

IMPACT OF LAPSET AND OTHER MEGAPROJECTS ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS ASPECTS OF PASTORALIST COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN KENYA

CONTEXT

Following the launching of its Vision 2030 in October 2006, the Government of Kenya has embarked on an aggressive campaign to revamp its infrastructure with the aim of becoming a middle-income country by 2030. The Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) corridor is one of the many flagship projects under Vision 2030 that are expected to make Kenya to drive 10% annual economic growth by 2030. The LAPSSET flagship is expected to stimulate economic growth by creating job opportunities for the growing youth population, in addition to helping Kenya achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and particularly SDG 9 that focuses on infrastructure development.

The LAPSSET was initiated as an economic enabler in line with the aspirations of the Economic Pillar of Vision 2030, to open up Northern Kenya to investment and trade while linking up the region to local and offshore markets. This move emanated from the realisation - *“Kenya will not achieve sustainable economic growth and progress as a nation if the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) are not appropriately factored into national economic planning and development.”*¹

Using a qualitative research design anchored upon Drivers, Pressures, States, Impacts and Responses (DPSIR) framework of Kristensen (2004)², a study was conducted in November 2019 to examine how the LAPSSET corridor and its ancillary megaprojects will impact the socio-economic, cultural, environmental, and human rights aspects of communities living around the projects in Isiolo, Marsabit, Samburu and Laikipia counties.

The study examined 16 LAPSSET and its associated megaprojects by conducting 55 focus group discussions, 89 key informant interviews, and expert field observations in the four counties. In Isiolo County, the study examined the LAPSSET Corridor, Crocodile Jaws megadam, Isiolo International Airport, Resort City, Isiolo-Modogashe and Isiolo-Moyale roads. In Marsabit County, the study focused on Isiolo-Moyale Road, the Kenya Electricity Transmission Company (KETRACO) powerline, Badasa megadam and Moyale dryport. In Samburu County, the focus was on Yamo megadam, the KETRACO powerline, and Rumuruti-Maralal and Kisima-Maralal roads. Finally, in Laikipia County, the study examined Crocodile Jaws megadam and the KETRACO powerline. A one-day validation workshop was held at Isiolo Town on 26th November 2019 involving representatives from grassroots communities, community-based organisations, and national and county

¹RoK (2012, p. 2)

²Kristensen (2004)



governments. The objective of the workshop was to share the research findings and obtain feedback from the attendees for further refinement of the report.



Laikipia rumuruti- farming.

STUDY FINDINGS

1. Community knowledge of LAPSET projects

- The level of knowledge on LAPSET projects was low among the grassroots communities.
- Most of the community members were happy with the projects for opening up the so far neglected areas and creating employment opportunities, particularly for the growing youth population.
- There was low participation of grassroots communities in various stages of the project cycle except some token casual labor services and rubberstamping EIA/SEIA reports and other “top-down” government decisions.
- There was no evidence that the proponents of the LAPSET projects went out of their way to ensure adequate community participation in the projects as well as to capture the voice and grievances of indigenous communities in project design and implementation.

2. Socio-economic impacts

- Apart from the KETRACO powerline, which had a negative response from the community, most development projects are expected to contribute positively to community livelihoods and socio-economic development through job creation, access to markets and social amenities, and growth of business and trade.
- Although communities expect the megaprojects to catalyse socio-economic development in their counties, they fear that the projects would induce sedentarisation, which might fuel

resource-based conflicts, including livestock rustling, thereby threaten pastoralist livelihoods. Additionally, some of the megaprojects such as megadams, resort cities, oil pipeline, the SGR, and highway that take up huge chunks of land or block pastoralist livestock migratory routes, will reduce pastoral migration, which is an important aspect of their survival strategy of mobility. This may lead to the demise of the pastoral production system as we know it, causing pastoralists to leave their profession, who, with little or no education, will most likely become destitutes in towns and cities.

- The only hope for the grassroots communities is that the LAPSSET projects will bring up sustainable alternative livelihoods such as irrigated crop and pasture production, fishing and add value to pastoral resources such as livestock products and *gum arabic*. However, the adoption of these livelihood alternatives largely requires capacity building, heavy financial investment, and acceptance by the pastoral communities themselves.

3. Socio-cultural impacts

- The LAPSSET projects will induce an unprecedented cultural change among the grassroots communities. In particular, there will be a heavy influx into the project corridor of immigrant communities from inside and outside the country. The social interaction between immigrants and indigenous communities will fundamentally alter the latter's culture, both positively and negatively. The main positive aspects of cultural change expected is multiculturalism due to intermarriage, adoption of modern technology, and acceptance of each other's lifestyle. This is expected to increase national cohesion and social harmony between communities.
- Some of the anticipated negative aspects of the cultural shift include change in morality especially among the youth in terms of dressing, language and respect for elders; changes in diet and religion, loss of indigenous knowledge, and collapse of traditional governance institutions such as the authority of council of elders. There is likely also to be an increase in school drop-outs, crime rate, prostitution, and substance abuse especially among the youth, as well as competition over scarce resources (water and pasture), and political rivalry between local communities and immigrants. This might exacerbate inter-ethnic tensions.

