposed guidelines for the network as well as the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Bill.

AFIEGO HOLDS A MEETING WITH DUTCH AMBASSADOR TO UGANDA



On January 16, 2025, H.E Frederieke Quispel, the ambassador of the Netherlands to Uganda met with AFIEGO staff at the embassy in Kampala.

AFIEGO and the ambassador discussed the work that the organisation does, as well as the potential future direction of the Dutch government's foreign assistance programmes.

Lobbying

In January and February 2025, AFIEGO's legal team wrote to the judiciary severally to express the frustrations of oil project affected persons (PAPs) with the slow justice system. AFIEGO also disseminated IEC materials to mark World Wetlands Day. Further, to enhance youth and women's awareness of oil sector impacts on communities, AFIEGO disseminated the Community Voice.



In the media

In January and February 2025, AFIEGO staff, research associates and youth champions wrote newspaper articles that were published in the leading newspapers. Some of the published articles are captured below.



EACOP case appellants' hopes and fears after Kigali hearing

3y Kazi Njema Reporter - March 1, 2025





Juring a press conference after the first hearing of the appeal case held in Kigali, Rwanda on February 24, 2025. (Image: (azi-njema Radio Unit)

East African Court set to decide fate of EACOP affected persons

🛔 The Independent 🛛 9 February 28, 2025 🖿 AFRICA, NEWS 👳 Leave a comment



Kampala, Uganda | THE INDEPENDENT | On Monday 24th February, John Lubega Nsamba traveled to Kigali Rwanda attend the Appellate Division of the East African Court of Justice (EACJ).

Upcoming events

March 07, 2025; Kampala: Dissemination of terms of reference for a study to assess the politicaleconomy landscape of Uganda's tourism industry

March 08, 2025; Online: Disseminate messages and press statement on International Women's Day

March 10, 2025; Kampala: Petition NEMA to ensure Hoima Sugar Limited (HSL) complies with the restoration directives for Bugoma forest

March 12, 2025; Kampala: Engage Uganda's prime minister to table the Consumer Protection and Management Bill before parliament for debate and enactment

March 17, 2025; Kampala: Parliament arrest case mentioning at High Court Civil Division

March 19, 2025; Kampala: Joint scheduling conference in the case of Jealousy and Robina Mulimba Vs Albertina Rachiu and others at Court of Appeal

March 21, 2025; Kampala: Dissemination of terms of reference for an EACOP perceptions study

March 25, 2025; Online: Webinar to disseminate research brief on tourism potential of Greater Masaka

March 31, 2025; Bunyoro and Greater Masaka: Disseminate a simplified community guide for monitoring oil threats

About AFIEGO

Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) is a non-profit company limited by guarantee that was incorporated under Uganda's Companies Act. AFIEGO undertakes public policy research and advocacy to influence energy policies to benefit the poor and vulnerable. Based in Kampala-Uganda, the non-profit company was born out of the need to contribute to efforts to turn Africa's clean energy potential into reality and to ensure that the common man and woman benefits from this energy boom. Through lobbying, research and community education, AFIEGO works with communities and leaders to ensure that clean energy resources are utilised in a way that promotes equitable development, environmental conservation and respect for human rights.

Our Vision

A society that equitably uses clean energy resources for socio-economic development

Our Mission To promote energy policies that benefit poor and vulnerable communities