WOMEN FOR GREEN ECONOMY MOVEMENT UGANDA

THE GENDERED IMPACTS OF THE EAST AFRICAN CRUDE OIL PIPELINE (EACOP) IN UGANDA

putting womens rights,livelihoods and participation at the centre of oil developments

POLICY BRIEF

Context

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ABOUT WOGEM UGANDA

Women for Green Economy Movement Uganda (WoGEM Uganda) is a women-led organization working to advance women's rights, gender equality, climate justice and inclusive green economic development. WoGEM Uganda works to strengthen the voices and participation of women, particularly women and communities affected by environmental, climate and economic inequalities, in policy processes and decision-making.

Through research, advocacy, community engagement and policy influencing, WoGEM Uganda seeks to promote development pathways that are socially just, environmentally sustainable and responsive to the rights and realities of women and marginalized communities.

WOGEM UGANDA'S POSITION

Women should not bear the social and economic costs of development while being excluded from its benefits and decisions.

A just transition in Uganda must place women's rights, economic security, participation and wellbeing at its center.

Executive Summary

The East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) is one of Uganda's largest oil infrastructure projects, connecting Uganda's oil fields in Albertine region to the coast of Tanzania for export. While the project is presented as an important investment in Uganda's petroleum sector and economic development, its impacts extend beyond the physical construction of a pipeline.

For women living in communities affected by the project, the consequences of land acquisition, displacement and changing livelihoods are shaped by existing inequalities in access to land, control over household resources, economic opportunities and decision-making. This is what makes the gender dimensions of EACOP particularly important.

Women may depend heavily on land and natural resources for food production, household income and family welfare while having less control over land ownership and compensation. When land is acquired, therefore, the loss experienced by a woman may not be limited to the loss of property. It can affect her ability to feed her family, earn an income, access productive resources, care for dependents and exercise economic independence.

The project's own Human Rights Impact Assessment identified risks affecting women in relation to employment, land and compensation, livelihoods, health, gender-based violence and access to information and consultation. Independent gender analysis of the project's environmental and social assessments has similarly highlighted concerns around women's land rights, food security, unpaid care work, employment and safety.

EACOP has subsequently introduced gender equality and social inclusion measures, including women's participation in resettlement processes, gender-focused consultations, livelihood restoration programmes and initiatives addressing gender-based violence. The company also reports that women and men are involved jointly in several stages of land acquisition and compensation processes. However, the existence of policies and programmes should not be treated as evidence that gender impacts have been fully addressed. The critical question is whether these measures are producing meaningful improvements in women's lives.

For WoGEM Uganda, a gender -responsive approach to EACOP must therefore go beyond counting women who attended meetings or received training. It must ask whether women have retained or regained secure access to land, whether they control economic resources, whether their livelihoods have been restored, whether their livelihoods have been restored, whether their unpaid care burden has increased, whether they are safe from violence and exploitation and whether their voices have meaningful influence over decisions affecting their lives.

WoGEM Uganda calls for:

- Strong protection of women's land and property rights throughout the EACOP project cycle.
- Meaningful participation of women in compensation, resettlement and livelihood decisions.

- Gender-responsive livelihood restoration that measures actual economic outcomes.
- Stronger prevention and response mechanisms or gender-based violence and sexual harassment.
- Recognition, reduction and redistribution of women's unpaid care work.
- Transparent gender-disaggregated reporting on projects impacts and benefits.
- Independent monitoring of gender commitments
- Accessible and effective grievance and remedy mechanisms for affected women.

Oil development should not deepen existing gender inequalities. Economic development must be measured not only by infrastructure constructed or investment generated, but also by whether women affected by development are able to live safely, maintain their livelihoods, exercise their rights and participate meaningfully in decisions about their future.

Introduction

Uganda's discovery and development of petroleum resources has generated significant national attention around economic transformation, infrastructure development, employment and public revenue.

EACOP is a central component of this development. The pipeline will transport crude oil from Uganda through Tanzania to the Indian Ocean for export. In Uganda, the project passes through communities whose livelihoods are closely connected to land, agriculture and natural resources.

The discussion around EACOP has often focused on environmental concerns, compensation, resettlement, investment and national economic benefits. These issues are important. However, a gender lens is necessary because women and men do not experience land acquisition, economic displacement or large scale development projects in the same way.

Gender inequality influences who owns land, who makes decisions about household assets, who controls money, who has access to employment and who carriers unpaid care responsibilities. Consequently, a project can comply with formal compensation procedures while women within affected households still experience economic and social disadvantage.

This policy brief therefore examines the gendered dimensions of EACOP and identifies policy measures needed to ensure that oil development does not reproduce or deepen existing inequalities affecting women.

