



POLICY BRIEF

Strengthening Environmental Safeguards and Social Accountability in Coastal Infrastructure Development

Community Perspectives from the Mombasa–Mtwapa
Road Project Corridor



Executive Summary

Infrastructure development is a critical pillar of Kenya's economic transformation, particularly under **Kenya Vision 2030**, which prioritizes improved transport networks to enhance trade, mobility, and regional integration. However, while these projects create economic opportunities, they can also generate environmental and social risks for communities living along project corridors.

Between October 2025 and March 2026, WeRise Africa, in collaboration with civil society organizations (CSOs), supported a series of community engagement activities along the project corridor, including community consultations, school sensitization sessions, and a multi-stakeholder workshop involving government agencies, civil society actors, Project Affected Persons (PAPs), and local community members. These engagements aimed to strengthen community environmental safeguards, promote inclusive participation, and enhance social accountability mechanisms associated with the road project.

Through these engagements, community members were provided with a platform to share their experiences, document emerging environmental and social concerns, and engage directly with relevant stakeholders. The process also contributed to the strengthening of the Grievance Redress Committees (GRCs) by enhancing stakeholder coordination, raising awareness on grievance reporting mechanisms, and supporting the committees' role in documenting and addressing community concerns related to project implementation.

Key concerns raised by communities include:

- i. Road safety risks near schools due to speeding vehicles and limited safety infrastructure.
- ii. Environmental impacts such as dust pollution and drainage challenges.
- iii. Unfulfilled commitments regarding school infrastructure improvements.
- iv. Weak grievance redress mechanisms and limited community awareness of complaint procedures.
- v. Delays and inconsistencies in compensation processes for Project Affected Persons.
- vi. Lack of inclusive infrastructure design affecting persons with disabilities.
- vii. Child protection risks associated with construction activities.

Despite Kenya's strong legal and policy frameworks including the **Constitution of Kenya (2010)**, the **Environmental Management and Coordination Act (EMCA)**, the **Land Act (2012)**, and international safeguard standards such as the **African Development Bank Integrated Safeguards System** implementation gaps remain.

This brief recommends strengthening environmental safeguards, improving transparency in compensation processes, enhancing road safety infrastructure near schools, and strengthening community participation and grievance mechanisms.



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1.0 BACKGROUND

Infrastructure development plays a central role in Kenya's economic transformation and regional integration. Investments in roads, ports, and transport corridors are prioritized under **Kenya Vision 2030**¹, which identifies infrastructure as a key enabler of economic growth, trade, and social development. The development of major road corridors such as the **Mombasa–Mtwapa Road Project: Lot 1 and 2 Nyali Bridge–Mtwapa Bridge–Kwa Kadzengo Kilifi (A7)** forms part of broader national and regional strategies aimed at improving mobility, reducing congestion, and enhancing connectivity along the coastal region.

While such projects bring significant economic benefits, they can also generate environmental and social impacts, particularly for communities located along project corridors. These impacts include displacement of households, disruption of livelihoods, environmental pollution, road safety risks, and increased vulnerability of children and marginalized populations.

Kenya's legal and policy framework provides safeguards intended to mitigate these impacts. The **Constitution of Kenya (2010)** guarantees the right to a clean and healthy environment and promotes public participation in decision-making processes affecting communities². Environmental protection is further reinforced through the **Environmental Management and Coordination Act (EMCA)**, which establishes environmental impact assessment requirements and environmental safeguards for development projects³.

Land acquisition and compensation processes associated with infrastructure projects are governed by the **Land Act (2012)**, which outlines procedures for compulsory acquisition, valuation, compensation, and resettlement of Project Affected Persons (PAPs)⁴. In addition, international safeguard standards also apply where development partners are involved in financing infrastructure projects. The **African Development Bank (AfDB) Integrated Safeguards System**, particularly the Operational Safeguards on involuntary resettlement and environmental protection, emphasizes the protection of livelihoods, transparency in compensation, and meaningful consultation with affected communities⁵.

Infrastructure projects must also safeguard the rights and well-being of children. Kenya is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which obligates states to ensure that children are protected from exploitation, abuse, and unsafe environments that may arise during development activities⁶.

¹ Government of Kenya. *Kenya Vision 2030: The Popular Version*. Nairobi: Government Printer.

