

## POLICY BRIEF 66

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### Agricultural Investment Corridors In Africa: Making the voices of women and smallholder farmers count

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#### Key messages

- Development corridors can improve livelihood opportunities for people living in far-flung areas – but only if they focus on smallholder farming, pastoralism, fishing, and infrastructure for small-scale trade.
- As the corridor and growth pole projects have unfolded, land rights abuses have occurred. Some poorly-designed programmes invited large agribusiness investments that displaced and marginalised local people.
- Smallholder-farmer and women's organisations are rarely invited to contribute to the planning and design of the corridor and growth pole projects, and are only minimally involved in their governance.
- Government, development partners, and private investors will be met with resistance unless they welcome the involvement of civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that seek to safeguard land tenure and the environment.
- The alternative is to reframe corridors and growth poles to focus on supporting existing smallholder land users, including through training and inputs to improve productivity, and value-chain

development to enable smallholders – and women particularly – to expand beyond mainly subsistence-based agriculture.

#### Background and context

In Africa, agricultural development corridors and clusters are highly complex projects driven by agribusiness and mining corporations; host governments; international donors; and development-finance institutions. For these stakeholders, corridors often involve the extractive and transport industries but can also include agribusiness and agricultural development. The projects aim to improve business, trade, and agriculture by boosting public and private investment to develop hard infrastructure, such as roads or irrigation; and soft infrastructure and skills, such as farmer training and building commercial relationships between actors in a supply chain, and/or simplifying border-crossing.

Three major forces have driven corridor development.

**One:** private-sector actors such as food manufacturers. Mining firms and fertiliser producers are demanding better road and rail infrastructure; unambiguous access to land; and greater access to rural communities to both source agricultural commodities and to sell agricultural inputs and services. African governments are under pressure to support foreign investors in these goals: corridors and clusters or growth poles provide a neat mechanism to channel private-sector investment where it is needed.

**Two:** governments are leveraging investment in infrastructure and business to promote economic development in corridor or cluster regions and transform historical transport routes into regional development projects.

**Three:** donors and international financial institutions have supported corridors and agricultural clusters or growth poles as they prioritise infrastructural improvements, cross-border trade, value-chain and private-sector development, as well as connecting smallholders to nucleus and/or processor estates.

From a development perspective, corridors and clusters or growth poles allow for local smallholders and small businesses to come into closer proximity to larger companies, exposing them to national or international markets. Agricultural clusters or growth poles are intended to create local hubs where large farms will generate positive spillover effects for commercial actors upstream and downstream.

If correctly planned and implemented, corridors and clusters or growth poles could promote agribusiness that is inclusive of low-income and marginalised groups, because small-scale family operations or smallholdings dominate African agriculture. Furthermore, women provide at least 40% of all crop farming labour in many African countries; they are critical to smallholder production. However, smallholders and women are often prevented from sustained participation in the potentially lucrative markets promoted by corridors and clusters. A large barrier to inclusion is that smallholders and women can be excluded from having a say in the design and governance of public-private partnerships and spatial development initiatives.



Figure 1 SEQ Figure \\* ARABIC 1: Location of five

We investigated if and how recent corridors and clusters in Africa have been able to achieve the meaningful engagement of small-scale economic actors, with a focus on smallholders, including pastoralists, and the women among them. We identified common challenges and pitfalls and highlighted key lessons to share with organisations involved in spatial development initiatives in Africa to enhance their prospects for long-term stability and effectiveness.

In this policy brief, we explore these case studies (see Figure 1):

- Beira Agricultural Growth Corridor in Mozambique and Zambia;
- Nacala Corridor in Mozambique and Malawi, incorporating the ProSAVANA agricultural development programme;
- Lamu Port–South Sudan–Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor in Kenya;
- Lobito Corridor in Angola, linking to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Zambia; and
- Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT).

## Progress so far

Each initiative established a dedicated office, partnership group or development authority, and in some instances, a separate administrative secretariat. The governance bodies administered the initiatives and raised and allocated funding. The initiatives were typically structured as public-private partnerships, with public and private funding committed by many actors. These included host governments and bilateral donors: the Department for International Development

(DFID); the US Agency for International Development (USAID); and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Lenders included: the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation (IFC); and the African Development Bank (AfDB). Support was also given by agri-food and fertiliser companies, mining, logistics, and telecommunications companies.

