

People in Need and the Lobito Corridor

**A Strategic Contribution to the EU's
360° Vision within the Global Gateway**



1 Unlocking Inclusive Development along the Lobito Corridor: PIN’s Strategic Contribution to the EU’s 360° Approach within the Global Gateway

The EU’s Global Gateway has identified the [Lobito Corridor](#) as a flagship investment—linking Africa’s mineral-rich heartlands with global markets and shaping inclusive growth across Angola, Zambia, and the DRC. Realising this ambition requires more than transport and energy infrastructure: it depends on the institutions, skills, and partnerships that allow investments to deliver lasting dividends.

[People in Need \(PIN\)](#) is the EU’s implementing partner with a long-term presence in all three Corridor countries. Over nearly two decades, we have built trusted local partnerships, generated evidence, and strengthened civil society and inclusive markets. Our approach anchors “hardware” investments in the “humanware” of skills, institutions, and social capital—helping to reduce risks, strengthen accountability, and translate capital flows into inclusive and sustainable outcomes.

In Angola, we have supported the transition from post-conflict assistance to systemic development; in the DRC, we combine humanitarian response with innovations in circular economy and clean energy; in Zambia, we are a key partner for EU investment in climate-resilient value chains, ecosystem restoration, and civil society strengthening. These experiences allow PIN to connect local realities with regional ambitions, offering a constructive contribution to the EU’s 360° approach.

PIN’s vision is for the Lobito Corridor to become Africa’s green and inclusive trade artery—connecting communities and markets across Angola, DRC, and Zambia, while delivering climate resilient and locally led development that benefits people, investors, and the planet. PIN’s **Theory of Change** centres on enabling community-driven, accountable, and transparent development through civil society engagement. It seeks to foster inclusive and sustainable economic growth that benefits local communities while encouraging responsible private investment—all while protecting natural resources and ensuring long-term environmental resilience.

This document brings together findings from our analyses and lessons learned to date—including value chain studies, civil society assessments, and governance ecosystem mapping—and outlines concrete programmatic approaches with actionable recommendations. PIN will continue to update and expand this knowledge base, including through new multi-country surveys of civil society organisations, so that the Global Gateway’s vision for the Lobito Corridor can translate into sustainable, inclusive, and accountable outcomes for people, investors, and the EU alike.

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2 Introducing Corridor Voices – People in Need’s Contribution to the Global Gateway in the Lobito Corridor

2.1 Why it matters

The Lobito Corridor is a Global Gateway flagship with the ambition to connect Angola, Zambia, and the DRC to global markets. Yet, infrastructure alone will not deliver the EU’s 360° vision. Without inclusion, climate safeguards, and local ownership, it risks replicating extractive patterns of the past:

- Exclusion of youth, women, and rural communities from economic opportunities.
- Environmental risks (deforestation, biodiversity loss, water depletion) undermining resilience.
- Weak legitimacy if local voices are sidelined, increasing risk of contested or failed investments.

The EU’s added value lies not only in building roads and railways, but in building trust, accountability, and inclusive, locally led systems.

2.2 Our Solution: Corridor Voices

Corridor Voices is People in Need’s flagship mechanism to deliver the EU’s 360° approach along the Lobito Corridor.

It is a locally led, cross-border initiative that ensures communities, civil society, SMEs, and expert organizations are meaningfully engaged in shaping Corridor development. It connects local priorities with Global Gateway governance—turning infrastructure into inclusive, climate-resilient, and locally led development.

Core functions:

- **Voice & Inclusion:** Amplify perspectives of women, youth, and marginalised groups.
- **Knowledge & Data:** Share assessments, evidence, and studies.
- **Skills & Capacity:** Link training and enterprise development to corridor value chains.
- **Partnership & Innovation:** Pilot inclusive business models and blended finance.
- **Accountability & Transparency:** Monitor safeguards, enable citizen feedback, and strengthen legitimacy.

Participation model:

- **Core Corridor Voices (CV):** Local CSOs, SMEs, and experts define priorities and co-create evidence and science-based policy proposals in collaboration with expert organizations.
- **Corridor Voices & Partners (CV&P):** Structured dialogue with governments, EU, and large investors—without losing local ownership.
- **Future streams:** CV & Environment, CV & Youth to deepen impact on key issues.

2.3 Why this matters for the EU / Global Gateway

- **De-risks investments:** CSO watchdog role reduces social and political risks.
- **Delivers EU comparative advantage:** EU is differentiated by quality, standards, and inclusivity—not just scale.

- **Implements the 360° approach:** Pairing infrastructure (“hardware”) with governance, skills, and safeguards (“humanware”).
- **Supports Team Europe priorities:** climate resilience, private sector mobilisation, digitalisation, skills.
- **Scales impact:** Civil society engagement makes projects up to 50% more likely to achieve social goals (OECD-DAC).

2.4 Key Recommendations

1. **Institutionalise civil society** in Lobito Corridor governance as enablers, not just stakeholders.
2. **Invest in youth and women** as leaders of inclusive value chains and watchdogs of the green transition.
3. **Finance humanware** alongside hardware: value chains, finance, and market systems that make infrastructure meaningful.
4. **Embed climate safeguards** from the outset—fund nature-based solutions and local adaptation.
5. **Support Corridor Voices as a structured dialogue mechanism**—linking EU, governments, private sector, civil society, and local communities.

Civil Society and Inclusive Governance Analysis in Angola's Lobito Corridor Space

June 2025



1 Introduction

People in Need (PIN) has been working in Angola since 2006, implementing programmes across three core pillars: Emergency Response and Recovery, Climate Resilience, and Civil Society and Inclusive Governance. Our work has focused on empowering civil society actors, supporting youth civic engagement, strengthening inclusive governance of public services, and advancing climate-resilient food, WASH, and livelihood systems. As the EU's Global Gateway Strategy and the Lobito Corridor flagship programme open new opportunities, PIN is building on this experience to position itself as a trusted EU partner in Angola, leveraging its track record in civil society development, inclusive governance, youth engagement, human rights, and climate resilience.

To support this, PIN conducted the Civil Society and Inclusive Governance Analysis to gather evidence and provide the EU with strategic and actionable recommendations in the areas of civil society engagement, inclusive governance, and human rights. The analysis highlights opportunities and risks linked to planned Lobito Corridor investments, ensuring that EU programming can be anchored in inclusive, locally led systems, thus de-risking investments and ensuring their sustainability and long-term economic returns. The findings from the analysis form part of PIN's broader regional strategy covering Angola, the DRC, and Zambia and will be continuously enriched with more evidence, data and in-depth research studies.

2 Methodology

The analysis applied a qualitative methodology to gather evidence on civil society engagement, governance, and human rights dimensions linked to the development of the Lobito Corridor in Angola. The approach was designed to gather actionable insights and provide the European Union with strategic recommendations on the Global Gateway's flagship programme, while also contributing to a broader regional perspective across Angola, Zambia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

2.1 Scope of the Analysis

The data collection explored three interrelated thematic areas:

1. **Human rights and social impacts of the Lobito Corridor investments**, including risks related to land rights, displacement, labor conditions, and the inclusion of marginalized groups such as women, youth, and indigenous communities;
2. **Civil society role, capacity, and coordination**, with attention to CSOs' readiness for oversight, advocacy, service delivery, and participation in local development planning;
3. **Governance, transparency, and accountability mechanisms**, including stakeholder perceptions of investment transparency and the existence or potential of multi-stakeholder coordination structures at sub-national levels.

2.2 Data Collection Methods

Data were gathered through two primary methods:

Desk Review of relevant secondary materials including donor strategies, policy documents, programme reports, and research related to the Lobito Corridor, civil society, and governance trends in Angola.

Key Informant Interviews conducted with:

- **Civil society organizations:** 3 interviews with local CSOs operating in Bailundo, Huambo, and Caála;
- **Community members:** 3 interviews, including a community activist from Caála and a traditional authority (*Soba Grande*) and pastor from Bailundo;
- **Local public authorities:** 5 interviews in Huambo, Caála, and Bailundo with representatives from the health, nutrition, and public administration sectors;
- **Key stakeholders** with direct relevance to the Lobito Corridor: including Mosaiko (leading Angolan human rights organization), the Netherlands Embassy (Ambassador-level), the Huambo office of the National Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (INEFOP), Lobito Atlantic Railway (LAR), the Huambo Train Station office, and the Provincial Economic Development Office.

The analysis concentrated on the Huambo Province, which sits at the centre of the planned Lobito Corridor developments, while engaging key national-level stakeholders.

2.3 Data Processing and Analysis

All interviews were documented through detailed notes and coded thematically against the three core areas of inquiry. Analysis focused on identifying key patterns, stakeholder perspectives, capacity strengths and gaps, emerging risks, and opportunities for programmatic engagement. The methodology aimed to gather insights from communities, civil society, and local government to provide a well-rounded understanding of governance and civil society dynamics related to the Lobito Corridor.

2.4 Limitations

PIN recognizes the limited scope of this analysis in terms of both the number of respondents and overall representativeness. It should be considered as a first overview of the civil society ecosystem in Angola's Lobito Corridor space. The findings will be further enriched through a quantitative CSO survey and additional in-depth assessments exploring specific sub-themes highlighted in this initial analysis.

3 Context

Angola presents a complex development landscape marked by both strategic potential and deep-rooted structural challenges. With a population exceeding 36 million and a strategic location connecting Southern and Central Africa to the Atlantic, the country is rich in natural resources, arable land, and a young population with the potential to boost economic growth. With all this, Angola is characterised by high rates of poverty. 31% of the population is living in extreme poverty according to World Poverty Clock.¹ Unemployment remains widespread, particularly among youth. Structural constraints—such as limited

¹ <https://worldpoverty.io/>

economic diversification, underdeveloped human capital, and institutional fragility—continue to suppress inclusive growth.²

The country maintains a highly centralized, top-down governance structure. Despite constitutional commitments to decentralisation, power remains concentrated in Luanda, with provincial and municipal governments lacking autonomy, budget oversight, and technical capacity.³ Governance deficits are worsened by systemic corruption, with Angola ranking low on Transparency International’s 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index (121st of 180).⁴ Despite some anti-corruption reforms under President Lourenço, public procurement remains opaque, and judiciary and media independence are weak.

