

AFRICAN ENERGY CHAMBER · PIPELINE

# Africa's Coastal-Inland Fuel Corridors Need Urgent Infrastructure Investment Amid Geopolitical Shocks

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Landlocked economies across Sub-Saharan Africa face mounting energy security risks as global supply disruptions and regional instability expose the structural weaknesses of existing fuel distribution networks. The African Energy Chamber has highlighted the urgent need to develop and reinforce coastal-to-inland fuel corridors, arguing that coordinated regional infrastructure is no longer optional but essential to sustaining economic activity across the continent's interior.

The core vulnerability is straightforward: landlocked nations such as Uganda, Zambia, Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso depend almost entirely on coastal import terminals and overland transport routes to receive petroleum products. When geopolitical shocks, port congestion, or cross-border disputes disrupt these arteries, inland markets face acute shortages and price spikes with limited ability to self-correct. The Chamber's analysis points to a pattern of reactive crisis management where structural investment in shared storage facilities, cross-border pipeline links, and coordinated logistics frameworks could instead provide systemic resilience.

The proposed remedy involves multiple interlocking components. Regional shared storage hubs at coastal terminals — particularly along the West African coastline and in East Africa's port cities of Mombasa and Dar es Salaam — would act as buffers against supply volatility. Cross-border pipeline systems capable of moving refined products or crude inland would reduce dependence on trucking, which remains the dominant but expensive and unreliable mode of inland fuel distribution. The Chamber

also calls for harmonised regulatory frameworks across regional economic blocs such as ECOWAS, the EAC, and SADC to facilitate investment and cross-border operations.

Several pipeline projects already in various stages of planning or early development could serve as anchors for this broader resilience strategy. The East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) linking Uganda's Albertine basin to Tanzania's Tanga port remains the region's most prominent cross-border infrastructure initiative, though it primarily handles crude export rather than product distribution. Separate refined-product pipeline proposals in Southern and West Africa have struggled to attract consistent financing, partly due to fragmented demand signals and regulatory uncertainty — gaps that coordinated regional policy could help close.

The geopolitical dimension is increasingly pressing. The Sahel's deteriorating security environment has disrupted overland supply routes serving Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, while Red Sea tensions have added cost and uncertainty to East African import economics. These compounding pressures are forcing regional governments and development finance institutions to reconsider infrastructure timelines that were previously treated as long-term aspirations. The African Energy Chamber's intervention signals that industry stakeholders view the window for proactive investment as narrowing.

## **Why this matters to partners and clients of Saga**

Norwegian pipeline and engineering service companies are well positioned to engage feasibility and FEED work on both crude and refined-product cross-border pipeline projects, particularly where EACOP-adjacent infrastructure or Southern African product corridors move toward final investment decisions. Companies with subsea terminal and coastal storage expertise can also target the shared hub concept the Chamber is advancing, where Norwegian offshore storage and marine offloading know-how translates directly. Monitoring regional DFI financing rounds and ECOWAS/EAC infrastructure tenders is the near-term priority action.

## PARTNER ANGLES

- **Pipeline:** Pursue FEED and engineering contracts on refined-product cross-border pipeline proposals in West and Southern Africa as regional bodies push coordinated financing frameworks.
- **Subsea/FPSO:** Coastal shared storage hub development creates demand for marine offloading infrastructure and floating storage solutions where Norwegian offshore expertise is directly applicable.
- **Drilling:** Inland resilience investment increases long-term viability of upstream projects in landlocked basins, improving the commercial case for drilling campaigns in Uganda, Chad, and Zambia.
- **LNG:** Small-scale LNG distribution to landlocked markets is an emerging alternative to liquid fuel corridors and warrants monitoring as a parallel supply-chain opportunity.
- **Service:** Logistics optimisation, integrity management, and HSE consulting on overland and pipeline distribution networks represent near-term entry points while larger infrastructure projects mature.

[Original source: African Energy Chamber →](#)

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