



Uganda: CNOOC, TotalEnergies Oil Project Fueling Serious Abuses Kingfisher Operations Tied to Repression, Forced Evictions and Sexual Exploitation

(Kampala, October 1, 2025) – People living in and near the area of Uganda’s Kingfisher oil project face militarized repression, forced evictions, sexual exploitation, and deepening poverty, the [Environment Governance Institute \(EGI\)](#) and [Climate Rights International \(CRI\)](#) said today in a [new briefing paper](#). The Ugandan government should investigate claims of human rights violations and hold perpetrators accountable, while the operator and owners of Kingfisher should immediately cease all human rights and environmental harms and ensure that all affected persons and communities receive full compensation for seized land and assets. Kingfisher is owned by TotalEnergies Uganda Ltd, the Chinese National Overseas Oil Corporation (CNOOC) Uganda Ltd., and the Ugandan National Oil Corporation (UNOC), and operated by CNOOC.

Researchers documented armed checkpoints and unannounced curfews that restrict movement; military-compelled payments by fishers to be allowed to operate, risking arrest or confiscation of boats if they refuse; routine harassment and extortion of women traders at informal checkpoints, devastating household incomes; sexual exploitation and gender-based violence; and increases in teenage pregnancies in nearby villages, forcing many girls out of school. In spite of CNOOC’s stated commitments to strengthen health and education, schools are underfunded, while health clinics remain severely under-resourced amidst new health risks from oil development. CRI and EGI [wrote](#) to CNOOC outlining the allegations made by residents of the Kingfisher project area but received no reply.

“Despite government and oil company promises of huge economic benefits to communities, the Kingfisher oil and gas project is leaving local residents poorer and in fear,” said Samuel Okulony, Director of the Environment Governance Institute. “People are losing their land, fishing grounds, and identity while being told that they are experiencing ‘development.’ The reality is abuse, displacement, and broken promises.”

Families described being forced off their land for oil expansion developments through BUCOLA, a CNOOC-aligned land association backed by military force, with no compensation. One resident reported that

“They never come to us. They just go to BUCOLA and claim they’ve got permission. Then one day, the military shows up, and we are told to vacate.”

Unannounced curfews have had a serious impact on livelihoods. A shopkeeper in Kiina village reported that,

“There’s no signpost, no notice, but if you’re found moving past six, they’ll arrest you or beat you. Many of us have suffered we have to close business earlier than usual.”

CNOOC has never published a resettlement action plan, despite requirements to do so under Ugandan law and international standards, and repeated requests to Ugandan authorities by EGI and other Ugandan civil society organisations under the country’s Access to Information laws.

The abuses at Kingfisher are casting a long shadow over Uganda’s wider oil and gas development plans, including at the Tilenga project operated by TotalEnergies Uganda Ltd. and the planned East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP). Together, these projects are expected to [produce 379 million tons](#) of carbon dioxide over 25 years, emissions incompatible with the [Paris Agreement](#)’s 1.5°C target.

EACOP, the controversial 1,443-kilometer heated pipeline intended to carry crude oil from Kingfisher and Tilenga to Tanzania’s coast for export, has had difficulties in acquiring financing and insurance, as many international financial institutions and insurers across Europe, North America, and Japan have [already ruled out](#) financing, citing human rights and climate concerns.

The International Court of Justice’s recent [Advisory Opinion on Obligations of States in Respect of Climate Change](#) [makes clear](#) that governments and companies fueling the climate crisis risk breaching international law. For Uganda and Tanzania, pushing ahead with EACOP despite its massive emissions directly contradicts this Opinion.

“For banks and insurers, financing EACOP is no longer just reputationally toxic, it could also carry legal consequences,” said Felix Horne, Senior Expert at Climate Rights International. “Backing EACOP isn’t just bad for the climate—it puts banks, insurers, and governments on the wrong side of international law. The ongoing abuses at Kingfisher make the risks around EACOP even clearer and should be a glaring red flag for any institution still considering involvement.”

CRI’s September 2024 report, [“They Don’t Want People to Stay Here:” How CNOOC’s Kingfisher Oil Project in Uganda Is Causing Human Rights, Environmental, and Climate Harms](#),” detailed how oil infrastructure is harming rights, eroding livelihoods, polluting the environment, and exacerbating climate risks, all without delivering tangible benefits to communities.

Uganda's leaders have long justified oil development as essential for energy access and economic transformation. But while most Ugandans still lack reliable and affordable access to energy, new oil projects are geared primarily toward export, not affordable domestic energy. Clean energy alternatives, including solar and wind, can deliver electricity to rural Ugandans without the land grabs, repression, and pollution that continue to mark the oil sector.

“Ugandans deserve energy that lights homes and powers schools, not projects that bring soldiers to their villages and devastate their livelihoods,” said Okulony. “Kingfisher shows the human cost of fossil fuels, and why clean energy is a far better path for Uganda’s development and the planet.”

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