

# Kingfisher is expected to produce oil for 25 to 30 years

PHOTO BY WILSON ASIIMWE

## FIRST OIL

Uganda is edging closer to commercial oil production as the Kingfisher and Tilenga projects near completion, marking a clear transition to the long-awaited production phase.

By Wilson Asiimwe

**K**ingfisher Oil Development Area in Kikuube district, which is being operated by the China National Offshore Oil Company, is ready for production, project engineers have confirmed.

The project covers four drilling well pads, a Central Processing Facility (CPF), feeder pipelines, a permanent operations camp, and critical support infrastructure such as roads, water intake systems, and safety checkpoints.

The initial drilling phase on three well pads (KFR02, KFR03 and KFR01) is complete. However, the drilling of the phase two wells was ongoing on well pad KFR02 as of October 31, 2025. Drilling operations on the fourth well pad — Pad 4 — will commence this year.

Denis Mulondo, a geologist at the project, recently said the project is expected to drill 31 wells, of which 20 will be producer wells designed to pump crude oil to the surface, while 11 will serve as injectors to push water into the reservoir to maintain pressure and enhance recovery.

"So far, engineers have completed drilling 19 wells, including 13 producers and three injectors, with the 16th in advanced stages, and several others underway," he said.

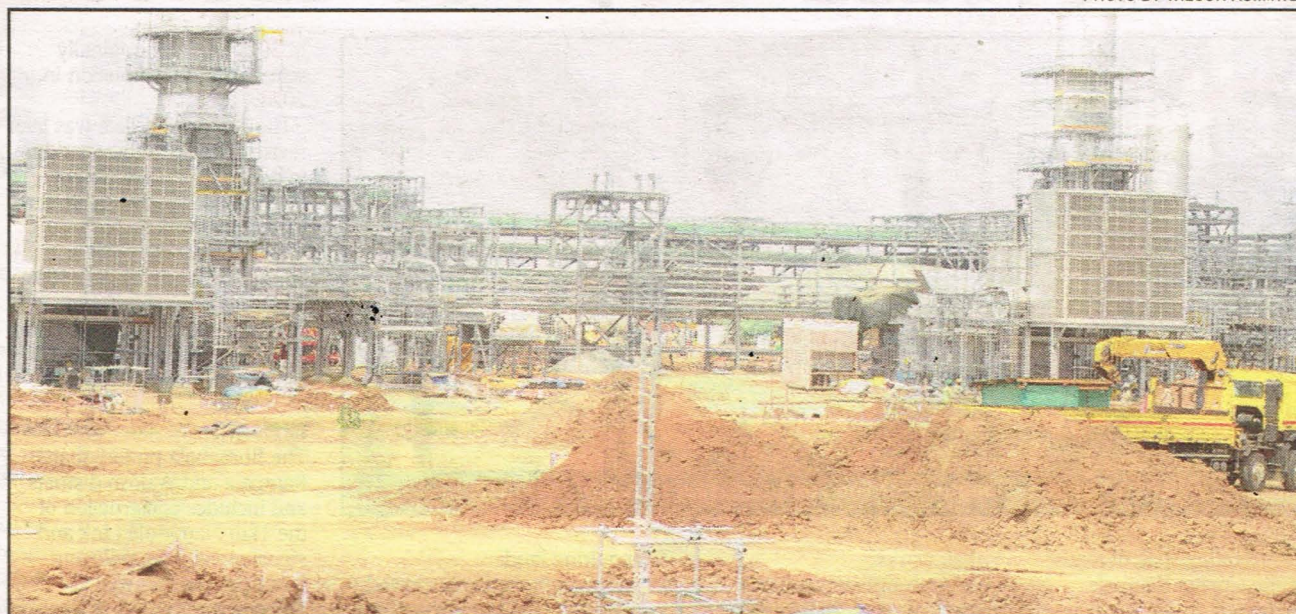
For oil production to commence, 17 wells out of the 31 wells of Kingfisher should have been drilled.

Mulondo noted that drilling of the 16th well has reached depths of over 4,200 metres, of the planned 5,081 metres.

"The rig we use can drill up to 8,001 metres but for Kingfisher, we do not need to go that far. Most wells will fall between 4,000 and 7,000 metres," he said.

Mulondo added that each well is drilled in stages, reinforced with steel casing and cement to prevent collapse and possible contact with the earth, which can lead to pollution.

Before production, a tubing is installed to channel crude to the surface.



Part of the Tilenga project processing plant in Kikuube, a key component of the country's oil and gas development

## OIL PRODUCTION EDGES CLOSER

### OIL READINESS

Kingfisher in Kikuube and Tilenga in Buliisa are nearing production readiness.

The projects cover multiple well pads, Central Processing Facilities, pipelines and support infrastructure.

Most wells have been drilled, with more in advanced stages to ensure full production capacity.

Central Processing Facilities will handle crude oil and produce liquified petroleum gas.