2. Why a Gender Lens Matters

Gender is not simply about counting how many women participate in a project. It is about understanding the different positions occupied by women and men within households, communities, markets and institutions,

In many rural communities, women contribute significantly to agricultural production and household welfare but may have limited control over land and productive assets. Cultural practices, customary arrangements and economic dependence can further affect women's ability to negotiate decisions concerning family property.

The EACOP Human Rights Impact Assessment recognized these challenges, noting risks of discrimination affecting women in relation to land and compensation, employment, livelihoods, health, gender-based violence and access to information and consultation. This means that gender considerations should not be added after decisions about land acquisition and compensation have already been made. They should be integrated into every stage of the project.

3. Gendered Impacts of EACOP

Land Acquisition and women's Land Rights

Land is more than an economic asset.

For rural women, land can provide food, income, housing, security and a means of supporting children and other dependents' women's relationship with land is often shaped by customary practices and household power relations. A woman may cultivate land without holding formal ownership or may depend on a spouse or male relative for decisions concerning the land.

The EACOP Human Rights Impact Assessment recognized that customary practices in Uganda can restrict women's ability to own, inherit or control property and the produce from land they work. This creates a particular concern when land acquired for infrastructure.

Where compensation is negotiated primarily at household level, the interests of women maybe overlooked even where they depend directly on the affected land.

Why this matter

- Loss of land can result in:
- Reduced agricultural production
- Loss of household food sources
- Reduced income
- Loss of access to natural resources
- Increased dependence on other household members
- Reduced economic independence

Greater vulnerability for widows, women - headed households and women in insecure relationships.

Policy implication: Land acquisition must recognize not only formal ownership but also the legitimate interests and livelihood dependence of women.

4. Compensation Does Not Automatically Equal Economic Security.

Compensation is intended to address losses resulting from land acquisition and displacement.

However, receiving compensation does not necessarily mean that every household member benefit equally from that compensation. This is particularly important where social and economic power within households is unequal.

EACOP reports that spouses are involved in the compensation process and that compensation agreements include spousal consent. These measures are important safeguards. However, they need to be accompanied by continued monitoring of what happens after compensation is paid.

The key policy question should therefore move beyond:

"Was compensation paid?"

To

"Did compensation improve or restore the economic security of affected women and their households?"

Women should have access to clear information about compensation, independent advice where necessary and meaningful participation in decisions concerning the use of compensation.

5. Livelihoods, Agriculture and Food Security.

For many affected communities, land is closely connected to agriculture and household food security.

The gender analysis of EACOP's environmental and social assessments identified land, livelihoods and food security as important gender concerns. It also highlighted the role women play in agricultural production and household welfare.

When productive land is lost, women may experience a double burden.

First, they may lose a source of food or income.

Second, they have to compensate for that loss through additional unpaid work, such as searching for alternative sources of food, water or income and caring for household members affected by economic hardship.

This means livelihood restoration must be assessed according to actual changes in household and women's economic wellbeing

rather than simply the delivery of training or inputs. Livelihood restoration programme is meaningful when women can actually rebuild sustainable livelihoods.

6. Women's Economic Empowerment and Employment.

Oil and infrastructure development can create employment, enterprise and procurement opportunities. However, women may not automatically benefit from these opportunities.

Barriers can include;

- Limited access to technical training
- Limited access to finance
- Unpaid care responsibilities
- Social expectations about women's roles
- Lack of information about opportunities
- Discrimination in traditionally male dominated sectors
- Insecurity or harassment in workplaces.

The EACOP Human Rights Impact Assessment identified women's employment and discrimination as areas requiring attention. A gender-responsive approach should therefore ask not only how many people have been employed but also;

Which women are benefiting? What positions do they hold? Are they receiving decent and safe employment? Are women from affected communities accessing opportunities?

Women -owned businesses should similarly have meaningful opportunities to participate in project related procurement and local economic activity.

7. Unpaid care work: The invisible impact

One of the least visible gendered impacts of large infrastructure and displacement processes is unpaid care work.

Women in Uganda already carry a disproportionate share of unpaid domestic and care responsibilities. This includes caring for children, older persons, sick family members and persons with disabilities, as well as collecting water, preparing food and maintaining households.

Ugandan gender research has consistently shown that unpaid care work affects women's ability to participate in paid employment, education, economic activity and public decision making.

The gender analysis of EACOP also identified unpaid care work as an issue requiring attention, particularly where changes in health, water, access, livelihoods and household circumstances may increase women's responsibilities.

This is a critical policy issue.

If displacement reduces access to water, healthcare, markets or productive land, women may have to spend more time securing basic necessities for their families.

The result can be a hidden transfer of the social costs of development onto women's time. Development should not be built on women's unpaid labour.