Work, by many of the corridors and clusters, has already commenced in rehabilitating and/or constructing hard infrastructure, including (i) work on the ports of Beira in Mozambique, Lamu in Kenya, and Lobito in Angola; and (ii) work on railways in Angola and Mozambique. Substantial road improvements have taken place, mainly to highways and trunk roads along corridor routes in the LAPSSET, Lobito, Nacala, and SAGCOT corridors.

Some investment in agricultural infrastructure such as irrigation, warehouses and grain stores, abattoirs, and processing plants has occurred. However, evidence of improved soft infrastructure, needed for trade, was limited – apart from the special economic zones established in Beira and Nacala in Mozambique.

Investment in large-scale plantations and farms by domestic and international organisations and individuals has commenced: notably in Mozambique,<sup>6</sup> but these projects are associated with land disputes and evictions. Projects supporting smallholders and small agribusinesses were underway in Mozambique and Tanzania.

In Mozambique, these projects (i) connected or contracted small-scale farmers in dairy, rice, sunflower, Irish potatoes, tomatoes, and tea; (ii) trained farmers; (iii) supported value-addition processing enterprises; and (iv) provided post-harvest handling and grain storage for smallholder rice and maize farmers. In Mozambique, a few small agribusiness ventures received funding from the Beira Agricultural Growth Corridor Catalytic Fund, while some contract farming initiatives involving smallholders received funding.

## Participation processes and initiatives

In analysing the extent of participation in the corridors and clusters, we looked at the extent to which small-scale producers were involved in governance, i.e. the process for decision-making and oversight of implementation; information dissemination; relationship-building;<sup>7</sup> and, in what part of the process they became involved. In the following subsections, we discuss the level of engagement of smallholder farmers and women's groups in each of the cases.

## Beira and Nacala corridors in Mozambique

The Beira and Nacala corridors were first created to support the colonial Portuguese economy.<sup>8</sup> In the early 2000s, the corridors, notably the Moatize-Nacala railway line, which passes through Malawi, underwent some rehabilitation.

The Nacala Port is also being developed. It has been identified as a more efficient hub for the transportation of coal from Tete province to the Beira harbour. Around Beira and Nacala cities, Special Economic Zones have been established. The Mozambique government is planning to create similar zones, dedicated to agriculture along both corridors.

The Mozambique government hopes to increase its agricultural potential by developing value chains based on agricultural research.<sup>9</sup> The Mozambique regulatory framework allows for both small- and large-scale land investment – the project blueprints make reference to smallholders as both contributors and beneficiaries alongside private capital. The Beira and Nacala agricultural corridors have attracted capital investment and technological transfer.

Capital flows and technological transfers do not follow predictable patterns, however, as they depend not only on the intervention of multiple actors, but they are also at the mercy of fluctuations in the global economy and global commodity prices. As such, the incorporation of smallholder value chains has been marginal, and projects that do exist are dispersed, with strong spatial asymmetries.<sup>10</sup>

Infrastructure like roads, storehouses, and irrigation systems for smallholders have yet to be built because the government does not have the capital to invest, and the Mozambique banking system is unwilling to take the risks involved in financing agriculture.

Therefore, farmers do not have easy access to markets, and any surplus that smallholders produce, is wasted before it gets to market. Poor feeder roads, a lack of reliable information on market prices, and few established buyers remain an impediment to smallholders.

Input from smallholders is often missing from the conception and implementation phases of agricultural development programmes, at times leading to contestation over agricultural programmes.<sup>11</sup> An analysis of gendered power relations has been largely missing from project plans, such that projects are unlikely to achieve gender growth equity.<sup>12</sup> For example, while women have traditionally been key actors in the cashew sector, interventions to promote cashew production have usually excluded women, who lose jobs to men in the processing sector.<sup>13</sup>

While smallholders have access to Mozambique's many government-created platforms for civil society participation, several less institutionalised, civil society-driven dialogue platforms exist at central, provincial and district levels. For example, smallholder associations have been involved in local mobilisation, often supported by NGOs. These also need support from the government. Better utilisation of social media and community radio stations and events – for the purposes of communicating issues related to smallholder agriculture, women, and land rights, is needed.

