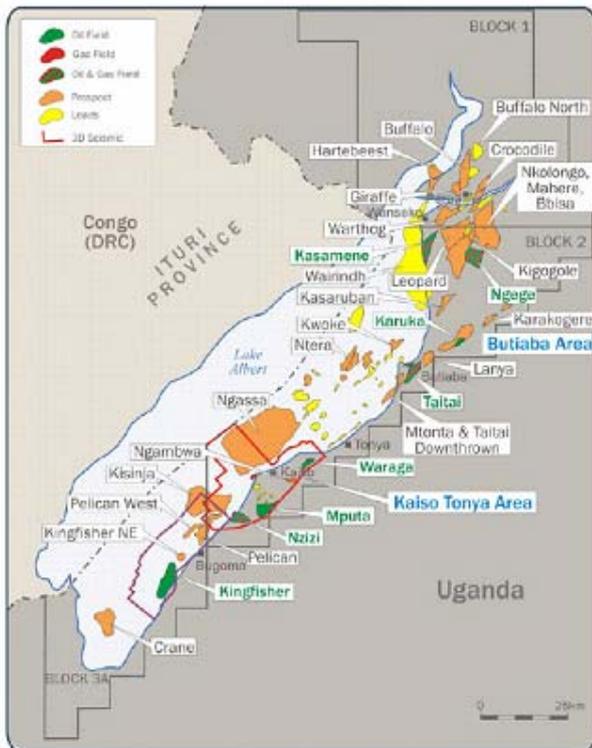


Strategic Environmental Assessment of oil and gas activities in Albertine Graben, Uganda

Oil and gas in Albertine Graben

Oil exploration in Uganda dates back to the 1920s, but it was not until 2006 that it was officially announced that oil had been discovered. Out of the prospective sedimentary basins in Uganda, the Albertine Graben promised to have the largest reserve of oil, which is why it will be developed first.

The Albertine Graben is an area of national and international significance due to its richness in biodiversity, national importance of the protected areas and spectacular sites for tourism.



Why SEA ?

To help to address the challenge of finding a balance between the need for hydrocarbon exploitation due to the increasing energy demand and use of goods and services of the Albertine Graben (e.g. biodiversity conservation and ecotourism), the government of Uganda, through the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), made the decision to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

The SEA is supported by the Norwegian Oil for Development (OfD) programme. The Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) coaches the process and reviews the SEA report.



Photo by Xan Rice (www.xanrice.com)

The objective of the SEA is to develop a framework for sustainable use of the oil and gas resources from the Albertine Graben. The exploration and exploitation should be carried out in a way which will maintain the structure, functioning and productivity of the ecosystems of the area as a foundation for long term value creation and sustained livelihoods. The SEA explores:

- How best to pace future exploration and development stages – for example: a stepwise approach starting from the least vulnerable areas and gradually entering the more vulnerable areas with the experience acquired
- Ways to deal with conservation of biodiversity and the most valuable and sensitive areas
- Sustainable coexistence with other sectors for example tourism, agriculture and fisheries
- Outlining options for how to deal with pollution and waste.
- Developing proposals for improving (institutional) capacity of different stakeholders to enforce law and deal with negative consequences of oil and gas development
- Developing compensation mechanisms
- Identifying cumulative impacts of the oil and gas developments to national and regional socio-economic and political developments.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a family of approaches that aim to integrate environmental considerations into policies, plans and programmes and evaluate their interlinkages with economic and social considerations.

The process of the SEA so far

- In 2009, NEMA received the preliminary draft Terms of Reference (ToR) for an SEA for oil exploration drilling activities at three blocks in Lake Albert (Albertine Graben) prepared by private parties (Tullow/Heritage). The NCEA

reviewed the ToR and concluded that it gave excellent generic explanations of SEA, but had not yet applied SEA thinking within the ToR itself.

- The NEMA took this ToR as a basis for further development into an SEA for the Albertine Graben as a whole. At the request of NEMA and in coordination with the Norwegian OfD Programme, the NCEA provided technical facilitation of a high level meeting and a 2-day scoping workshop in April 2010 on this anticipated SEA. Objectives were to sensitize the main government agencies on the need for the SEA, and obtain their input. Thereafter, technical officers from government agencies, civil society and the districts went into the details of what the SEA should address. It was recommended to have a Steering Committee in place.
- In June 2010, a preliminary draft ToR for the SEA was sent by NEMA and the Petroleum Exploration and Production Department (PEPD) to the NCEA and Norway for comments which were used as input for the Steering Committee for further specification of the SEA.
- This led to a series of Steering Committee meetings in November–December 2010. The meetings provided conclusions on the scope of the SEA and appointment of more Steering Committee members. However, there were still issues that needed further discussion. For example, final agreement on the ToR for the Steering Committee itself and a decision on who should take the lead in practical implementation

Steering Committee members

- Petroleum Exploration and Production Department;
- National Environment Management Authority;
- Directorate of Environmental Affairs;
- Uganda Wildlife Authority;
- Directorate of Water Resource Management;
- Directorate of Physical Planning & Urban development
- Department of Fisheries Resources; and
- Uganda Association of Impact Assessors.

of the SEA.

- These issues were resolved in January 2011. It was decided that the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development would be in the lead, and would hand over final responsibility for the quality of the SEA to the Steering Committee.
- In January and April 2011 draft ToR were sent to the NCEA and Norwegian partners for comment, resulting in an approved ToR for the SEA by NEMA on 28 June 2011.
- A tender procedure started thereafter, resulting in the appointment of an SEA team consisting of an international consultant and a 7-member local consultants team.
- The kick-off workshop for the SEA took place in March 2012, followed by a field trip to the Albertine Graben. The field trip served to build relations between members of the Steering

Committee and allowed the SEA team to become familiar with the region and ongoing and planned petroleum activities.

- This inception phase has been concluded with an inception report, presenting background information, an overview of the oil and gas sector in Uganda and the SEA process. The report will be discussed with stakeholders in a workshop in Kampala in May 2012. The SEA is expected to be finalised by the end of 2012.

NCEA involvement in the SEA

Initially, the cooperation activities with Uganda started when the NCEA reviewed a draft SEA manual that was prepared by NEMA in 2007. Since then, involvement with the specific SEA for Albertine Graben consisted of:

- Technical facilitation and contributions to SEA scoping workshops
- Attendance of Steering Committee meetings
- Commenting on drafts of ToR for the SEA.
- Quality assurance of SEA process and contents through desk review and field visits.



Services provided by the NCEA

The NCEA supports SEA practice in different countries. Depending on the needs in a specific country, the NCEA contributes to:

- SEA Introductory training;
- Institutional assessment;
- Coaching and training on-the-job of SEA teams;
- Introduction and design of SEA systems (see key sheet *SEA introduction*);
- Advising on ToR for and quality review of individual SEAs. (see key sheet *Independent advice on SEA reports*)

More information

- National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA): Mr Waiswa Ayazika. www.nemaug.org
- Tailor-made support and advice on EIA/SEA (for oil & gas) contact helpdesk@eia.nl
- Or visit NCEA's website at www.eia.nl for news, country profiles, resources and project database.