8. Gender -Based Violence and Women's Safety.

Large scale projects can change the social and economic environment in communities.

The movement of workers, changing household incomes, economic dependence, unequal power relations and employment -related vulnerabilities can create or intensify risks of gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and harassment.

The EACOP Human Rights Impact Assessment identified gender-based violence as one of the areas requiring attention.

EACOP has subsequently undertaken GBV awareness and sexual and reproductive health initiatives in communities along the project route. However, awareness alone is not enough.

Women need safe and confidential mechanisms through which they can report violence and harassment, obtain healthcare and psychosocial support, access legal assistance and seek remedy without fear of retaliation or stigma.

Contactors and workers should also be held to clear standards on sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse.

9. Women's participation and voice

Participation should mean more than inviting women to meetings.

For women to participate meaningfully, they need:

- Timely and understandable information
- Safe spaces to express concerns
- Opportunities to participate without intimidation
- Access to information about their rights
- Representation in decision making structures
- Feedback on how their concerns were addressed
- Accessible grievance mechanisms

EACOP has reported the use of women -only meetings and engagement processes intended to facilitate women's participation. It also reports involving both spouses at key stages of the land acquisition and resettlement process.

These approaches provide an important foundation.

The next step is to measure whether women's participation actually influences decisions. A woman being present in a meeting is not the same as a woman having power in that meeting.

10. Women and Grievance Mechanisms

Effective grievance mechanisms are essential where communities experience land, livelihood or social impacts.

For women, however, grievance mechanisms must take account of gender -specific barriers.

A woman may hesitate to report a concern because;

She depends economically on the person responsible.

She fears retaliation

She lacks information about where to report

She does not trust the institution handling the complaint

She cannot travel easily because of care responsibilities

Cultural expectations discourage her from speaking publicly.

Grievance systems should therefore provide multiple channels for reporting, including confidential options.

Women should also be informed about how complaints are handled and what remedies are available.

11. Policy and Legal Framework

The protection of women affected by EACOP is supported by Uganda's existing legal and policy framework.

Constitution of Uganda

The constitution recognizes women's rights to equality and equal opportunities and provides for affirmative action to address inequalities against women.

Land Act

Uganda's Land Act contains protections concerning spouses 'security of occupancy on family land requires spousal consent in specified transactions involving family land.

These provisions are particularly relevant where land acquired for infrastructure constitutes a family's residence or source of livelihood.

National Gender Policy

Uganda's National Gender policy provides a framework for integrating gender equality into development planning and addressing structural inequalities affecting women.

Petroleum Government Framework

Uganda's petroleum laws and institutions establish requirements for responsible petroleum development, environmental management, participation and protection of affected communities.

Intentional Standards

EACOP's project framework also refers to international standards, including IFC performance standards .IFC performance standards requires appropriate consultation, compensation and livelihood restoration for people affected by land acquisition and involuntary resettlement.

These frameworks provide an important foundation. The challenge is ensuring that rights and safeguards are realized in practice.

12. Where the Policy Gap Remains

There is a distinction between having a gender policy and achieving gender equality.

EACOP has developed gender and social inclusion commitments and reports measures designed to protect women's participation and right's in land acquisition and resettlement.

The continuing policy concern is therefore one of implementation, transparency, monitoring and accountability.

There is a need for greater public understanding of what gender commitments mean at community level.

For example

Are women actually able to maintain or regain productive livelihoods?

Do women have meaningful control over economic benefits?

Have affected women experienced increased care responsibilities?

Are women able to access employment and enterprise opportunities?

Are GBV prevention and response services accessible?

Can women safely use grievance mechanisms?

Are women's concerns reflected in project decisions?

What happens when commitments are not met?

These are the questions that should guide the next phase of monitoring

13. WoGEM Uganda's policy Recommendations

1. **Put women's land rights at the center of resettlement**

Government and project actors should ensure that women's legitimate interests in land are identified and protected throughout land acquisition, compensation and resettlement.

Special attention should be given to women headed households, widows, women in customary arrangements and women whose livelihoods depend on land without formal ownership.

2. Ensure women's meaningful control over compensation

Women should not simply be present during compensation processes. They should have meaningful opportunities to understand, participate in and influence decisions concerning compensation and resettlement.

Where women have recognized interests in affected land or property, those interested should be documented and protected.

3. Measure livelihood restoration through outcomes

Livelihood restoration should be assessed according to whether affected women are able to rebuild sustainable livelihoods.

Monitoring should consider;

- Income
- Food security
- Access to productive land
- Access to markets
- Ownership of productive assets
- Enterprise development
- Employment
- Economic independence
- Women's decision-making power.