Government support is helping companies

deliver on schedule while building local workforce skills.

Communities affected by oil operations are participating in tree planting and land restoration.

Over 40,000 trees will be planted in Kyakaboga resettlement village to address environmental degradation.

The projects are expected to produce oil for decades, boosting Uganda's economy and energy sector.

The CPF, which is very crucial of the project, has also reached an advanced stage.

Toni Asiimwe, another engineer at the project, said the CPF will also produce liquified petroleum gas.

Recently, Eng. Irene Batebe, the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, said the Government is supporting the companies to ensure that they deliver on time.

Once operational, Kingfisher is expected to produce oil for 25 to 30 years, churning out up to 190 million barrels. As the project nears completion, it underlines Uganda's progress towards first oil.

Okasai Opolot, the Minister of State for Energy, said Uganda is in a historic transition from infrastructure development to the production phase.

"Uganda stands at a defining moment after nearly two decades of exploration, appraisal, and meticulous planning.

With 6.65 billion barrels of oil in place, 1.65 billion barrels



**First oil is expected in the second half of 2026, according to the director of the Petroleum Authority of Uganda, Ernest Rubondo.**

of which are economically recoverable, our production capacity is expected to reach 230,000 barrels per day, positioning Uganda among Africa's significant mid-tier oil

producers," said Okasai.

The minister stressed that beyond extraction, the real measure of progress is building resilient institutions, empowering local enterprises, and developing a skilled workforce that will sustain Uganda's oil and gas sector for generations.

Ernest Rubondo, the executive director of the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU), highlighted that first oil is expected in the second half of 2026.

He outlined the stages of first oil from initial production to delivery at Kabaale, Hoima, and export via Tanga, Tanzania.

### ENERGY RESTORATION

The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development recently partnered with the people who were affected by the oil and gas activities to contribute to Uganda's climate change and environmental strategy, as well as strengthen climate change mitigation efforts.

The ministry launched a tree planting campaign aimed at addressing the environmental

challenges faced by the communities at Kyakaboga resettlement village, Bududa district, where people who were affected by the oil refinery project in Hoima district were resettled.

The campaign is geared towards restoring 101 acres of reserve land in Kyakaboga resettlement village.

Dr Geoffrey Ogwang, the commissioner midstream petroleum department, said the resettlement village covers 533 acres and has a population of more than 1,200 people who mainly depend on agriculture for their livelihood.

He said the ministry's strategy focuses on two key components of adapting to the effects of climate change and implementing mitigation measures.

"As has been observed here, much of the tree cover in this village has been depleted, which if not checked, will lead to environmental degradation.

### CLIMATE CHANGE

The loss of tree cover has been driven by demands for timber, fuelwood, unsustainable agricultural practices, and unregulated livestock grazing. If this continues as business as usual, the soil will become degraded, resulting in poor crop yield," Ogwang said.

He added that the loss of tree cover also has greater contributions to climate change effects and destabilisation of the water cycle, leading to disappearance of local streams, and climatic variability.

Ogwang said the ministry aims to massively and

progressively increase tree cover in the resettlement village through tree planting and sustainable management of reserve land, so as to increase tree cover and conserve the environment.

He added that the current programme will target the planting of over 40,000 trees on the 101 acres of reserve land so as to increase the tree cover in the region.

"As a start, we shall plant 4,000 seedlings along the boundaries of the reserve land for purposes of demarcation.

This will later be followed by a greater tree planting and management campaign to restore this area to its natural capacity in terms of ecosystem services, while also improving the productivity of the land," Ogwang added.

Jackson Kiya, a resident of Kyakaboga village, appreciated the ministry for the move aimed at restoring the degraded forest cover in the area.

"Through the project, we are being given trees which we shall plant on our land and in reserves. Many of our forests have been destroyed and we have started suffering the effects of climate change," Kiya said.

### TILENGA CLOSE TO COMPLETION

It is also important to note that the Tilenga project operated by TotalEnergies Exploration and Production has made so much progress.

The latest information from the Petroleum Authority of Uganda indicates that as at November 21, 2025, a total of 164 wells had been drilled out of its 426 wells on 31 well pads. For oil production to commence at Tilenga, 170 wells should have been drilled.

Three drilling rigs are operational in Tilenga with two rigs in the north of the Nile within the Murchison Falls National Park and one drilling rigs in the south of the Nile (outside Murchison Falls). The project includes preparing facilities to support the production of petroleum from six oilfields located in Buliisa and Nwoya districts. The oil fields under the Tilenga project have a combined volume of oil in place of 5.8 billion barrels of oil.

The project is projected to produce 190,000 barrels of oil per day at peak, which will be processed and cleaned up at the CPF located in the industrial area.

The CPF consists of a series of tanks and piping systems through which the produced oil and the associated gas will be processed to remove any unwanted mixtures such as water and sand.