



Press Statement:

October 6, 2021

RE: ICT, INFRASTRUCTURE, INDUSTRY, OIL & GAS DOMINATE ESIA SUBMISSIONS OVER THE LAST 10 YEARS

NEMA is mandated by law to review and make decisions on Environment and Social Impact Assessments (EISA). ESIA is an analytical and systematic process that examines the likely environmental and social aspects of proposed development projects.

The process enables NEMA, the relevant Lead Agencies and stakeholders to identify and propose appropriate mitigation and monitoring measures for both anticipated and unanticipated environmental risks. Project approval is only granted after specific requirements have been met. NEMA continues to monitor all projects during the different phases of operation and development to ensure compliance to the conditions of approval.

Over the last years, NEMA has registered continuous growth in the number EISA reports specifically in ICT, Infrastructure, Industry, and Oil & Gas sectors accounting for 91.3% of the total number of projects approved. The dominance of these sectors is attributed to the last two National Development Plans (NDP III & NDP II) that put emphasis completion of high level projects such as industrial parks, ICT connectivity, hydropower dams (Isimba, Karuma, Nyagak (etc.)) oil roads and support infrastructure.

Since 2011, a total of 11,604 project proposals from different sectors have been submitted to NEMA, out of which 7,637 have been approved while the rest have been rejected. The trend is an indication of increasing compliance and awareness among the regulated sectors regarding the requirement for Environment and Social Impact Assessment before project approval.

With the ever increasing number of submissions, NEMA has since automated the ESIA review process by adopting an electronic database designed to improve efficiency and enable digital tracking of the Environment Impact Studies. This intervention was undertaken as a measure to minimize or eliminate previous delays associated with manual ESIA review processes.

Automation has enabled NEMA to continue operating normally even at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, when nationwide lockdowns were enforced in 2020 and 2021. While the economy was closed to contain the pandemic, developers were still able to submit ESIA studies for review online and consequently, there was no significant decrease in the number of projects submitted for review between 2020 and 2021.

Implication of the developments on the environment

The high number of infrastructural projects is exerting pressure on the natural resource base, due to increasing demand for fuel and construction materials, like sand, murram, and stone from quarries, wood, clay, and water. As a result, Uganda is facing degradation of the environment in some areas through removal of natural vegetation, distortion of drainage channels, pollution of air and water; and yet the restoration of scarred areas has been slow or inadequate.

On a positive note, these projects have created employment opportunities for the youth, expanded income and tax bases, stable internet connectivity, a constant supply and nationwide distribution of electricity and water, and upgraded road infrastructure. This has facilitated e-commerce and sped up monetary transactions among others.

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