4. Create stronger economic opportunities for women

EACOP and government should strengthen women's access to:

- Skills development
- Decent employment
- Entrepreneurship
- Financial services
- Procurement opportunities
- Markets
- Technical training

Women from affected communities should be prioritized for appropriate economic opportunities.

5. Recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work

Project planning and community development programmes should assess whether project related changes increase women's unpaid care responsibilities.

Investment in water, healthcare, childcare, transport and other essential services should be treated as part of gender -responsive development rather than as secondary social interventions.

6. Strengthen prevention and response to GBV

GBV prevention must be supported by functioning response systems.

Women and girls should have access to:

- Confidential reporting
- Healthcare
- Psychosocial support
- Legal assistance
- Survivor -centered referrals
- Effective remedies

Contractors and project workers should be subject to clear standards and accountability mechanisms concerning sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse.

7. Make women's participation meaningful

Women should be represented in community level monitoring and decision-making structures.

Consultations should include safe spaces for women, including women who may be unable to speak freely in mixed community meetings.

Particular attention should be paid to women with disabilities and other women facing multiple forms of exclusion.

8. Strengthen independent monitoring

Government should facilitate independent monitoring of the gendered impacts of EACOP.

Women's rights organizations, local civil society organizations, affected communities and independent researchers should be able to participate in monitoring without intimidation or exclusion.

Monitoring finding should be made publicly accessible.

9. Strengthen gender -disaggregated reporting

Project reporting should provide meaningful gender-disaggregated information on:

- Land acquisition
- Compensation
- Livelihood restoration
- Employment
- Procurement
- Grievances
- GBV prevention and response
- Community participation

- Project benefits.

This information should be presented in a way that communities can understand and use.

10. Ensure access to remedy

Where women experience adverse impacts, they should have access to effective and accessible remedies.

Grievance mechanisms should be independent enough to inspire confidence, responsive to gender-specific barriers and capable of referring serious complaints to the appropriate state institutions.

14. Proposed Accountability Framework

Area	What should be monitored?	Who should be accountable?
Land	Women's interests and access to affected land	Government, EACOP and relevant land institutions
Compensation	Women's participation and protection of their interests	EACOP and responsible government institutions
Livelihoods	Whether women have restored sustainable livelihoods	EACOP, government and local authorities
Employment	Women's access to decent of safe work	EACOP and contractors
Enterprise	Access of women-owned businesses to opportunities	EACOP, contractors and government
Care work	Changes in women's unpaid care burden	Government, local, authorities and project actors
GBV	Prevention, reporting, referral and remedy	EACOP, contractors, government and service providers
Participation	Women's influence over project decisions	EACOP and responsible government institutions
Grievances	Accessibility and effectiveness of complaints mechanisms	EACOP and relevant authorities
Transparency	Public availability of gender - disaggregated information	Government and EACOP

15. Key Messages for Policymakers

1. Compensation is not the same as restoration

A woman may receive compensation within a household while still losing her economic security.

2. Land rights are women's rights

Protecting women's relationship with land must be central to resettlement and livelihood restoration

3. Unpaid care is an economic issue

When development increases women's unpaid workload, women bear part of the hidden cost of development.

4. Participation must translate into influence

Women should not simply be consulted; their views should shape decisions

5. Economic benefits must reach women

Women should have fair access to employment, enterprise, procurement and livelihood opportunities created around the project.

6. Safety cannot be treated as an afterthought

Preventing gendered -based violence and sexual harassment requires functioning systems for prevention, reporting, response and remedy.

7. Accountability requires evidence

Gender -disaggregated information is necessary to determine whether commitments are actually improving women's lives.

16. Conclusion

The EACOP project presents Uganda with an important policy question: what does responsible development mean for women whose land, livelihoods and communities are affected by major infrastructure projects?

For WoGEM Uganda, the answer cannot be limited to whether compensation has been paid or whether women have been included in consultations.

Responsible development must protect women's rights, strengthen their economic agency and ensure that development does not reproduce the inequalities that already limit women's opportunities.

The gendered impacts of EACOP are rooted in broader structural inequalities around land ownership, household decision-making, unpaid care, access to employment and economic resources. These inequalities existed before the project and may be intensified when communities experience displacement or changes in livelihoods.

At the same time, the project has established gender and social inclusion measures, and EACOP reports efforts to involve women in land acquisition, resettlement, livelihood restoration and GBV prevention.

The responsibility now is to ensure that these commitments translate into measurable and lasting improvements.

WoGEM Uganda therefore calls upon the Government of Uganda, EACOP, local governments, regulators, development partners and other stakeholders to place women's rights at the center of the continuing implementation, monitoring and governance of EACOP.

The success of development should not be measured only by what is built.

It should also be measured by whose lives improve, whose voices are heard, whose rights are protected and who is able to benefit from the development being purse

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