In terms of civic space, Angola is currently rated as “Repressed” on the CIVICUS Monitor’s five-tier scale (ranging from *Open* to *Closed*), and “Not Free” by Freedom House, with a score of 28 out of 100 (10/40 for political rights and 18/60 for civil liberties). These ratings reflect a highly restricted civic space where civil society operates under significant legal, political, and institutional constraints, underscoring the urgent need to protect fundamental freedoms and support inclusive governance mechanisms.

Throughout 2024, Angola faced significant human rights challenges marked by reports of police brutality—including killings, sexual violence, torture, and excessive force against activists, protesters, and vulnerable groups such as women street vendors. Children suffered severely from chronic malnutrition amid worsening drought and food insecurity, with thousands facing acute hunger and displacement pressures. The government enacted laws severely restricting media freedom, expression, and peaceful assembly, drawing condemnation from international bodies concerned about the shrinking civic space. Two new laws passed in August 2024 significantly curtailed freedoms: the Law on Crimes of Vandalism imposed harsh penalties on protest participants, while the National Security Law granted sweeping powers for media interference and surveillance without judicial oversight. Peaceful protests were frequently met with arbitrary detention and intimidation, and journalists covering dissent faced harassment and equipment seizures.⁵

Despite this restrictive context, civil society in Angola remains a vital force in social development, governance, and public participation. It encompasses more than just formally registered NGOs. The civil society ecosystem includes academia (contributing through research and training), traditional authorities (acting as intermediaries in rural areas), and faith-based organizations (which provide civic education and community leadership). It also includes community-based organizations (CBOs) with limited resources but deep local engagement, as well as women’s rights groups, youth platforms, and thematic networks in health, education, and the environment.

These diverse actors form a dynamic and resilient civil society that plays a critical role in service delivery, civic engagement, and holding authorities accountable. However, they continue to face significant operational barriers—including financial constraints, limited institutional support, and restrictive regulations. Recognizing this broader context is crucial for designing inclusive and sustainable support strategies for civil society in Angola.

² <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/angola/overview>

³ <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/AGO>

⁴ <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2024/index/ago>

⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/angola>, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/angola/freedom-world/2025> and <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/repressive-new-laws-threaten-civic-space/>

A closer examination of Angolan CSOs⁶ reveals key characteristics across four core dimensions—organizational capacity, financial viability, advocacy, and service provision—as outlined below based on the CSO Sustainability Index (2021).⁷

Organizational Capacity

CSOs in Angola display moderate but gradually improving organizational capacity. Many have adopted more participatory approaches to project design, integrating community input and conducting needs assessments. Strategic planning practices are becoming more widespread, particularly among well-established organizations that receive international or corporate funding. These CSOs often maintain internal regulations, management tools, and increasingly apply conflict-of-interest policies. However, human resource challenges persist, as many organizations struggle to retain staff due to low and irregular salaries. Access to technology is uneven—urban CSOs are more digitally equipped, while rural ones rely heavily on mobile phones and social media platforms. While digital communication and cybersecurity awareness have increased since the pandemic, infrastructure gaps and connectivity costs remain significant barriers.

Financial Viability

The financial sustainability of Angolan CSOs remains fragile. Most organizations are highly dependent on international donors, with limited access to domestic funding from either the public or private sectors. Though some relief funding was available during the pandemic, long-term financial stability continues to be a concern. Local CSOs often find themselves in a weaker position than international NGOs, which tend to secure the majority of donor resources. Bureaucratic barriers—such as limited time to respond to funding opportunities and misunderstandings about tax obligations—further complicate access to funds. Income generation is rare and limited to a few organizations providing consultancy or technical services. Larger CSOs tend to have stronger financial management systems, including accounting software and external audits, while smaller organizations often lack such capacity.

Advocacy

Advocacy by civil society in Angola has seen modest improvements, benefiting from a slightly more open attitude from parts of the government. CSOs have engaged in policy discussions, particularly in public health, youth empowerment, and legal reforms. Organizations are increasingly using digital platforms to coordinate efforts across provinces and amplify their voices. Nonetheless, systemic challenges persist—many public officials still lack awareness of the value of civil society, and weak institutional capacity within government often results in inconsistent engagement. Despite these challenges, CSOs continue to advocate for reforms in the legal and regulatory framework and work toward strengthening their collective influence on national development agendas.

Service Provision

Service delivery is one of the strongest and most recognized functions of Angolan CSOs. Organizations operate across key sectors such as health, education, water and sanitation,

⁶ CSO Sustainability index report also adopts a broad definition of CSOs: any organizations, whether formal or informal, that are not part of the apparatus of government, that do not distribute profits to their directors or operators, that are self-governing, and in which participation is a matter of free choice.

⁷ <https://www.fhi360.org/wp-content/uploads/drupal/documents/csosi-africa-2021-report.pdf>

social protection, and environmental conservation. They are responsive to community needs, often initiating activities based on consultations and needs assessments. During the COVID-19 pandemic, CSOs were quick to adapt, delivering prevention services and awareness-raising campaigns. Their services are typically offered at no cost, as they primarily target vulnerable populations. Local governments frequently acknowledge the value of CSO contributions and, in some cases, draw on their expertise in municipal planning and implementation.

Overall, Angola's development landscape presents a paradox: while there is strong political commitment to economic growth and infrastructure expansion, including major investments like the Lobito Corridor, this progress coexists with persistent human rights risks such as forced evictions, growing social inequalities, and limited public participation. Civil society remains underdeveloped and under-resourced, particularly in areas of oversight and advocacy, with many organisations focusing on service delivery rather than accountability. Governance structures remain highly centralized, with power concentrated in Luanda and the executive, leaving local administrations with limited autonomy and capacity. These dynamics are compounded by entrenched corruption and a lack of transparency in public decision-making, which continue to undermine meaningful accountability and inclusive development. Without more robust investment in social protection, job creation, and equitable development, Angola risks stagnation amid rising demographic and economic pressures.

3.2 Lobito Corridor

The Lobito Corridor project is a transformative infrastructure initiative designed to connect Angola, the DRC, and Zambia to global markets via Angola's Lobito port. Spearheaded by the EU under its Global Gateway⁸ strategy and the United States through the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII)⁹, its core objective is to enhance regional trade, foster economic diversification, and promote sustainable development. Angola is central to this trans-African route, facilitating the export of critical minerals, agricultural products, and other goods, thereby reducing transportation times and costs. Significant investments include €76.5 million from the EU for trade, vocational training (PROSPERA), and biodiversity, approximately \$500 million from the African Development Bank (AfDB)¹⁰, and a total US commitment of \$4 billion to refurbish railway lines and other priorities.¹¹

Although the United States has taken a leading role in advancing the Lobito Corridor through the PGII, China continues to wield considerable influence in the region's infrastructure and resource sectors. Less than ten years ago, China financed and rehabilitated 1,300 kilometres of the Benguela railway, reinforcing its strategic presence. Notably, it also contested the operational concession for the railway, though unsuccessfully. Its ongoing construction of the USD 6 billion Lobito Refinery, backed by a guarantee from the Angolan government, further highlights its enduring role. China

⁸ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway_en

⁹ <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/05/20/fact-sheet-partnership-for-global-infrastructure-and-investment-at-the-g7-summit/>

¹⁰ <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/african-development-bank-joins-global-partners-raise-financing-16-bn-multinational-lobito-transportation-corridor-programme-65357>

¹¹ <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/africasource/what-to-know-about-the-lobito-corridor-and-how-it-may-change-how-minerals-move/>

remains Angola's largest trading partner, underscoring its entrenched position in the country's economic landscape.¹²

Civil society actors interviewed as part of this analysis view the Lobito Corridor as a key opportunity for job creation and agricultural market growth but note low community awareness of its plans and impacts. They see themselves as intermediaries for information-sharing and in promoting inclusion, justice, and transparency. Despite this, interviewed CSOs acknowledge a gap in concrete planning for risk mitigation and clarifying their specific roles in implementation and monitoring, indicating a need for structured dialogue and capacity strengthening.

Regarding human rights and governance, transparency, and accountability, concerns arise from the lack of adequate communication and consultation with local communities along the railway. There is a fear of forced displacement and social tension, with past examples showing inadequate resettlement processes and communities fearing loss of land, homes, and social infrastructure. Governance is often perceived as centralized and top-down, bypassing authentic community processes and relying on traditional leaders who may lack broad legitimacy. Angola's history of corruption and lack of transparency in large infrastructure projects raises concerns about the misuse of funds. Experts emphasize that if democracy and civic space are not strengthened, the Lobito project's development "will not function or last".

In essence, the Lobito Corridor is a complex blueprint for regional connectivity and economic transformation. Its success hinges not only on infrastructure development but equally on transparent governance, robust accountability mechanisms, and meaningful engagement with civil society to safeguard human rights, deliver vital services and ensure equitable benefits for all communities involved. To ensure the Lobito Corridor translates into sustainable and equitable development, investments must be paired with robust social safeguards, comprehensive civil society capacity development and support that promotes transparency, local participation, and accountability.

4 Key Findings from the Analysis

4.1 Human Rights and Social Impacts of Lobito Corridor Investments

The Lobito Corridor has generated significant anticipation as a catalyst for economic transformation across Angola's interior provinces. However, stakeholder interviews reveal that the initiative currently faces governance, transparency, and inclusion challenges that may undermine its long-term developmental impact. Communities along the Corridor remain poorly informed and insufficiently consulted, and social safeguards appear weak or absent. Without intentional and inclusive planning, the project risks reinforcing existing inequalities, marginalising vulnerable populations, and entrenching a model of extractive development that benefits external actors more than local communities. The following key findings highlight the most pressing social, rights-based, and governance risks that must be addressed to ensure the Corridor supports just and equitable development.