## LAPSSET corridor in Kenya

The Lamu Port–South Sudan–Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor Project in Kenya promises to develop infrastructure to connect Northern Kenya, South Sudan and Southern Ethiopia to global markets. In 2012, the Kenyan government began commissioning the construction of different components of the project, including a deep-water port, new highway system, standard gauge railway system, an oil pipeline and oil refinery, as well as upgrades to resort cities, the construction of three new airports, and a new dam. Driven mainly by oil and mineral transport needs, planners hope these developments will offer opportunities for industrial, logistics and tourism development, and agro-commercialisation (including processing plants, distribution centres, special economic zones and free trade zones). However, plans to boost agricultural production focus on establishing large plantations, nucleus farms, outgrower schemes, and large holding grounds for livestock, presenting smallholders with both risks and opportunities.

In Lamu county, livelihoods are dependent on smallholder agriculture, pastoralism, and fishing. About 70,000 hectares of rain-fed smallholder agricultural activity takes place, informally employing about 54% of the region's working-age population (evenly distributed between men and women). Smallholders have minimal access to markets, seeds, credit, storage facilities, inputs, and extension services. Pastoralism is mainly practised around the drier, sparsely inhabited northern parts of the county, bordering Kenya's Northeast region, and largely remains distinctively traditional and small-scale.

Like smallholders, pastoralists lack access to markets and fear threats to their livelihoods will result from LAPSSET claiming land. Fishing is the main economic activity on Lamu island, with 40 fishing grounds, 37 landing sites, and a total catch of 2,200 metric tonnes (in 2015/16), mostly coming from small-scale artisanal fishers.

LAPSSET's planned port extension will cut into the fishing waters of fishers, and community-based organisations have demanded the development of a bio-cultural community protocol based on a comprehensive social and environmental impact assessment study.

Project managers have put forward proposals to modernise and commercialise fishing and are negotiating their modernisation agenda with the County Government and community representatives. It is unclear how this will impact small-scale fishers, especially women.

The government's public language promotes communal consultation and rights to culture; individuals and groups in Lamu are using this language to make specific demands about the design and implementation of LAPSSET and question the control, participation and ownership, and the impact on culture and the ecological diversity of the project. However, civil society organisations (CSOs) have struggled to represent the views of diverse and affected communities and have developed distinct narratives regarding the fate of pastoralism, small-scale agriculture, and issues of concern to women.

Despite an active civil society space in Lamu, information asymmetries continue to cause a great deal of confusion and suspicion over how the corridor will affect different groups. Some groups are focusing on direct threats posed by the project, while other groups are focusing on the potential immediate gains, such as financial compensation for land and resources claimed by the infrastructural developments. Therefore, local opinion is divided, and unequal power relations are being reproduced between smallholders and large investors.

To ensure that the vision of LAPSSET is democratised, it is essential to support local actors to advance their vision of development and their interests in commercialisation. This can be done by including quotas for smallholders' and women's participation in the LAPSSET Corridor Development Authority (LCDA), collaborating with the Pastoralists Parliamentary Group, creating CSO and county-government steering committees across all counties along the corridor, improving stakeholder engagement and educating smallholders about agricultural commercialisation, and addressing current communal concerns over LAPSSET's impact on the environment, land and local resources.

## Lobito Development Corridor in Angola

The Lobito Development Corridor, a multimodal transport system anchored to Lobito Port in Angola – one of the biggest commercial ports on Africa’s Atlantic coastline – and the network supported by the corridor runs deep into the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Zambia.

The corridor includes: (i) a rail network – the Benguela Railway Company – running from Lobito Port to DRC and Zambia; (ii) a planned direct rail link from Solwezi in Zambia to Luena in Angola; (iii) a road network (in bad condition) from Lobito Port to DRC and Zambia; (iv) an international airport in Catumbela (Benguela province); (v) a new domestic airport in Luau (Moxico province); and (vi) a planned national network of logistics platforms.

Despite high hopes, investments in large- and medium-scale agricultural projects have rarely been realised within the contractually-defined deadlines due to a precarious market for inputs, supplies, and services. Therefore it has been a financial failure, with no transfer of skills and expertise.

