

PIPELINE TECHNOLOGY JOURNAL · DRILLING

EACOP Reaches 80-84% Completion With First Oil Exports Targeted October 2026

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After more than a decade of planning, delays, and sustained opposition, the East African Crude Oil Pipeline is approaching the finish line. As of mid-2026, the project has reached approximately 80-84% overall completion, with officials targeting commissioning in July 2026 and first oil exports by October. The milestone marks a turning point for Uganda's long-delayed entry into global oil markets and signals that one of Africa's most consequential infrastructure projects is moving from construction into operations.

The 1,443-kilometre pipeline will transport waxy crude from Uganda's Albertine Graben oil fields near Lake Albert to the Chongoleani Peninsula near Tanzania's Tanga port on the Indian Ocean. Its 24-inch diameter design incorporates electrical trace heating to maintain temperatures around 50 degrees Celsius, preventing the waxy crude from solidifying in transit — a technically complex requirement that makes EACOP the world's longest electrically heated crude oil pipeline. At peak capacity, the pipeline is designed to carry up to 246,000 barrels per day. All line pipes have been delivered, pump station construction is well advanced, and the marine terminal and jetty at Tanga have exceeded 88% completion.

Uganda discovered commercially viable reserves estimated at 6.5 billion barrels in 2006, with recoverable volumes between 1.4 billion and 1.7 billion barrels. Its landlocked geography made export infrastructure the critical bottleneck, delaying development for nearly two decades. The project's consortium includes TotalEnergies

as majority stakeholder, alongside the Uganda National Oil Company, the Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation, and China's CNOOC. The Final Investment Decision was reached in 2021-2022, after which construction accelerated meaningfully.

Cost escalation and financing difficulties have been significant headwinds. The pipeline alone was originally estimated at \$3.5-5 billion, but total project figures — including upstream developments — have risen considerably beyond initial projections. International financing has proven challenging after major banks and insurers withdrew amid environmental and human rights concerns, forcing the consortium to seek alternative funding arrangements. Despite these pressures, Tanzanian and Ugandan officials have conducted joint site visits and publicly commended progress at pump stations and the marine terminal, signalling continued political commitment from both governments.

For the energy services sector, EACOP's imminent commissioning shifts the opportunity horizon. The construction phase — dominated by civil works, pipe laying, and electrical systems installation — is largely concluded. The next cycle of commercial activity will centre on operations and maintenance contracts, integrity management, cathodic protection systems, and the marine loading infrastructure at Tanga. Upstream, the Albertine Graben fields that feed the pipeline will require continued drilling campaigns, well services, and production optimisation as Uganda scales toward plateau output. The Tanga marine terminal, designed to handle EACOP volumes for export, also opens a logistics and vessel operations dimension as first liftings approach.

Why this matters to partners and clients of Saga

Norwegian service companies should monitor the transition from construction to operations closely, as EACOP's imminent commissioning will trigger demand for pipeline integrity services, marine terminal operations support, and upstream well services in Uganda's Albertine Graben. Companies with heated pipeline expertise, subsea or marine loading technology, and East Africa regional presence are best positioned to engage TotalEnergies and CNOOC on early operations and maintenance contracting. Partners without an existing East Africa footprint should consider joint approaches with regional contractors given the project's financing complexity and local content requirements.



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- **Pipeline:** Electrical trace heating and integrity management on a 1,443 km heated crude line is a specialised niche where Norwegian pipeline technology and inspection companies can compete for long-term operations and maintenance contracts with the EACOP consortium.
- **Subsea/FPSO:** The marine terminal and jetty at Tanga port, now exceeding 88% completion, will require marine loading arms, mooring systems, and vessel interface management as first oil exports approach in October 2026.
- **Drilling:** Uganda's Albertine Graben fields, holding 1.4-1.7 billion recoverable barrels, will need sustained drilling campaigns and well services to ramp production toward EACOP's 246,000 bpd design capacity.
- **Service:** Pump station commissioning and ongoing operations across the pipeline's multiple stations represent near-term service contracts for rotating equipment specialists and instrumentation companies as the July 2026 commissioning target approaches.

- **LNG:** While EACOP is a crude oil pipeline, the power supply requirements for electrical trace heating across 1,443 km create potential demand for distributed power generation solutions relevant to Norwegian energy technology providers.

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