Lack of Transparency and Community Engagement

Despite the high-profile nature of the Lobito Corridor initiative, communities along the

¹² <https://afripoli.org/a-game-changer-in-flux-recent-developments-and-risks-in-the-lobito-corridor>

route—particularly in Huambo, Bié, and Benguela—have limited access to information. Consultations, when held, typically engage traditional leaders, some of whom lack community legitimacy or function primarily as state intermediaries. Broader community engagement is largely absent, fuelling mistrust and uncertainty around who is involved, what infrastructure will be built, and how local people will be impacted or benefit.

Risks to Land Rights and Displacement

There is widespread concern that expansion or rehabilitation of rail lines and other corridor infrastructure may displace families without adequate consultation or compensation. In the past, communities in Huíla Province experienced forced removals in connection with infrastructure projects, with little regard for timing, school ties, or livelihoods. Compensation processes, seasonal timing (e.g., during rainy periods), and school calendars must be considered to minimise harm when relocation is unavoidable. These risks are compounded by unclear land tenure arrangements and weak legal protections for rural populations. Communities also need to be empowered to understand and influence decisions that affect them—particularly regarding land access, relocation plans, and compensation measures. While environmental damage is seen as less immediate—given that many tracks already exist—any new lines may pose a threat to nearby ecosystems.



Labour Conditions and Decent Work

Expectations around employment remain ambiguous and unfulfilled. The interviewed human rights organisation fears the majority of jobs created will be low-skilled, short-term, or outsourced, offering limited benefits to local populations. There is no public information about employment conditions, recruitment policies, or obligations for local hiring. Without clear standards, the risk of exploitative labour practices or unequal benefit-sharing remains high—especially in transport, logistics, and mining sectors.

Gender and Social Exclusion

The Corridor's development risks reinforcing social inequalities unless corrective measures are taken. Women, youth, and other marginalised groups are not systematically included in consultations or compensation processes. Interactions are often mediated by traditional authorities who may not represent the interests of all community members. There is limited visibility of gender-sensitive safeguards, and no structured mechanisms to ensure inclusive participation or equitable benefit-sharing.

Limited Local Governance and Accountability Challenges

Local administrators are described as accessible but lacking authority. Key decisions regarding the Corridor appear to be made at the national or provincial level, with little local input or oversight. While local officials can facilitate introductions or express community concerns, they do not control project implementation or negotiation processes. This further weakens accountability mechanisms and increases the risk of social conflicts.

Unrealised Potential of Human Rights Monitoring Platforms

Human rights networks such as the Working Group on Human Rights Monitoring, and local groups in areas like Cubal, exist but remain under-utilised. Their connection to affected communities is weak, and they often lack capacity or coordination. However, churches, schools, and grassroots CSOs remain trusted and active local actors with potential to monitor social risks if better supported and networked. Civil society actors, including local human rights groups, are ready to engage if included meaningfully, and there is some space for advocacy depending on the openness of specific government actors. Nonetheless, the broader context of shrinking civic space, electoral concerns, and limited democracy poses a significant risk to sustainable development and the effectiveness of rights-based monitoring.

Risk of Extractive Development Model

There is concern that the Lobito Corridor may serve merely as a "pass-through" infrastructure—transporting goods without transforming local economies. This model could deepen existing inequalities, as economic benefits flow to foreign investors and elites rather than host communities. Without a clear development vision that includes local value addition, inclusive market linkages, and reinvestment in basic services, the Corridor risks bypassing communities entirely.

Civic Space and Long-Term Governance Risks

Broader concerns about governance and democratic decline underlie many of the social risks identified. Civil society actors note that restrictive electoral laws, lack of transparency and shrinking public participation space undermine long-term development. There is an urgent need to link infrastructure development to democratic reforms, as sustainability depends on the strength of public institutions and civic engagement.

PIN's Strategic Contribution to the EU's 360-Degree Development Approach

- The Lobito Corridor offers significant development opportunities alongside potential social and human rights challenges. To ensure that benefits are broadly shared and risks are effectively managed, targeted and inclusive interventions are critical. PIN can play a constructive role by promoting development approaches that integrate respect for community rights and foster positive local impacts alongside infrastructure investments.
- There is a clear case for rights-focused, contextually-aligned programming. PIN can play a leading role in advancing community-led monitoring, social safeguard mechanisms, and benefit-sharing models. A strategic partnership with Mosaiko and local human rights actors can help build a credible, contextually-informed platform for advocacy and accountability.
- Civil society strengthening is a key entry point. PIN supports capacity development of local CSOs and informal actors (e.g. churches, youth groups) to participate in monitoring and decision-making. Potential exists to co-create platforms for community dialogue and coordination along the Corridor.
- Democracy and civic space are foundational. Development gains cannot be sustained without democratic institutions. PIN incorporates civic engagement, public participation, and inclusive oversight mechanisms into its Lobito Corridor-related programming and advocacy, while strengthening civil society's ability to safeguard civic space, hold duty-bearers accountable, and influence decisions that affect their communities.

4.2 Civil Society Role, Capacity and Coordination

CSOs in Huambo and surrounding provinces have expressed strong interest in the development opportunities presented by the Lobito Corridor. There is a general sense of optimism, with CSOs acknowledging the potential of the Corridor to reduce unemployment, strengthen agricultural value chains, and improve connectivity and trade. CSOs also recognise their role in supporting access to education, vocational training, community awareness, and social inclusion. However, significant gaps persist in terms of preparedness, coordination and structured engagement with government and private sector actors.

Growing Optimism and Proactive Engagement

Civil society actors interviewed across Huambo province expressed optimism about the Lobito Corridor's potential to generate economic and social opportunities, particularly for youth employment, trade facilitation and improved infrastructure. A few CSOs had participated in key forums, including the February 2024 investment meeting in Huambo

and felt the Lobito Corridor project could help alleviate long-standing challenges, including access to markets, inputs like fertilizer and reliable transportation.

Community members, however, have limited awareness of the planned development of the Lobito Corridor and its potential impacts. CSOs emphasized the importance of extensive community outreach and information-sharing, and expressed their willingness to serve as intermediaries to ensure communities are kept informed and actively engaged. While some civil society representatives acknowledged the current gaps in community awareness, they saw themselves as key actors in bridging that gap through information dissemination and local mobilisation.

Youth-Focused Training and Employment Challenges

Several respondents raised concerns around youth readiness for emerging job opportunities. While infrastructure development and trade expansion may create employment, youth in Huambo and surrounding areas often lack both technical and soft skills. CSOs highlighted the need for proactive investment in youth character development (e.g., honesty, reliability) alongside vocational training in areas like computer science and construction. There is also a perceived cultural challenge: many young people are reluctant to pursue hands-on jobs or entrepreneurship, preferring formal government employment.

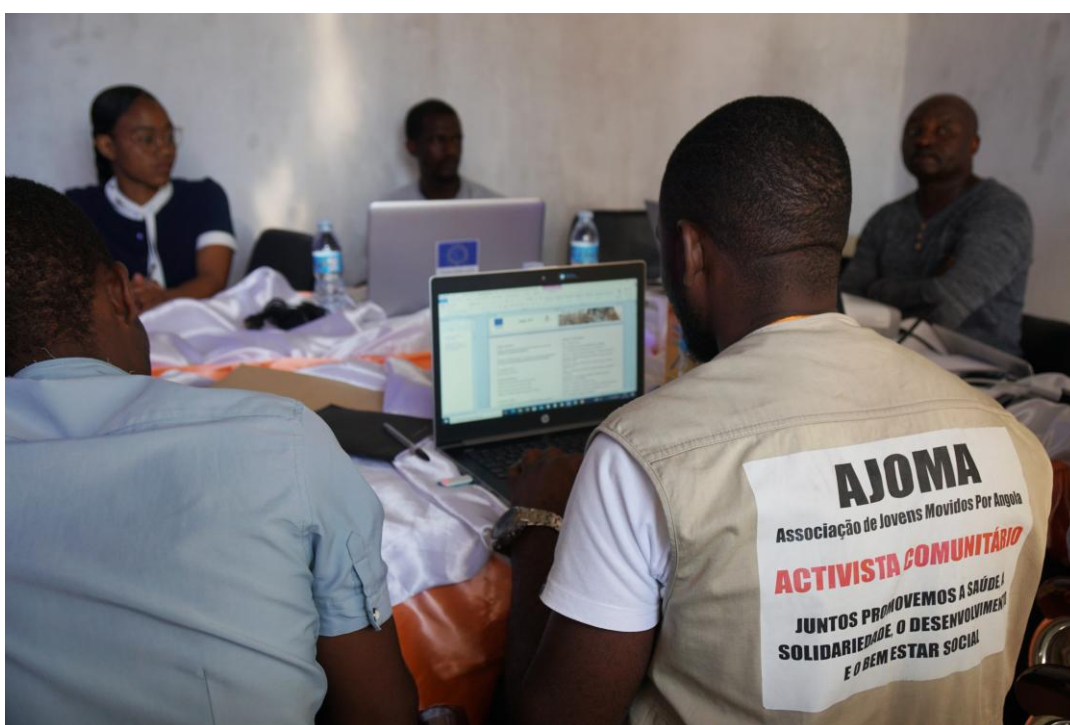
INEFOP (Instituto Nacional de Emprego e Formação Profissional), the national agency responsible for job creation and placement, is actively preparing to meet the demands created by the Lobito Corridor. INEFOP is investing in training centres in Caála and Huambo and offers technical courses relevant to the Corridor's sectors, such as welding, renewable energy, road maintenance and project management. While most courses require payment, job placement support is provided after training, including collaboration with private companies and oversight of employment contracts. Interviewed INEFOP representative emphasized gender inclusion. Women are participating in non-traditional technical fields such as mechanics and welding. INEFOP office in Huambo city also partners with LARDEF (an association working with people with disabilities) to support job access. The institute sees civil society as a valuable partner in extending the reach and longevity of job placement programmes and has collaborated with RETEFOP (EU-financed) to implement time-bound internship placements. CSOs can further support INEFOP's mandate by creating their own training initiatives in collaboration with INEFOP's, accessing certified technicians and exploring joint efforts in microloan provision and post-training support. So, addressing youth employment challenges along the Corridor will require coordinated efforts between government agencies, civil society, and the private sector to enhance skills, foster inclusion and shift cultural attitudes towards diverse job opportunities.