² Government of Kenya. *Constitution of Kenya (2010)*, Article 42 and Article 69

³ Government of Kenya. *Environmental Management and Coordination Act (EMCA)*, 1999 (Revised 2015)

⁴ Government of Kenya, *Land Act*, Cap. 280, originally enacted 2012, amended through *Land Laws (Amendment) Act, 2016*, *Land Value (Amendment) Act, 2019*, and *Land (Amendment) Act, No. 21 of 2025* (Nairobi: National Council for Law Reporting, 2025)

⁵ African Development Bank Group. (2023). *Integrated Safeguards System (updated policy effective May 31, 2024)*. Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire: African Development Bank Group.

⁶ United Nations. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 1989.



Despite the existence of these legal and institutional safeguards, implementation gaps often remain. Communities affected by infrastructure development frequently report limited access to information, weak grievance mechanisms, delays in compensation processes, and inadequate consultation. These challenges can undermine public trust and exacerbate social tensions.

2.0 COMMUNITY VOICES FROM THE GROUND

Community consultations provided valuable insights into how infrastructure development is affecting daily life along the project corridor along Shanzu, Bombolulu, Kongowea-Lights. The community voices included:



Vehicles move very fast during school hours, and even when the flag marshal signals them to stop, some drivers ignore it.

Student, Ziwa La Ng'ombe Comprehensive School.



Dust from the road affects learners, especially those with allergies, and sometimes it becomes difficult to concentrate in class.

Student, Ziwa La Ng'ombe Comprehensive School



Some families are under pressure because compensation has taken too long, and it is causing tension in households.

Project Affected Person, Bombolulu



Open trenches along the road are dangerous for persons with disabilities because we cannot cross easily and are forced to take longer routes.

PWD Representative, Community Meeting.

These voices highlight the importance of integrating community experiences and perspectives into infrastructure planning and monitoring processes.



3.0 KEY ENVIRONMENTAL SAFEGUARDS

The environmental and social concerns highlighted in this policy brief were identified through a community-centered monitoring approach implemented by WeRise Africa as part of efforts to strengthen environmental safeguards and social accountability along the Mombasa–Mtwapa Road Project corridor. The approach prioritized the participation of community members, including students, teachers, Project Affected Persons (PAPs), persons with disabilities, and local leaders, in identifying and documenting emerging concerns associated with the road construction.

Data collection methods included community dialogue sessions, school sensitization engagements, stakeholder consultations, and field observations. In addition, participatory documentation techniques such as note-taking during community discussions, photography, and direct observation of environmental conditions along the corridor were used to capture lived experiences and visible impacts of the project. These methods allowed communities to provide first-hand insights into environmental and social challenges affecting their daily lives.

The issues presented below therefore reflect community-identified concerns and observations, supported by documentation from field engagements and consultations conducted between October 2025 and March 2026.

ISSUE	EVIDENCE FROM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	IMPLICATIONS
1. Road Safety Risks Near Schools	Students from Ziwa La Ng'ombe Comprehensive School and Shimo La Tewa School reported frequent incidents of speeding vehicles along the road corridor, especially during morning arrival and afternoon dismissal hours. During the sensitization session at Ziwa La Ng'ombe, learners explained that although a flag marshal assists during peak crossing times, some motorists ignore the signals and continue driving at high speeds. Community members reported a recent accident near Shimo La Tewa School in which four students were reportedly hit by a vehicle while attempting to cross the road.	Increased risk of road traffic injuries and fatalities among school children and pedestrians. The lack of adequate traffic calming infrastructure exposes learners to daily safety risks.



ISSUE	EVIDENCE FROM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	IMPLICATIONS
2. Inadequate Road Safety Infrastructure	Observations during school engagements revealed limited road safety infrastructure such as speed bumps, pedestrian crossings, warning signage, and adequate school zone markings and alternative pathways for students. Community members also indicated that pedestrian crossings are either absent or poorly marked in several sections of the road corridor.	Without adequate road safety infrastructure, children, persons with disabilities, and elderly pedestrians remain highly vulnerable to accidents.
3. Environmental Pollution (Dust and Air Quality)	Excessive dust pollution was widely reported during the school sensitization sessions at Ziwa La Ng'ombe Comprehensive School and Shimo La Tewa School, particularly during the dry season when construction activities intensify and vehicles frequently pass through the corridor. Learners and teachers noted that dust often enters classrooms during lessons, forcing them to close windows or pause learning activities. Some students reported experiencing coughing, sneezing, and eye irritation during peak dust periods. Community members living near the road also reported that dust accumulates in homes and affects small businesses operating along the roadside.	Prolonged exposure to dust may contribute to respiratory complications, particularly among children who are more vulnerable to air pollution. Dust also disrupts learning environments and reduces classroom comfort. Additionally, roadside businesses and households experience declining sanitation and productivity due to continuous dust exposure.
4. Drainage and Flooding Challenges	Community members and teachers reported water accumulation near school entrances and along pedestrian pathways during rainy seasons, particularly around Ziwa La Ng'ombe Comprehensive School and sections of the corridor near Bombolulu.	Poor drainage systems increase the risk of flooding, reduce safe access to schools, and create hazardous walking conditions for children and pedestrians.



