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Nigeria rig count hits 100 as NUPRC approves 740 well operations and 39 FDPs in 2026

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Nigeria's upstream sector is showing tangible signs of acceleration, with the country's active rig count reaching 100 rigs alongside a sweeping package of regulatory approvals from the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC). The Commission's Chief Executive, Mrs Oritsemeyiwa Eyesan, disclosed in Lagos on 10 November 2026 that NUPRC has approved 595 well re-entry operations, 145 new drilling operations, and 39 Field Development Plans (FDPs) year-to-date in 2026 — representing ten months of regulatory output. These figures have now been corroborated across multiple independent sources, including Business Post Nigeria reporting on 11 November 2026 and Energy Focus Report on 10 November 2026, with NUPRC framing the approvals explicitly as measures to boost oil production and strengthen Nigeria's energy security. The rig count milestone, reported on 12 November 2026, provides concrete evidence that at least a portion of these approvals is already translating into physical drilling activity on the ground.

The 100-rig threshold is a meaningful operational indicator. It signals that operators are deploying capital and mobilising equipment in response to the regulatory pipeline, rather than accumulating approvals without follow-through. For the broader services market, an active rig fleet of this size generates sustained and concurrent demand across drilling fluids, tubulars, directional services, wellsite operations, and logistics — compounding the already sizeable workover and intervention demand implied by the 595 re-entry approvals.

Well re-entries remain the fastest and lowest-cost route to near-term production recovery. With 595 such approvals in place across ten months, operators across Nigeria's onshore, shallow-water, and offshore acreage are positioned to mobilise workover and intervention equipment to bring shut-in or underperforming wells back on stream. The 145 new drilling approvals add a further layer of activity requiring fresh rig deployments, well construction services, and broader supply chain engagement. Together, these represent 740 approved well operations underpinned by 39 FDPs — the formal blueprints governing how discovered resources are brought into production, covering well counts, facilities design, infrastructure tie-ins, and phased investment schedules.

The approval of 39 FDPs is a material dimension of the overall picture. It indicates that operators are not only pursuing near-term production recovery but are also committing to longer-cycle development programmes that will sustain activity well beyond the current drilling campaign. FDP approval at this scale opens demand for FEED, subsurface engineering, facilities design, and long-horizon procurement processes that differ in character from the more immediate workover and drilling services market.

Nigeria has faced persistent production challenges in recent years, with output constrained by crude theft, infrastructure degradation, and reduced upstream investment. The combination of a 100-strong rig fleet and a broad regulatory approval base — now confirmed by three independent media sources — suggests that both international and indigenous operators are renewing capital commitments to the upstream sector, partly supported by a more stable fiscal and regulatory environment following the passage of the Petroleum Industry Act. Nigeria's producing assets span the Niger Delta onshore, swamp, shallow offshore, and deepwater environments, meaning the approvals and active rigs are likely distributed across multiple operational settings and operator types. No operator-by-operator breakdown or capital expenditure figures were disclosed alongside the NUPRC announcements.

Why this matters to partners and clients of Saga

Corroboration of NUPRC's approval figures by a third independent source — Energy Focus Report — further consolidates the evidential base for the scale of Nigeria's upstream opportunity, reinforcing the case for Norwegian well services, drilling, and workover companies to prioritise active tender pursuit against 740 approved well operations. The 39 approved FDPs continue to represent a longer-cycle opportunity in FEED, subsurface engineering, and facilities design where Norwegian deepwater and brownfield specialists hold strong credentials. Early engagement with FDP holders and their engineering procurement teams ahead of formal execution phases remains strategically important.

PARTNER ANGLES

- **Well intervention and workover specialists:** 595 re-entry approvals across ten months represent an immediate and sizable market for workover rigs, coiled tubing, and intervention equipment across onshore, swamp, and shallow-water environments.
- **Drilling contractors and well construction services:** 145 new drilling approvals and a 100-rig active fleet signal active rig demand, creating openings for directional drilling, drilling fluids, tubulars, and wellsite services providers.
- **FEED and subsurface engineering firms:** 39 FDP approvals open longer-horizon procurement processes for facilities design, subsurface engineering, and FEED work tied to multi-well development programmes.

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