Gender and Social Inclusion

Several stakeholders raised concerns about gender-based risks that could emerge alongside the Corridor's development. Increased mobility and inflow of workers could expose girls and women to vulnerabilities, including early pregnancies and gender-based violence. CSOs emphasized the need for tailored awareness-raising and community sensitization to mitigate such risks. Some organisations are already involved in social education and sensitisation work, and have expressed interest in supporting girls' education, reproductive health awareness, and protection strategies. They also underscored the importance of preparing young women to benefit from new opportunities—not just protecting them from harm. Other underrepresented groups such as children with disabilities were also highlighted as needing more targeted attention within the Corridor's development.

CSO Roles, Accountability and Partnership Opportunities

While many CSOs are active and well-intentioned, there remains uneven capacity in advocacy, planning, and long-term strategic engagement. Most actors view the Lobito Corridor primarily through an opportunity lens, with limited structured discussion of social risks, accountability, or CSO monitoring/watchdog roles. Nonetheless, CSOs emphasized their strong commitment to advocacy, justice, and promoting an inclusive and equitable development approach. They see themselves not only as service providers but also as important actors in fostering transparency and fair outcomes. Many are committed to monitoring risks and potential negative impacts and to constructive engagement with local authorities to help ensure that communities benefit meaningfully from the Corridor. Stakeholders highlighted the need for increased reflection on civil society’s dual role—supporting service delivery while constructively engaging decision-makers—as a foundation for effective partnership.



Private Sector-CSO Collaboration Potential

The Dutch Embassy noted that while civil society in Angola is generally weak and centred around a few “usual suspects,” there is a clear need to identify and support capable but lesser-known CSOs. These groups can help facilitate community engagement, build trust and extend the reach of social investments by private sector actors operating along the Corridor. Dutch businesses and logistics partners have shown interest in developing responsible investment practices, including small-scale social interventions and workforce inclusion models. There is no formal platform yet linking CSOs with major private actors. However, the potential for collaboration exists, especially in areas such as job creation, technical training and community outreach. Successful partnerships will depend on clearly articulated roles, sustained engagement and visible value for both communities and private sector actors.

Lobito Atlantic Railway (LAR), the private concessionaire, has established regular coordination mechanisms with municipal and provincial authorities and maintains relationships with local CSOs and churches (as reported by them). LAR's main training centre is based in Huambo, and it has partnerships with local universities for internships and technical education in fields like engineering, mechanics, IT and economics. LAR intends to hire up to 3,000 people along the Corridor and has emphasized the importance of skills alignment and community engagement. LAR sees civil society as key allies in addressing social issues such as vandalism and misinformation along the railway. They have expressed willingness to co-develop community information campaigns, anti-vandalism initiatives and vocational training opportunities in partnership with NGOs.¹³ Overall, the groundwork for CSO–private sector collaboration exists, but unlocking its full potential will require deliberate investment in coordination, trust-building and shared accountability.

PIN's Strategic Contribution to the EU's 360-Degree Development Approach

- **Strengthening civil society oversight and inclusion:** PIN highlights that while CSOs are eager to contribute, they need structured frameworks to engage in oversight, advocacy, and inclusive planning. PIN's role is to help shape these frameworks and ensure civil society voices are embedded in the Lobito Corridor development.
- **Building integrated training-to-employment pathways:** PIN can act as a connector and facilitator between vocational training providers (INEFOP, CINFOTEC), local CSOs, and private sector actors. By co-designing inclusive training aligned with labour market needs along the Corridor, PIN can ensure that EU investments translate into green jobs, skills development, and access for vulnerable groups (youth with low academic literacy, women, and persons with disabilities).
- **Promoting gender equality and social inclusion:** PIN underlines the need to systematically address gender risks and the needs of marginalized populations. EU support guided by PIN's recommendations would ensure that Lobito Corridor programming is gender-responsive and inclusive.
- **Mapping and supporting capable but under-recognized CSOs:** By identifying and strengthening lesser-known but effective civil society actors, PIN contributes to reinforcing the social fabric necessary for resilient and locally owned Corridor development.
- **Establishing a Civil Society Observatory for the Corridor:** PIN proposes supporting the creation of a regional observatory, mandated to monitor social impacts, track community concerns, and ensure inclusive participation. This would operationalize the EU's 360° vision by linking infrastructure investments with governance and community safeguards.

¹³ LAR has an Environment and Social Programme based in Lobito

4.3 Governance, Transparency and Accountability Mechanisms

Governance structures around the Lobito Corridor show early signs of coordination and inclusive intent, with provincial and municipal actors engaging in joint planning and dialogue with local stakeholders. Public outreach efforts have begun, but communication about risks and community feedback mechanisms remain limited. Civil society is recognised as a useful delivery partner but is largely excluded from oversight and accountability roles. Below are key findings highlighting both progress and persistent gaps in governance, transparency and accountability.

Government Coordination and Anticipated Opportunities

Local and provincial government stakeholders demonstrate awareness of the Corridor’s transformative potential and are involved in inter-departmental coordination. In Huambo, the Provincial Cabinet of Integrated Economic Development serves as a strategic node, collaborating with key departments such as Agriculture, Education, Social Action and Justice. This structure facilitates joint planning on economic diversification, employment promotion and investment readiness. Authorities broadly anticipate that the Lobito Corridor will unlock economic and social inclusion opportunities, including boosting tourism and cultural exchange, strengthening health systems in response to increased population movement, and enhancing local logistics capacity—particularly in Caála, where a new logistics platform is expected to improve the transport of goods and reduce costs for local producers.



There is active collaboration between departments such as Health, Agriculture, and Education to manage expected impacts. The Health Department, for example, is working on a general plan to address public health challenges related to population influx. While this intersectoral coordination signals early institutional alignment, it is not yet clear how well it functions in practice, as interviews with stakeholders tend to focus on anticipated benefits rather than implementation challenges.

Interviewed authorities reported convening regular meetings with diverse actors—traditional leaders, CSOs, and women’s groups—to discuss issues including youth employment, gender-based violence, and community access to job opportunities. These spaces support collective problem-solving, yet rely heavily on political will and individual leadership rather than formalised mechanisms or mandates.

Transparency and Public Outreach: Initiatives Underway but with Limited Reach

Both municipal and provincial interviewed actors recognize the importance of public engagement and have initiated awareness-raising activities, including school-based campaigns, community forums and media outreach. The emphasis on preventing misinformation and fostering local ownership is commendable. However, challenges remain in ensuring information consistency, clarity and accessibility, especially in remote areas.

Many community members do not perceive significant risks associated with the Corridor, often referencing previous railway developments as largely beneficial. Environmental and displacement concerns tend to be viewed as matters for government authorities to handle rather than local communities. This highlights a clear need for enhanced awareness-raising around potential risks and mitigation strategies to foster informed community participation.

While communities receive updates, it seems that opportunities for them to provide input, question decisions, or influence planning processes are minimal. Government actors acknowledge the need for deeper public understanding but did not articulate specific feedback mechanisms.

CSO Engagement: Valued in Delivery, Limited in Oversight

Civil society is acknowledged by government stakeholders as a valuable actor—particularly in areas like social mobilisation, youth engagement and education. NGOs are seen as useful partners in extending the reach of training programmes or facilitating community trust in government initiatives. However, CSOs are rarely included in oversight or accountability processes. Interviews suggest that civil society involvement is often ad hoc, driven by external projects or donor requirements rather than integrated into governance structures.

Early Signs of Accountability, with Room to Grow

Government actors noted the importance of legal compliance and labour standards in private sector engagement. For example, INEFOP monitors contract conditions for workers placed through its programmes and follows up with companies to verify hiring practices. Nevertheless, there is limited transparency regarding how investment decisions are made, how social and environmental impacts are managed, or how communities are compensated. Formal accountability mechanisms—such as community monitoring, or third-party audits—are largely absent or underutilized.

PIN's Strategic Contribution to the EU's 360-Degree Development Approach

Governance structures supporting the Lobito Corridor in Huambo show encouraging signs of coordination and community engagement. Local government efforts to convene multi-actor dialogues and collaborate with CSOs are noteworthy. However, transparency and accountability remain underdeveloped and civil society's role in formal oversight is minimal. Strengthening these elements is essential to ensure the Corridor delivers not only economic growth but also inclusive and equitable development outcomes.

- **Support institutional coordination:** PIN could assist provincial and municipal actors to institutionalize multi-stakeholder platforms (CSOs, government, and private sector actors) with clear roles for CSOs in planning, monitoring, and dialogue.
- **Build CSO capacity for transparency and accountability roles:** Many CSOs currently act as communicators rather than independent monitors. Through training, mentoring, and small grants, PIN can support skills development in areas such as budget literacy, public procurement oversight, environmental and social safeguard monitoring, policy advocacy participatory planning etc.
- **Promote open and accessible information sharing:** PIN could support CSO initiatives improving public understanding of the Lobito Corridor through simplified communications, local-language materials and community radio programming—particularly in rural or underserved areas where information access remains low.
- **Encourage transparency in private sector-community agreements:** Where local businesses or contractors are involved in the Lobito Corridor-related investments, PIN can support CSO efforts to disclose hiring practices, local procurement plans, or environmental safeguards—thereby reinforcing community trust and accountability.

5 Concrete Programmatic Approaches Recommended by PIN

The recommendations are aligned with the above-described findings from the analysis and build on PIN's in-house technical expertise and extensive track record in [Civil Society and Inclusive Governance](#) and [Climate Resilience](#).

The three components reflected below are central to PIN's **Theory of Change** for the Lobito Corridor programming and are directly linked to the specific objective focused on *Enabling community-driven, accountable and transparent development along the Lobito Corridor through strengthened CSO engagement*. These components are designed to contribute to PIN's long-term impact: *The Lobito Corridor becomes Africa's green and inclusive trade artery—connecting communities and markets across Angola, DRC, and Zambia, while*

delivering climate resilient and locally led development that benefits people, investors, and the planet. Together, the three components form an integrated approach that equips CSOs to become credible and effective partners in shaping the Lobito Corridor’s development in ways that reflect community needs and priorities.