More realistic, profitable, and inclusive projects should be anchored in family and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises because this sector supports about 80% of domestic agricultural production, with about 63% using only hoes for cultivation. <sup>14</sup>

The development of the Benguela railway in the Lobito Corridor has boosted the mobility of poor and vulnerable community members and professionals (teachers, nurses, and others), and led to the formation of ‘intermediate trade centres’, where goods, knowledge, information, and news are exchanged.

The trade centres also serve as distribution points for imported manufactured goods, and agricultural inputs and outputs not locally produced. As a result of the Benguela railway, rural communities are now able to buy essentials and other goods that were previously unavailable. However, profits from trade remain unstable due to the transportation of locally-produced agricultural goods, which are determined by seasonal fluctuations, while the transportation of manufactured goods is subject to long delays at the Lobito Port. Furthermore, there are no storage facilities and inadequate social services at the newly-emerging intermediate trade centres.

The train service has allowed smallholders to diversify from farming to trade. Train passengers, including women, do not only benefit from the accessibility of rail transport; they have also gained access to more income-earning opportunities, like selling items inland, brought from the coastal areas, and selling inland products at urban markets. The train service has increased women’s mobility, profits from selling their surpluses, and bargaining power, but they have also experienced severe constraints and obstacles when doing business while travelling by train with perishable agricultural produce.

Therefore, the corridor planners and implementers need to engage smallholders, and small traders, including women, in enhancing the income-generating opportunities the corridor has to offer. This could include providing more agricultural inputs (e.g. improved quality seeds, fertilisers and correctives, ploughs for animal traction); developing and implementing a mechanisation strategy to boost production; and providing educational opportunities for women to develop their technical, financial and commercialisation know-how – while also improving services on offer at intermediate trade centres (including storage facilities; electricity; water; sanitation; and education and health facilities).

### SAGCOT corridor in Tanzania

The Tanzanian government created the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT) with the vision of modernising and commercialising agriculture for a 'green revolution'. Adopting the slogan 'Kilimo Kwanza' (Agriculture First), the government aimed to mobilise private-sector investments in agriculture. The private-sector investors pushed for access to more land and changes to land policy and laws, which they saw as an obstacle to developing large-scale agricultural projects.<sup>15</sup> As a result, small producers are concerned about the potential impacts of the growth corridor on their access to use, control and ownership of land and other natural resources rights.

Since 90% of agriculture in Tanzania is produced by smallholders, boosting production would be more viable if it provided smallholders with the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their farming activities, supplemented with timely access to affordable and useful inputs and credit, as well as reliable markets and processors who offer reasonable prices.

In some areas, the failure to inform and consult communities adequately about the impact of this corridor has led to ongoing resistance and significant court cases.<sup>16</sup>

For example, in the case of Kilombero Sugar Company Limited (KSCL), often referred to as a 'success story' in Tanzania's sugar sector – increasing land scarcity is squeezing out poor outgrowers as wealthier producers buy up land.<sup>18</sup> However, communities are increasingly mobilising and resisting the company's efforts to seize more land, having won a court case to protect their land, while NGOs are raising awareness among villagers about their land and resource rights.<sup>19</sup>

Farmers also dispute the remuneration they receive for their sugar, and they do not trust the company's calculations.

In the case of the Mkulazi Holding Company Limited (MHCL), communities occupied unused land where a former prison farm was located. When the investor moved in, the community demanded compensation, but the terms of compensation have yet to be worked out. Land is also becoming scarce and expensive in the area, with much of the land having been acquired by urban elites from as far off as Dar es Salaam or those with large sugar farms in Kilombero.



Pastoral communities have also been excluded from decision-making, even though the expansion of sugarcane production in the area could negatively impact their livelihoods – especially if the project fails to keep migratory routes open and to provide pasture for livestock.

The Njombe Milk Factory Limited is a cooperative set up to process milk from dairy farmers, the main shareholders in the project. However, conflict has emerged about the way farmers are incorporated into the project as they remain price-takers. Striking a balance among and between shareholders in milk production, company management, and decision-making bodies is proving difficult, yet it is crucial to the success of the project.

