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# Ophir kick-starts year with deepwater drilling in Tanzania

Ophir Energy has spudded the first well in a planned programme of at least nine and has set out plans for seismic work across its portfolio.

Mzia-1, previously known as 1W – in Tanzania’s Block 1 located in the Mafia Deep Offshore Basin Ruvuma Basin – was spudded on January 1 by the Metro-1 drillship in 1,500 metres of water.

Part of a batch drilling programme, the top hole section of Mzia-1 is expected to take up to 10 days. The rig will then move to and complete drilling at Jodari-1 – which is likely to take 40 days, spudding in 1,155 metres of water and drilling to a total subsea depth of around 4,600 metres. Once Jodari-1 is completed, the rig will return to Mzia-1.

Ophir holds a 40% interest in Tanzania’s Blocks 1, 3 and 4 and was previously the operator. It has, though, handed over operatorship to its joint venture partner, BG International, which has a 60% stake.

Ophir is the operator of Tanzania’s East Pande licence, where a 2,200-square km 3-D seismic programme began on December 30, 2011. It is thought the survey will take 40 days to complete and drilling may begin in late 2012. Ophir has a 70% share in this prospect, with RAKGas holding the remainder.

Focusing on the Tanzanian drilling programme and providing updates on other assets, Ophir’s CEO, Nick Cooper, said 2012 was potentially “transformational” for the UK independent in a statement issued on January 3.

A 60-day drilling programme at Block R, offshore Equatorial Guinea, is likely to start in late March and will include one or more appraisal wells at the Fortuna-1 discovery and exploration wells on the Silenus and Tonel prospects.

A 2,100-square km 3-D seismic survey to focus on subsalt targets in Gabon’s Mbeli and Ntsina licences began on December 26, with completion expected in 42 days. Drilling is anticipated during late 2012. ■