Component A: Strengthening Civil Society to Ensure Inclusive and Accountable Lobito Corridor Investments

Objective: Empower local civil society actors to ensure that infrastructure investments:

- Reflect local priorities;
- Adhere to environmental and social safeguards;
- Foster community feedback, especially in fragile contexts;
- Support climate adaptation and resilience;
- Uphold principles of locally led action, climate justice, and inclusive governance.

Proposed programmatic approaches:

- **Organizational and technical capacity strengthening:** PIN can provide a tailored capacity assessment and strengthening package, including:
 - **Tailored organisational capacity assessment tool**

PIN’s proven capacity assessment tool, adaptable to a range of civil society actors—from informal grassroots groups to growing, formalized organizations. The tool guides civil society actors through structured self-reflection on: 1) Mission and strategic clarity, 2) stakeholder engagement and communication, 3) service delivery and resource mobilization 4) public advocacy and public opinion influencing 5) internal governance and administration.

Special focus will be placed on capacity of civil society actors to deliver services, inform communities, and support youth skills development.

- **Structured strategic planning support**

Using participatory workshops and practical tools, PIN can help civil society actors (CSA) analyse how the Lobito Corridor impacts their target communities—especially youth, women, and vulnerable groups. This will enable them to:

- Clarify their mission and strategic goals
- Align activities with community needs
- Identify advocacy, partnership and fundraising opportunities

The process strengthens CSAs’ ability to respond proactively to emerging challenges, stay resilient, sustain their operations, and play a constructive role in ensuring inclusive, rights-based development along the Corridor.

- **Targeted capacity development package**

A tailored training and mentoring package will build technical and operational capacities of civil society actors in:

- Context and stakeholder analysis
- Project design and service delivery
- Rights-based advocacy, communication, and accountability

Support will also target internal systems such as governance, financial management, and team coordination—with a strong emphasis on youth engagement. These efforts will enable CSOs to better represent their communities, address Corridor-related impacts, and promote inclusive and transparent development.

- **Community awareness and engagement:** PIN can fund community awareness campaigns, leveraging CSOs role as information channels to bridge the knowledge gap around the Corridor’s plans, opportunities, and risks.
- **Multi-Stakeholder dialogue and coordination mechanisms:** Building on successful models such as the [Civil Society for Nutrition \(CS4N\) project](#), PIN can facilitate participatory platforms involving civil society, public authorities and private sector actors. These mechanisms will:
 - Promote inclusive planning and feedback loops
 - Enhance transparency, trust, and collaboration
 - Prioritize participation of women, youth, and marginalized communities in planning, design and implementation of the Lobito Corridor investments at municipal and provincial levels.

These mechanisms will institutionalize community input and ensure formal consultation processes, addressing the historic lack of participatory governance.

- **Inclusive governance and accountability:** CSOs need to be capacitated to conduct contextually-informed policy analysis and engage in co-developing mitigation strategies with authorities. This will contribute to decentralizing oversight and embedding civic engagement in infrastructure governance processes.
- **Climate and environmental advocacy:** While some communities may not yet perceive environmental risks, PIN can proactively build CSO capacity in climate advocacy and adaptation, aligning with both community resilience goals and EU climate action commitments.

Component B: Empowering Youth and Marginalized Groups through Inclusive Economic Opportunities

Objective: Enable civil society to enhance the participation of youth, women, and marginalized populations in inclusive value chains by:

- Strengthening entrepreneurial and technical skills;
- Improving access to finance and business development services;
- Promoting inclusive, safe and equitable working environments.

Proposed programmatic approaches:

- **Youth skills development:** To enhance job prospects of young people along the corridor, PIN proposes to partner with CSOs and training institutes, and engage private sector actors to offer:
 - Market-driven vocational training with private sector engagement
 - Entrepreneurship support and life skills development
 - Mentorship and job linkage services with private sector

The approach will focus on sectors relevant to the Corridor (e.g., logistics, agriculture, ICT). Importantly, through civic engagement, youth will also be supported to participate in local

planning processes, transitioning from passive beneficiaries to active contributors of economic development.



- **Entrepreneurship and financial access:** Support will be provided for entrepreneurship training, business plan development, and access to affordable finance, particularly for youth- and women-led MSMEs. CSOs may facilitate microloan schemes with appropriate controls and mentoring structures.
- **Gender equality and protection:** PIN integrates gender-focused education programmes, addressing issues such as domestic violence and early pregnancies—risks that are likely to increase with the influx of workers to Corridor areas. These efforts will empower young women and foster responsible social norms.
- **Inclusive value chains:** Through CSO partnerships, PIN can promote investable, locally rooted value chains that integrate smallholder farmers and marginalized entrepreneurs into markets. This will include tackling access barriers and enabling more equitable market participation.

Component C: Strengthening Civil Society Capacity for Human Rights and Social Inclusion

Objective: Equip CSOs to promote economic, social, and environmental rights, while advancing the inclusion of women, youth, people with disabilities and indigenous communities affected by the Lobito Corridor.

Proposed programmatic approaches:

- **Advocacy and policy dialogue:** PIN can support CSOs to improve their ability to influence public policy by:
 - Assessing existing advocacy capacity

- Providing training in policy analysis, evidence-based advocacy, stakeholder mapping, negotiation, and coalition-building
 - Coalition-strengthening will help overcome fragmented advocacy efforts and amplify collective impact
 - This will enable CSOs to engage with authorities, advocate for inclusive policies, and ensure that the voices of women, youth, and marginalized groups are reflected in development outcomes.
- **Flexible financial support:** PIN can implement a flexible Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) mechanism to empower local CSOs to lead community-driven initiatives in areas such as:
 - Service delivery and community outreach
 - Awareness campaigns, advocacy and social accountability
 - Youth skills development

Alongside funding, CSOs will receive support in grant management, reporting, and compliance. A joint implementation model—pairing 2–3 CSOs—will encourage collaboration, mutual learning, and increased impact.

- **Promoting social inclusion:** PIN will prioritize partnerships with CSOs representing marginalized communities. Activities will be designed to be disability-responsive and inclusive, in alignment with the EU’s “Leave No One Behind” principle.

It should be noted that on civil society and human rights, the environment remains highly sensitive. With elections approaching in Angola and the ruling party in power since independence, strengthening civil society can be perceived as a threat by authorities, who often frame INGOs as ‘foreign agents’. To avoid triggering political sensitivities, references to ‘human rights’ should be carefully framed around community protection, decent work, and social accountability. Advocacy must therefore emphasize that investments under the Lobito Corridor should translate into decent jobs and tangible community benefits, while maintaining an explicitly apolitical stance.

6 Conclusion

This analysis confirms that placing civil society at the center of development along the Lobito Corridor is essential for ensuring inclusive, sustainable outcomes. Strengthening the capacity of local CSOs in advocacy, governance oversight, inclusive economic participation, and service delivery addresses critical gaps in civic engagement, accountability, and support for marginalized communities.

When these dimensions are integrated, infrastructure investments become not only economically viable but also socially just, environmentally sound, and inclusive of youth, women, and marginalized groups. Embedding civil society in this way reduces risks of failed or contested investments, prevents conflicts, and increases the likelihood of long-term sustainability and economic returns from the Lobito Corridor investments.

Ultimately, the findings highlight that the Lobito Corridor can evolve into a **model of equitable, climate-resilient, and locally driven development**—but only if civil society is empowered as a core partner in its design, governance, and implementation.

The Lobito Corridor in DRC: Unlocking Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Economies

July-September 2025



Executive Summary

The Lobito Corridor holds the promise to transform the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) from an extractive-dependent economy into a hub of inclusive, climate-smart, and youth-driven growth. This report synthesizes findings from value chain analysis, GPS-mapped actor registries, and twenty coded interviews with producers, civil society organizations (CSOs), private sector actors, and government stakeholders.

Key Opportunities

- **Agricultural diversification and import substitution:** Maize alone represents a gap of over 600,000 tons annually, mostly imported from Zambia. Cassava offers strong food security potential, while peri-urban vegetable cultivation provides vital income streams for women and youth.
- **Value addition and agro-processing:** Cassava flour, starch, and gari production, as well as fruit drying and juice processing, remain nascent but high-potential avenues for employment and enterprise development.
- **Mining–MSME linkages:** Supplier development programs and subcontracting reforms demonstrate possibilities for linking mining revenues to local job and SME creation.
- **Digital transformation:** Innovation hubs, fintech platforms, and mobile-based marketplaces are beginning to connect farmers and entrepreneurs to knowledge, payments, and advisory services.

Critical Bottlenecks

- **Access to finance and markets:** Nearly all interviewees cited credit and market barriers as binding constraints.
- **Infrastructure deficits:** High transport costs, poor feeder roads, and limited rural storage facilities suppress farmer profitability and increase post-harvest losses.
- **Skills mismatch:** Training programs are often misaligned with corridor value chain needs, leaving gaps in mechanization, processing, and business literacy.
- **Governance and resource scarcity:** Ad-hoc state–CSO coordination, politicization of actors, and weak civic voice restrict inclusive governance of corridor investments.
- **Environmental degradation** from shifting rainfall, deforestation (charcoal, farm delocalisation), and weak mining safeguards. Entry-points exist via CSR anchors and watchdog CSOs for climate-smart and green growth

In summary, the DRC segment of the Lobito Corridor presents a **clear window of opportunity to catalyze inclusive local growth**, but this will require systematic removal of bottlenecks across infrastructure, finance, skills, and governance. Anchoring these efforts in the **Four-Pillar Framework**—Infrastructure & Connectivity, Economic Diversification, Human Capital & Social Inclusion, and Governance & Regional Integration—provides a coherent pathway for inclusive transformation.

1 Introduction & Context

The DRC segment of the Lobito Corridor links agricultural production areas in Haut-Katanga to urban demand in Lubumbashi and Kolwezi and to regional and global markets via the Atlantic route. This connectivity has the potential to lower logistics costs, stabilize food systems, and integrate rural producers into higher-value markets. Interviews across nodes describe Lubumbashi as a market and research hub, Kolwezi as a mining and innovation centre, Likasi as a mixed-farming cluster, and Kipushi as a key border point for cross-border trade (Traders and producers, July–August 2025; GPS Actor Registry, 2025).