Despite the different arrangements in the case studies above, conflict results mainly from the terms on which farmers are incorporated into company schemes. For these projects to lift smallholders out of poverty, smallholders need to be better consulted, be given a greater say, and have more decision-making power. The government and other stakeholders need to prioritise agricultural investments that target small- and medium-scale producers, especially the legitimate owners of the land, ensuring that they can fully participate in the whole agricultural value chain, including in both upstream and downstream activities.

If farmers are to engage in contract farming, they and their cooperative societies and associations need model contracts to improve their bargaining power and make clear (i) the roles of the state, investors, and development partners; (ii) how and by whom key infrastructure will be developed; and (iii) who will finance extension services, agricultural inputs, and markets.

## Challenges

Governments, donors and lenders, and managers of corridors and growth poles might face challenges in ensuring the effective engagement of smallholders and women's groups in spatial development initiatives, including:

- balancing the interests of multiple parties in public-private partnerships;
- the need to attract investment and facilitate land acquisition;
- a lack of effective representative bodies for smallholders and businesses, especially at the local or sub-national government level;
- unhelpful project designs from external parties based on incorrect assumptions and a lack of consideration for the local context;
- inadequate information and communication channels between and among stakeholders and decision-makers; and
- logistical challenges in reaching residents and resource users in rural areas.

## Factors that enable success across all corridor initiatives

Despite the challenges, when the needs of smallholders and women were being taken more seriously in spatial development initiatives, some successes were noted. These resulted from:

- **Enabling policies:** governments and development partners requiring investors to include women and other smallholders; stipulating impact assessment procedures; limiting the size of large-scale operations; ensuring there are downstream investors for value-chain development and marketing; creating forums with quotas to include smallholders and women; including training and inputs for smallholders and women; protecting land tenure and providing compensation and micro-financing.
- **Mediation and innovation from specialised third parties:** welcoming external organisations like CIRAD, and acknowledging the impact that constructive resistance from civil society has in terms of overall safeguards for land tenure and the environment.
- **Learning from past initiatives:** initiating dialogue with small-scale agricultural actors as soon as possible to build trust, incorporating their needs into the design, and developing structures for sustained engagement over time.

## Conclusion

The inclusion of smallholders and women's groups has been problematic at all stages of the corridor initiatives, from conception and design to project implementation – but particularly at the conception stage.

**Smallholders' and women's organisations were rarely, if ever, invited to contribute to the initial conception and design of the initiatives** and as projects unfolded, land rights abuses occurred and poorly-designed support programmes were initiated. However, beyond project conception, efforts were made to engage smallholders, even though these phases of consultation centred on land allocation and project implementation, rather than project conception.

The chances of the inclusion of smallholders and women are highest in spatial development initiatives that: (i) are demand-driven and strongly influenced by donors or development institutions that prioritise smallholder infrastructure or value-chain programmes (as opposed to large-scale agriculture and nucleus-outgrower schemes); and (ii) are not strongly influenced by agribusinesses whose strategic priorities include large-scale land acquisition or commodity extraction.

## Recommendations

- **To benefit smallholders and women, corridors and growth poles should be focused on supporting existing smallholder land users**, including through training and inputs to improve productivity, and value-chain development to enable smallholders and women, in particular, to expand beyond mainly subsistence-based agriculture.
- From the outset in the development process, **governments, donors, lenders, companies, and managers of corridors and growth poles might face challenges in ensuring effective engagement** of smallholders and women's groups – including, smallholders, pastoralists, and women – in spatial development initiatives.
- **Project managers, governments, donors, and companies can improve engagement with smallholders and women** by setting quotas for inclusion in governance structures, and providing support and information to farmers' and women's organisations to enable them to shape decisions.
- **Governments, lenders, and companies should: introduce selection criteria and requirements for investors** to avoid large land-based investments; ensure smallholder and gender-sensitive inclusion; establish and monitor communications; train farmers; and develop value chain programmes that ensure local benefits.

- **Institutions initiating corridor and growth pole projects could include NGOs** to help mediate between different stakeholders and develop innovative ways in which the voices of smallholders and women can be heard, so as to provide meaningful space for disagreement and alternatives to be considered and debated.

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