

AFRICA OIL+GAS REPORT · MOZAMBIQUE · DRILLING

SLB Opens Drilling Fluids Plant in Pemba, Strengthening Mozambique LNG Supply Chain

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SLB, the global oilfield services major formerly known as Schlumberger, has commissioned a new fluids systems plant in Pemba, northern Mozambique. The facility represents a concrete step toward localising critical drilling support infrastructure in a country that holds some of the largest natural gas discoveries made globally in recent decades and where offshore development activity is expected to intensify once security conditions and project financing allow major operators to return to full execution mode.

Pemba, the capital of Cabo Delgado province, serves as the principal logistics and services hub for Mozambique's offshore gas industry. Its proximity to the Rovuma Basin blocks makes it the natural location for companies seeking to pre-position equipment, personnel, and consumables ahead of renewed drilling campaigns. By establishing a local manufacturing and blending capability for drilling fluids, SLB reduces the lead times and logistics costs that have historically made deepwater operations in the region more expensive than comparable projects elsewhere. The move also signals that SLB is treating Mozambique as a long-term market rather than a project-by-project opportunity.

Drilling fluids — often called mud systems — are a non-negotiable consumable in any well programme, used to manage downhole pressure, cool the drill bit, and carry cuttings to surface. Having a local supply source eliminates the need to ship bulk fluid volumes from regional hubs in South Africa or the Middle East, which carries

both cost and scheduling risk. For operators planning exploration or appraisal wells, a reliable in-country fluids supplier materially improves programme certainty. The plant's scale is described as modest, but its commissioning establishes a physical footprint that can be expanded as activity picks up.

The broader context for this investment is cautiously optimistic. TotalEnergies' Area 1 LNG project and Eni's coral South FLNG facility have defined Mozambique's offshore potential, and while onshore security disruptions delayed Area 1 significantly, diplomatic and security efforts have continued. The presence of established service infrastructure in Pemba will be a relevant factor when operators and their contractors finalise mobilisation timelines. SLB's plant adds one more piece to a supply chain that Norwegian and other international service companies will need to interface with if they secure roles in future drilling or subsea scopes in the Rovuma Basin.

For Norwegian oilfield service firms monitoring Mozambique, SLB's move is a useful market signal. It suggests that at least one major services player has sufficient confidence in near-term activity to commit capital to fixed local infrastructure. Companies that have not yet established a Pemba presence should assess whether the window for early-mover advantage in complementary service lines — particularly subsea installation, well intervention, and FPSO-related services — is beginning to narrow.

Why this matters to partners and clients of Saga

Norwegian service companies should treat SLB's Pemba plant as a market confidence indicator and review their own positioning for Mozambique's next drilling cycle. Firms in drilling, subsea, and FPSO segments should assess whether local partnership or office presence in Pemba is now warranted given the incremental build-up of in-country infrastructure. Those without existing relationships in-country should prioritise intelligence-gathering visits to Pemba and engagement with operators active in the Rovuma Basin.

PARTNER ANGLES

- **Drilling:** SLB's fluids plant reduces one key supply-chain bottleneck; Norwegian drilling contractors and well-services firms should assess whether other consumable or equipment gaps in Pemba represent partnership or pre-positioning opportunities.
- **Subsea/FPSO:** Growing service infrastructure in Pemba improves overall project viability for FPSO and subsea scopes tied to Rovuma Basin gas development, making it a more attractive time to engage operators on future installation and hook-up contracts.
- **LNG:** The plant supports the supply chain underpinning Mozambique's LNG projects; Norwegian LNG technology and engineering firms should monitor operator re-mobilisation timelines and align business development accordingly.
- **Pipeline:** Onshore and nearshore pipeline contractors should note that Pemba's logistics hub is maturing, reducing one barrier to competitive project execution for any future gas export or tie-in pipeline scopes.
- **Service:** Norwegian well-services and inspection companies should evaluate whether SLB's local commitment creates subcontracting or frame-agreement opportunities, as major operators typically prefer integrated local supply chains when mobilising in frontier markets.

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