Despite this spatial advantage, the economic structure remains skewed toward extractives, with thin agro-processing capacity, fragmented value chains, and high costs to move goods from farms to markets (Producers, MSMEs, academics, July–August 2025).

"Need one million tonnes maize per year, local production only 300,000 tonnes, import 600,000+ tonnes from Zambia."

(Interview, University of Lubumbashi, July 2025)

"The corridor is not only about moving goods; it can also be a platform for entrepreneurs, digital tools, and new forms of youth participation."

(Interview, Digital Hub Representative, Kolwezi, August 2025)

2 Value Chain Deep-Dives

2.1 Maize

Maize represents one of the most significant untapped opportunities in the DRC segment of the Lobito Corridor. Demand in Haut-Katanga and surrounding provinces is estimated at over one million tons annually, yet local production reaches only about 300,000 tons. This leaves a deficit of more than 600,000 tons that is currently filled through imports, primarily from Zambia.

Strong urban markets, driven by milling and feed industries in Lubumbashi and Kolwezi, provide reliable demand that local farmers struggle to meet. While several large-scale enterprises and corporate social responsibility (CSR) models have attempted to support production, the impact remains limited. For example, one mining-linked program supports 30–40 farmers and produces 15 tons annually—an important initiative, but far below the required scale. As one academic stressed:

"Need one million tons maize per year, local production only 300,000 tons, import 600,000+ tons from Zambia." (Interview, University of Lubumbashi, July 2025)

Economically, maize farming demonstrates viability. With yields of 4–6 tons per hectare, farmers can expect revenues of USD 1,000–2,000 per hectare. However, profitability is often constrained by systemic bottlenecks. Producers cite high input costs, unreliable access to quality seed and fertilizer, and climate variability that shortens rainy seasons. One medium-scale farmer explained:

“I own 170 hectares, but profits are constrained by input prices and the late arrival of rains. What we need is weather information and more reliable transport to markets.” (Interview, Medium Farmer, Lubumbashi, July 2025)

Bottlenecks identified from primary actor data include:

- Access to markets (three mentions)
- Input availability (two mentions)
- Finance constraints (two mentions)
- High transport costs (one mention)
- Mechanization gaps (one mention)

Climate dimension: Shortened rainy seasons increasingly constrain yields; resilience requires irrigation, weather info, and diversified cropping.

Scaling maize production in DRC will require a systematic approach: access to finance, mechanization services, extension, agro-logistics, and border trade facilitation. Without these, maize will continue to represent unrealized potential, dependent on cross-border imports.

2.2 Cassava

Cassava (or manioc) serves as a food security backbone in both rural and peri-urban DRC, yet its potential is undermined by perishability and weak processing infrastructure. Fresh roots must be processed into flour, starch, or cassava-based products (such as gari) within 24–48 hours of harvest. Without timely processing, farmers face spoilage and income loss.

Several small-scale cooperatives have shown aggregation potential, stabilizing prices and ensuring basic food security. However, investment into rural processing units remains limited. Opportunities for value addition through flour milling, starch extraction, and gari (multi step process) production are evident across markets in Lubumbashi and Kolwezi.

Despite its resilience as a crop, farmers emphasized constraints that make cassava cultivation insufficient for income generation on its own. One smallholder farmer explained:

“I cultivate only two of my ten hectares because of capital limits. I try rice, cassava, and vegetables, but what we need is disease-diagnosis training and collective marketing to make cassava profitable.” (Interview, Small Farmer, Likasi, August 2025)

Environmental angle: Cassava is resilient under erratic rainfall, but area expansion without inputs accelerates deforestation; disease control and aggregation can reduce this pressure.

All interview segments on cassava were coded as negative in sentiment, underscoring the severity of challenges. The most commonly cited **bottlenecks** include:

- Access to markets (three mentions)
- Finance constraints (two mentions)
- Input availability (two mentions)
- Transport and logistics (one mention)
- Need for basic mechanization (one mention)

Unlocking cassava's potential requires **investment in decentralized processing facilities**, better rural transport, and training programs for disease control and value chain aggregation. Without these, the crop risks remaining a subsistence staple, rather than a driver of inclusive corridor growth.

2.3 Wheat, Vegetables, and Fruits

2.3.1 Wheat

Wheat presents an untapped opportunity for urban bakers and millers in Lubumbashi. Demand is growing, but local production remains almost nonexistent. Regulatory hurdles and import competition have stifled domestic production. A potential pathway could include piloting certified seed trials with guaranteed offtake agreements between producers and milling companies.

2.3.2 Vegetables

Peri-urban vegetable production has strong potential as a women-led income generator and as a contributor to improved household and community nutrition. Urban and peri-urban clusters around Lubumbashi already support vibrant vegetable markets, supplying diverse crops that are central to balanced diets. Yet farmers remain constrained by lack of finance, inputs, and collective marketing structures, which limits both income opportunities and the steady availability of affordable, nutritious foods for local consumers. As one agri-input distributor explained:

"We are working on a development project focusing on women in agriculture. We provide land, teach vegetable growing, and create opportunities to market their produce." (Interview, AgriTech Distributor, Lubumbashi, August 2025)

Vegetable production led by women not only generates income but also increases the supply of fresh, nutrient-rich foods, contributing to dietary diversity and reducing risks of malnutrition, especially among children and vulnerable households. Strengthening peri-urban horticulture can therefore have a dual impact: raising women's economic empowerment while improving access to healthy foods within growing urban populations.

Climate/environment note: Peri-urban horticulture mitigates forest clearing by intensifying production near cities. At the same time, scaling production sustainably will require irrigation, climate-smart practices, and better access to finance, ensuring that both environmental and food security benefits are maximized.

2.3.3 Fruits

Mango, citrus, and banana production has niche potential, particularly for dried fruit and juice processing for urban and export markets. However, cold chain infrastructure, finance, and transport bottlenecks severely hinder fruit commercialization. Small-scale youth-led enterprises could be drivers of innovation in processing if provided with access to TVET training and incubation support.

"We provide land, teach vegetable growing, and create opportunities to market their produce." (Interview, AgriTech Distributor, Lubumbashi, August 2025)

2.4 Mining, Logistics, Digital, and Finance

2.4.1 Mining–MSME Linkages

The mining sector remains the backbone of the DRC economy but has historically been disconnected from local economies. Reforms and subcontracting platforms, such as the Autorité de Régulation de la Sous-Traitance (ARSP), created in 2018 after strong CSO advocacy, are beginning to create openings for SME participation.

One civil society leader highlighted the stakes:

“DRC loses USD 9 billion annually to illicit financial flows in mining. But our lobbying helped create ARSP, and now we can demand subcontracting rules for local suppliers.” (Interview, CSO Platform Representative, Kolwezi, August 2025)

Environmental impacts: Tailings, dust, and water pollution undermine farmland productivity. CSR attempts (reforestation, buffer zones) exist but weak enforcement is the binding constraint.

Mining–MSME supplier programs, when coupled with training from institutions like INPP, can create diversified income streams outside direct extractive activity.

2.4.2 Logistics & Transport

The Lobito Corridor is rightly viewed as an infrastructural backbone, but interviews revealed that first- and last-mile logistics remain costly and unreliable. Warehousing and aggregation facilities exist, but poorly maintained feeder roads keep transport costs high and reduce farmer profitability.

2.4.3 Digital & ICT

Digital hubs in Kolwezi and Lubumbashi provide training in entrepreneurship and digital solutions. Platforms range from online courses to blockchain-based traceability. However, affordability and digital literacy gaps remain. As one hub manager put it:

“Our platform provides mobile payment solutions, advisory services, and even blockchain tracking for supply chains, but uptake is limited by affordability and internet challenges.” (Interview, Digital Hub Representative, Kolwezi, July 2025)

2.4.4 Finance

Financial services are consistently cited as a binding constraint. MSMEs face collateral requirements, high interest rates, and limited willingness of financial institutions to lend. Opportunity exists for **bundled financial products**, combining mobile payments, credit for inputs, and advisory services under a single platform.

3 Cross-Cutting Enablers

3.1 Skills Development and TVET

Skills development remains one of the most decisive factors for unlocking sustainable growth in the Lobito Corridor. Interviewees consistently underlined the mismatch between training offered and the realities of value chain needs.

In 2024, the **Institut National de Préparation Professionnelle (INPP) Haut-Katanga** trained more than **17,000 individuals**, many through direct partnerships with mining companies which deploy trainers on-site. These programs ensure a relatively high level of technical specialization in mining-related trades, such as machine operation, mechanics, and electrical systems.

However, gaps persist in areas critical to agriculture and MSME entrepreneurship. Mechanization operators, post-harvest handling specialists, and even entry-level business/accounting skills are in short supply. As one vocational trainer noted:

“We have contracts with mining companies and send trainers on site. But in agriculture, mechanization and post-harvest skills are still too scarce, and that affects productivity.” (Interview, TVET Instructor, Lubumbashi, August 2025)

Digital education is showing strong momentum. More than **20,000 young people**, particularly women, have been introduced to basic digital literacy in the past three years, and over **900 individuals** have completed advanced modules in programming and digital entrepreneurship. While still limited in scale, these developments mark an important shift—the Lobito Corridor is becoming not only a transport artery but also a digital skills ecosystem.

The gender dimension, however, remains underwhelming. Agronomy faculties, for example, report only 8–10% female students. Yet there is upward momentum, with projections that women could comprise 20% of cohorts within five years if supported by scholarships and targeted mentorship. Without addressing these imbalances, the risk is that corridor growth merely reproduces existing inequalities rather than overcoming them.

3.2 Governance and Civil Society

Perhaps no enabling factor attracted as much commentary in field interviews as governance. The evidence revealed a dual reality: **a relatively strong CSO sector** with proven advocacy capacity, and **structural constraints** that undermine its effectiveness.