4. Environmental impacts

- The LAPSSET projects are expected to induce the loss of wildlife, grazing lands and forest cover. The influx of immigrants will create increased demand for energy and housing, which will increase charcoal burning, sand harvesting and quarrying. Hence, unless settlements along the LAPSSET and around the megaprojects are well-planned, *ad hoc* (re-)settlement around the new infrastructure projects will likely lead to severe land degradation, with negative implications for sustainable livelihoods.
- The highways is likely to increase land (through littering), air and noise pollution.
- There is also an anticipated increase in chemical pollution arising from use of agrochemicals in farming, especially along the waterways and in proposed dams.
- The KETRACO powerline was reported to cause a lot of noise at night. There is also potential for bush fires along the wayleave.
- The effect of the projects on community resilience and/or vulnerability to climate change is mixed. On the one hand, some projects such as megadams and highways are said to enhance community adaptation and resilience to climate change. On the other hand, the megadams are said to increase the vulnerability of downstream communities to drought

due to restricted water flow. Only the KETRACO powerline was reported to be outright harmful to the environment due to vegetation clearing along the wayleave.

5. Human rights impacts

- The respondents reported little and somewhat haphazard community participation in LAPSET and other megaprojects surveyed.
- Most respondents were unhappy with the way their land was appropriated by the government and how the compensation was done. The communal land was grossly undervalued (using the urban market valuation formula instead of a non-market one based on rural community valuation of their assets) and, at times, uncompensated for lack of title deeds. Even where communal land was compensated through the county government, the community was not involved in the determination of the use of the money. Some of the local leaders were not transparent in the way they used compensation cash.
- In a large part, the community voice was not captured at all stages of the project cycle. Government decision-making was (and still remains) top-down with indigenous communities largely being used as rubberstamps of decisions made elsewhere, including validating EIA/SEIA reports. However, some of the human right responses were a bit out of touch with our findings at community level; thus, making a case that human rights interests should be moderated, otherwise, projects are likely to stall due to the loud voice of non-representative community voice crusaders. This observation came out strongly during our validation workshop in Isiolo. It remains an open question as to whose voice should carry the day.

6. Perceived future risks of the megaprojects

Looking into the future, communities in the four counties were apprehensive of the following issues:

- Displacement of people from private land through compulsory acquisition with little or no compensation
- Extinction of pastoralism due to land use change, appropriation by government and grabbing by local elites and immigrants
- Erosion of indigenous culture, beliefs, knowledge, morality and traditions
- Environmental pollution and degradation
- Wildlife extinction
- Increase in resource-based conflicts, road accidents, crime rate and delinquency especially among the youth.

However, most communities expressed their readiness to embrace change and development arising from the planned megaprojects. For example, members of the Samburu community were anxious to start enjoying the benefits of the LAPSET and the other megaprojects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is proposed that the government prepares the grassroots communities for the changes to their livelihoods, culture and the environment through effective capacity building, cultural promotion, legal protection, and sustainable people-centered development.
- There is also need for the LAPSET Secretariat to share more information with grassroots communities, their representatives (governors, and members of parliament, among

others), other government agencies, and civil society organisations, in order to manage expectations, tone down the prevailing widespread suspicion, and reduce negative perceptions about the megaprojects.

- It is clear from the study that the LAPSSET Corridor Development Authority (LCDA) has not yet embraced a multi-agency approach in its development planning. In fact, according to a key informant, it is like *“the right hand does not know what the left is doing”* in regard to the singularity of decision making by the LCDA. There is, therefore, a need for the LCDA to embrace other government agencies in its planning and coordination processes for more inclusion and information sharing.
- **For CORDAID and its partners, there is a need to:**

- Build the capacity of indigenous communities to lobby the government for timely and actionable information about the LAPSSET projects and for wider inclusion in project activities including the EIA/SEIA and determination of compensation rates.
- Partner with government agencies to develop training curriculum for capacity building of pastoralists on alternative livelihoods.
- Work with both the private sector, and national and county governments to develop livestock and dryland resource value chains based on the comparative advantage of particular indigenous communities.
- Collaborate with indigenous communities and religious groups to promote “peace for development” and “development for peace” initiatives based on the principal of “do no harm”. This can be achieved through community and interfaith dialogues and peace-building forums to reduce civil and resource-based conflicts in the marginal areas.
- Engage with other human rights organisations and crusaders to build the political awareness of indigenous communities to participate in county government budgetary and development planning processes. This will ensure inclusion of community voice in development planning.
- Work with human rights organisations and crusaders to inform indigenous communities on their land rights.
- Partner with relevant agents to enlist pastoral dropouts into social safety net programmes in the county in the short and medium term. In the long-run, the exit strategy should be to build the dropouts' capacity to adopt alternative livelihoods.
- Support relevant national and county government agencies to strengthen existing regulations on environmental pollution (including the ban on plastics, charcoal burning and sand harvesting).
- Support national and county government effort to address the problem of environmental degradation through tree planting, construction of gabions and range rehabilitation.
- Advocate for new pasture and range management systems, e.g. reviving the *“dedha”* system, which will promote peace-building and community co-existence.
- Sensitise communities on when and how to participate in EIA/SEIAs in their locale. This could be achieved by facilitating announcements and meeting programmes on local FM radios.

- Promote cultural activities through the construction of a museum to preserve community heritage and biodiversity (e.g., last coffee in Kenya).
- Urgently fund a documentary on indigenous community culture, values and practices before they are completely lost to the modernisation expected from the LAPSET and other megaprojects.

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Please see the annex.



Livestock grazing under powerline in Samburu.