Platforms like the **Collectif des ONG du Congo du Sud du Haut-Katanga (CCSCHK)** bring together over 100 member organizations and were central in lobbying for the creation of the **Autorité de Régulation de la Sous-Traitance (ARSP)** in 2018. This institution now regulates subcontracting in the mining sector and is seen as a rare example of successful advocacy translating into policy change. As one CSO leader proudly recalled:

“ARSP was created in 2018—a public organization that CSOs lobbied for in mining—to enforce subcontracting rules. Without sustained advocacy, this breakthrough would not have happened.” (Interview, CSO Platform Representative, Kolwezi, July 2025)

At the same time, civil society actors consistently highlighted the fragility of their operating environment. Many CSOs are politicized, reliant on external donors, and suffer from what one representative described bluntly as “operating hand to mouth.” Another stakeholder added:

“There is politicization of CSOs, lack of operating funds, and heavy taxation of micro-entrepreneurs. Often, the government collaborates with us only in a one-way, ad-hoc fashion.” (Interview, Gender Department of CSO Network, Lubumbashi, August 2025)

A practical way forward could be to **link multi-stakeholder platforms directly to specific service delivery** instead of limiting them to advocacy alone. Civil society organizations could be funded and equipped to take on roles such as maintaining feeder roads, running market information systems, or implementing skills training contracts. By giving CSOs these concrete responsibilities, the corridor would benefit from improved local services while also creating a more stable and constructive space for civic engagement.

3.3 Gender and Youth Inclusion

Gender and youth dimensions cut across every enabler discussed above. While youth drive digital innovation and informal agricultural markets, they face persistent barriers in accessing credit, land, and startup capital. Without deliberate investment in youth entrepreneurship programs and blended finance facilities, their contributions risk being systemically undervalued.

For women, peri-urban vegetable production serves as both a livelihood strategy and a demonstration of their role in food security. Several respondents noted that **women’s groups were already leading small-scale horticulture projects**, often tied to donor-funded programs providing land, seeds, and training. Yet these initiatives remained small-scale in comparison to the corridor’s potential impact.

As one program implementer working with women farmers explained:

“We provided land and trained women in growing vegetables, and demand was clear. But without access to microfinance and collective marketing, their production stays limited.” (Interview, AgriTech Distributor, Lubumbashi, July 2025)

Opportunities abound in aligning youth entrepreneurship initiatives with digital hubs, expanding outreach to female students in agronomy, and bundling microfinance with technical training for women’s groups. Without embedding gender and youth into planning and implementation, corridor gains will likely amplify rather than close inequalities.

3.4 Climate and Environment Resilience

Farmers identified multiple environmental and livelihood pressures, linking deforestation to the displacement of farms and the continued reliance on charcoal as an energy source. Shorter and less predictable rainy seasons are hitting smallholder farmers hardest, undermining food security and resilience. At the same time, the impacts of mining are particularly severe. Beyond environmental degradation—such as water pollution, soil erosion, and land degradation—mining also generates profound social and health challenges. These include increased exposure to hazardous working and living conditions, negative effects on community health, disruption of traditional livelihoods, and rising social tensions. Particularly concerning are the protection risks associated with mining activities,

including child labour, gender-based violence, and other forms of exploitation that disproportionately affect women, children, and marginalized groups.

To mitigate these risks, the project underlines the need for a set of safeguards, including streamlined environmental and social impact assessments (ESIA-lite), enforcement of corporate social responsibility compliance, and civil society-led monitoring mechanisms. These measures are critical to ensure accountability, protect vulnerable populations, and promote more sustainable and equitable management of natural resources.

4 Four-Pillar Framework Analysis

4.1 Infrastructure and Connectivity

Infrastructure is the enabling spine of the Lobito Corridor, yet it remains the most immediate constraint to inclusive growth in the DRC segment. While the corridor's trunk route connects production basins to urban markets and Atlantic export channels, the "capillaries"—first- and last mile links—are weak. Producers across Lubumbashi, Likasi, and Kipushi described feeder roads that become impassable during rainy periods and costly during the dry season due to vehicle wear. These conditions elevate transport prices, depress farm-gate incomes, and render timely delivery of perishable products—especially cassava—exceptionally challenging.

Post-harvest infrastructure is equally underdeveloped. Storage near production clusters is scarce and often unmanaged, leading to losses that erode already thin margins. The perishability window for cassava (24–48 hours) crystallizes the urgency: unless storage and basic processing are available at the community level, farmers cannot reliably convert production into income.

Interview data consistently highlighted the economic drag from logistics. One medium-scale farmer summarized the cost-risk equation: "I own 170 hectares, but profits are constrained by input prices and the late arrival of rains. What we need is weather information and more reliable transport to markets." (Interview, Medium Farmer, Lubumbashi, July 2025). Similar concerns surfaced among traders and processors who face high variability in delivery times, limited aggregation points, and unpredictable road conditions that drive up risk premiums.

Strategically, the corridor can absorb these shocks by combining feeder-road investments, targeted storage/aggregation, and information systems. Prioritizing links from rural nodes such as Likasi and Kipushi into Lubumbashi and Kolwezi would yield near-term productivity gains. Complementary measures—local management contracts for storage/processing facilities and mobile platforms for weather and transport coordination—can improve asset utilization, reduce spoilage, and lower unit logistics costs. In short, basic but well-governed infrastructure at the edges of the corridor is a prerequisite for realizing its macro-level promise.

4.2 Economic Diversification and Inclusive Value Chains

The DRC's growth model remains overly concentrated in extractives, leaving agriculture, food processing, and service-linked MSMEs insufficiently developed. Yet the evidence shows multiple diversification wedges that can be scaled with relatively modest reforms and investment.

Maize import substitution is the most immediate. With an annual deficit exceeding 600,000 tonnes, urban markets present guaranteed demand at competitive prices. Local production economics are already viable at 4–6 tonnes per hectare; the constraint is not agronomy but the surrounding system—finance, inputs, mechanization, and logistics. Complementary opportunities exist in wheat for bakeries and mills, where regulatory frictions and import competition currently block domestic pilots.

Cassava sits at the intersection of food security and value-addition. Decentralized processing (flour, starch, gari) would convert a subsistence staple into tradable products while reducing exposure to perishability. Peri-urban horticulture, often led by women’s groups, is another diversification channel that simultaneously addresses nutrition and incomes. One implementer described a model combining land access, training, and basic inputs for women growers: “We provided land and trained women in growing vegetables, and demand was clear. But without access to microfinance and collective marketing, their production stays limited.” (Interview, AgriTech Distributor, Lubumbashi, July 2025).

Beyond agriculture, supplier-development linkages with the mining sector and the rise of digital marketplaces are critical to broadening participation. Civil society advocacy leading to the creation of the subcontracting regulator (ARSP) shows that institutional levers exist to channel mining demand into local MSME growth. In parallel, fintech solutions—mobile payments, input credit, and advisory services—can lower transaction costs and extend formal market access to small producers.

The common thread is integration. Supporting entire chains—from inputs and skills to aggregation, processing, and markets—will generate more stable returns than isolated interventions. Bundled finance with technical assistance, cooperative aggregation for scale, and clear offtake arrangements can turn today’s fragmented activities into engines of inclusive growth.

4.3 Human Capital and Social Inclusion

Human capital is both a comparative advantage and a constraint. The region benefits from established TVET infrastructure and strong industry partnerships; INPP Haut-Katanga alone trained over 17,000 people in 2024, often through on-site programs with mining companies. Yet the structure of training supply does not fully match the demand profile of the emerging corridor economy. Producers and MSMEs repeatedly flagged shortages in mechanization operators, post-harvest handling technicians, and basic business skills—competencies essential for agriculture and processing to scale.

Digital skills are a bright spot. Over 20,000 young people have benefited from basic digital literacy, and more than 900 have completed advanced courses. Innovation hubs in Kolwezi and Lubumbashi are catalysing entrepreneurship in services, logistics, and agri-tech. As a hub representative put it, “Our platform provides mobile payment solutions, advisory services, and even blockchain tracking for supply chains, but uptake is limited by affordability and internet challenges.” (Interview, Digital Hub Representative, Kolwezi, July 2025). Addressing affordability and connectivity constraints would accelerate the diffusion of these capabilities into value chains.

Inclusion gaps persist. Women comprise only 8–10% of agronomy students; even with momentum, reaching 20% within five years will require targeted scholarships, mentorship, and placement programs. Youth face parallel barriers in accessing land, collateral, and startup capital. Without deliberate pathways—scholarships and quotas in technical fields,

incubators tied to finance, and procurement opportunities linked to corridor projects—the benefits of corridor growth will skew toward already advantaged groups.

Aligning curricula with value-chain needs is the pivotal reform. Joint planning platforms between TVET providers, private sector off-takers, and public actors can ensure training translates into employability and enterprise growth. Where possible, training should be bundled with access to equipment (e.g., mechanization pools), finance, and market linkages to convert skills into livelihoods.

4.4 Governance and Regional Integration

The governance landscape is characterized by active civil society and episodic reform successes amid structural constraints. The creation of ARSP in 2018—secured through sustained advocacy by CSO platforms—demonstrates that institutional change is possible. One CSO leader emphasized the significance: “ARSP was created in 2018—a public organization that CSOs lobbied for in mining—to enforce subcontracting rules.” (Interview, CSO Platform Representative, Kolwezi, July 2025). Such outcomes can be replicated if civic actors are resourced and if platforms are designed around concrete delivery rather than dialogue alone.

At the same time, respondents identified politicization, funding scarcity, and ad-hoc, one-way collaboration with government as barriers to effective corridor governance. Another CSO representative summarized the operating environment: “Politicization of CSOs, lack of operating funds, and heavy taxation of micro-entrepreneurs... often collaboration is one-way and ad-hoc.” (Interview, Gender Department of CSO Network, Lubumbashi, August 2025). These dynamics weaken accountability, reduce program continuity, and limit the potential for locally led solutions.

Regional integration is both a challenge and an opportunity. The trade deficit in staples like maize and wheat underscores the need to harmonize standards, streamline border procedures (e.g., at Kasumbalesa), and reduce administrative friction. Illicit financial flows—estimated at several billions of USD annually—sap public revenues and distort fair competition, reinforcing the urgency of transparency mechanisms linked to corridor investments.

The pathway forward is to institutionalize multistakeholder platforms with mandates to deliver specific outcomes—feeder road maintenance, market information services, training contracts, and small grant windows for CSO-led monitoring. When civic participation is coupled to delivery and measured by performance, collaboration becomes less political and more problem-solving. In parallel, trade facilitation and regulatory coherence with neighbouring countries can convert today’s import dependencies into engines of domestic production, processing, and regional market access.

5 Risks and Opportunities

Near-term growth is realistic in maize and cassava if finance, inputs, mechanization, and decentralized processing are delivered within defined clusters where aggregation and urban demand are already visible. The principal counter-risks include stalled import substitution if first-/last-mile logistics are not improved, and the potential transfer of market risk to farmers through unsold stocks and price volatility (Academic, producers, traders, July–August 2025).

Women-led peri-urban horticulture can deliver quick income and nutrition gains where microfinance, input packages, and collective marketing are available; without appropriate instruments for informal producers, initiatives remain sub-scale and exposed to seasonal price swings (Program implementers, women's groups, financial stakeholders, July–August 2025).

Mining–MSME supplier development and training partnerships can broaden non-agricultural incomes, but governance gaps risk concentrating benefits among well-connected firms, limiting spillovers and local jobs (CSOs, MSMEs, TVET providers, July–August 2025).

Digital and fintech platforms reduce transaction costs and enable advisory and traceability, yet affordability, connectivity, and applied literacy constraints could limit uptake outside urban centres unless offset by subsidized access and targeted training (Hubs, trainees, July–August 2025).

Multi-stakeholder platforms can strengthen accountability if tied to contracted delivery; absent stable resourcing and clear mandates, they can revert to dialogue without outcomes, eroding trust and feedback loops (CSO and private sector stakeholders, July–August 2025).

6 Strategic Recommendations (Sequenced)

6.1 Short term (6–12 months)

Launch integrated pilots in two to three production clusters that combine input finance, mechanization services, decentralized cassava processing, and offtake agreements for maize, alongside women-led peri-urban vegetable hubs with microfinance, input packages, and collective marketing. These measures address the most frequently cited constraints and build on existing demand nodes (Producers, MSMEs, implementers, July–August 2025; GPS Actor Registry, 2025).

Initiate operator training and certification for agricultural mechanization and establish pilot multi-stakeholder platforms in Lubumbashi and Kolwezi with clear delivery mandates and small performance-based grants for CSO monitoring. This responds to skills misalignment and governance gaps identified by training institutions, MSMEs, and CSOs (TVET, MSMEs, CSOs, July–August 2025).

6.2 Medium term (1–3 years)

Scale feeder road improvements linking prioritized clusters to urban markets; develop cooperative aggregation and primary processing for cassava and maize; and extend digital marketplaces and payment systems within target chains to formalize transactions and reduce costs (Producers, traders, MSMEs, hubs, July–August 2025).

Co-design demand-driven curricula with off-takers and provide scholarships and quotas for women and youth in technical fields, ensuring that training pathways include access to equipment and working capital (TVET, MSMEs, faculty, July–August 2025).

6.3 Long term (3–5 years)

Set explicit import substitution milestones in maize and wheat, institutionalize governance platforms with stable resourcing and performance metrics, and consolidate blended finance instruments for MSMEs conditioned on delivery (Interviews across actor types, July–August 2025).

Harmonize standards and streamline border procedures at key nodes to convert import dependencies into domestic production with cross-border value addition (Traders and private sector stakeholders, Kipushi/Lubumbashi, July–August 2025).

7 Conclusion and Vision

The Lobito Corridor can evolve from a logistics route into an engine of inclusive transformation if persistent bottlenecks are addressed systematically across infrastructure, value chains, skills, and governance. Convergent evidence from interviews, the GPS Actor Registry, and institutional data indicates that targeted, sequenced interventions can deliver early wins while laying the foundations for structural change. The path forward requires co-investment in integrated value chains, co-governance through delivery-mandated platforms, and co-learning via adaptive, evidence-based programming that keeps women and youth at the centre of opportunity creation.

References

- Anonymized Interviews (20): Academics, producers, traders, MSME owners, CSO leaders, TVET instructors, and digital hub managers (Lubumbashi, Kolwezi, Likasi, Kipushi; July–August 2025).
- GPS Actor Registry (DRC Lobito Corridor): Locations, products, bottlenecks, and corridor node usage (2025).
- Institutional Data via Interviews: INPP Haut-Katanga training volumes and program modalities (2024–2025).

Appendix: Methodology

This assessment used a mixed-methods design integrating qualitative interviews, a GPS-mapped actor registry, and structured coding with sentiment analysis. Twenty anonymized interviews were conducted in July–August 2025 with producers, traders, MSMEs, CSO leaders, academics, TVET providers, and digital hub managers across Lubumbashi, Kolwezi, Likasi, and Kipushi.

Respondents were purposively sampled to reflect corridor nodes and actor types spanning agriculture, mining-linked MSMEs, logistics, digital services, and civil society. The GPS Actor Registry (2025) recorded locations, products handled, bottlenecks, and node usage patterns.

Transcripts were coded using a predefined framework for value chains (maize, cassava, horticulture, wheat), cross-cutting themes (finance, skills, mechanization, storage/logistics), governance (CSO capacity, state collaboration), and digitalization (payments, marketplaces, advisory). Sentiment was assessed at the segment level to capture orientations toward constraints and opportunities; cassava-related segments

skewed negative due to perishability and market access constraints, while digital and TVET segments tended toward neutral-to-positive where pilots were active.

Triangulation across actor types, spatial registry patterns, and institutional statistics informed the analysis; divergent accounts were contextualized or excluded from causal inferences when not corroborated. Limitations include a modest sample focused on Haut-Katanga nodes, reliance on self-reporting, and potential undercoverage of informal actors without fixed locations; these were mitigated through triangulation and transparent sourcing.

CSO Perceptions of the Lobito Corridor Investments in Zambia

July-August 2025



1 Introduction

PIN Zambia conducted an online survey with civil society actors engaged in the EU-funded Local Empowerment and Development – Civil Society (LEADs) project implemented by PIN. The survey covered 10 CSOs active in the North-Western Province—the region targeted by the Lobito Corridor investment programme—as well as national-level civil society organizations with a broader presence. The following section presents an analysis of the survey results.

2 Survey Results

2.1 Opportunities Identified

Civil society organizations see the Lobito Corridor as more than a transport route—it is perceived as a catalyst for **employment, trade, and local market growth**.

- **Employment & jobs:** 40% of respondents explicitly identified job creation as the most immediate benefit.
- **Trade & markets:** 30% highlighted expanded trade opportunities, particularly for connecting North-Western Province to regional markets.
- **Infrastructure:** 60% of respondents emphasized the role of improved transport links in opening access to services, goods, and economic opportunities.
- Skills development and income diversification were also mentioned, but less frequently.

Interpretation: CSOs view the Corridor as an opportunity to reduce isolation of rural communities, create jobs, and enable more robust local economies. However, they also see benefits tied directly to **infrastructure improvements**, underlining expectations for tangible, visible changes.

2.2 Challenges and Risks

Respondents raised concerns around **environmental impacts, land, and social risks**.

- **Environmental concerns:** Highlighted by 80% of CSOs - responses focused on deforestation, ecosystem degradation, and poor environmental protection planning.
- **Land issues:** 100% of CSOs cited land dispossessions as a key risk, especially displacement and unclear land rights.
- **HIV and health risks:** 30% of respondents mentioned health risks, linked to the influx of workers and emergence of “hotspots” along transport routes.
- **Social exclusion & corruption:** 40% of CSO respondents mentioned these as key risks, reflecting fears that marginalized groups may be left out and inclusive governance processes could be undermined.

Interpretation: While CSOs acknowledge opportunities, they are acutely aware of risks tied to land dispossession, environmental degradation, and social pressures (including public

health). They frame these as **critical governance gaps** of the Lobito Corridor investment programme that must be addressed early.

2.3 Skills Development and Employment

When asked how to harness the Corridor for meaningful skills development:

- Most responses stressed youth training and vocational education, especially in green and technical skills.
- Several called for **local hiring policies**, discouraging overreliance on expatriate labor.
- Respondents highlighted the importance of **community involvement** in planning, linking skills directly to job creation.

Interpretation: CSOs see the Corridor as a chance to build **long-term human capital**, but warn against external labor dominating opportunities. They emphasize vocational training and green jobs as pathways to diversification beyond mining.

2.4 Role of Civil Society

CSOs see themselves as essential **watchdogs and advocates**, but also as facilitators.

- **Advocacy & accountability:** 70% of CSOs mentioned that they see their core role in holding government and investors accountable.
- **Awareness-raising & training:** 20% of CSOs cited awareness raising and direct service provision as their key roles, especially in relation to HIV prevention and community sensitization.
- **Community voice:** 70% of respondents stressed amplifying community concerns in planning and monitoring of Lobito Corridor investments.

Interpretation: Civil society envisions a dual role: both **advocating for transparency and accountability**, and **directly engaging communities through awareness and capacity building**

2.5 Support Needs for CSOs

To play their role effectively, CSOs highlighted several areas of support:

- **Training and capacity building:** 100% of CSOs mentioned this, highlighting capacity strengthening needs in advocacy, monitoring of government/investment programmes, and other technical skills related to policy engagement.
- **Funding/financial support:** 70% of respondents mentioned this, including flexible core funding.
- **Organizational strengthening:** 80% highlighted the needs for internal capacity development (governance, systems, project development).
- **Partnerships:** 20% of CSOs mentioned a need to strengthen collaboration with government and private sector.

Interpretation: CSOs are willing and motivated, but under-resourced. They see capacity strengthening and sustainable financing as prerequisites for meaningful engagement.

3 Overall Analysis

Zambian CSOs perceive the Lobito Corridor as a **transformative opportunity** for jobs, markets, and connectivity, but they are vocal about the **risks of land conflict, environmental damage, and exclusion**. They emphasize:

1. The need for **inclusive planning** to prevent social harms.
2. **Youth and women's empowerment** through skills and employment.
3. A stronger role for civil society in **advocacy, monitoring, and community mobilization**.
4. Sustainable **capacity strengthening and financing** so that CSOs can move beyond ad hoc participation.

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