ISSUE	EVIDENCE FROM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	IMPLICATIONS
4. Drainage and Flooding Challenges	Participants explained that incomplete drainage systems and blocked culverts cause rainwater to stagnate along the roadside, making it difficult for learners and community members to access schools and nearby facilities. During the sensitization session, learners noted that when it rains heavily, they are forced to walk through flooded or muddy sections to reach the school compound.	Standing water can also contribute to mosquito breeding and potential public health risks. Inadequate stormwater management may further accelerate road deterioration and increase maintenance costs.
5. Delays and Lack of Transparency in Compensation Processes	During the community meeting in Bombolulu, several Project Affected Persons (PAPs) reported confusion regarding compensation timelines and processes. Community members expressed uncertainty regarding the roles of the Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA) and the National Land Commission (NLC) in handling compensation payments. Some PAPs indicated that they had submitted documentation but had not received clear communication on the status of their claims. Others reported that delays in compensation had created economic pressure within households, particularly where land or business structures had already been affected by the project.	Delays and lack of transparency in compensation processes can undermine community trust in development institutions and increase financial vulnerability among affected households. Prolonged uncertainty may exacerbate household stress, disrupt livelihoods, and heighten social tensions between communities and project implementers.
6. Weak Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRMs)	Members of the Grievance Redress Committees (GRCs) reported that grievance structures established during the early phases of the project have become largely inactive or poorly coordinated.	Weak grievance mechanisms reduce accountability and limit communities' ability to seek timely resolution of project-related concerns.



ISSUE	EVIDENCE FROM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	IMPLICATIONS
6. Weak Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRMs)	Community members indicated that many residents are not aware of how to formally lodge complaints or follow up on previously submitted grievances. Some participants stated that complaints raised informally at community meetings are not always documented or resolved through formal grievance channels. During the GRC engagement, members reported limited collaboration and communication between them and the implementing authorities, including contractors. This has made their work more challenging and contributed to an unclear understanding of their role as the GRC. Despite being trained, GRC members reported that implementation on the ground is influenced by directives from KeNHA, limiting their ability to apply the grievance handling and reporting procedures as trained. This has created confusion and contributed to mistrust between the GRC and Project Affected Persons (PAPs).	Ineffective grievance systems may allow environmental and social issues to persist without corrective action, potentially escalating conflicts between project implementers and affected communities. Ineffective grievance management - Limited collaboration and communication may weaken the GRC's ability to effectively address community grievances.
7. Limited Inclusive Infrastructure for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)	Persons with disabilities participating in the community meeting highlighted challenges navigating sections of the road corridor due to open trenches, uneven pedestrian pathways, and limited accessible crossings.	The absence of inclusive infrastructure increases mobility barriers for persons with disabilities and undermines principles of equitable access to public infrastructure.



ISSUE	EVIDENCE FROM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	IMPLICATIONS
7. Limited Inclusive Infrastructure for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)	Participants noted that ongoing construction activities have made it difficult for individuals using mobility aids to cross the road safely. In some cases, persons with disabilities reported having to take significantly longer routes to access essential services or public transport points.	Failure to incorporate universal design principles may further marginalize vulnerable populations and contradict national disability inclusion policies.



4.0 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

STAKEHOLDER	DETAILED RECOMMENDED ACTION
1. Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA)	Conduct a comprehensive drainage assessment along the Nyali Bridge–Mtwapa corridor to identify flood-prone areas affecting schools and residential zones. Based on the assessment, KeNHA should prioritize the construction and rehabilitation of stormwater drainage systems, including additional culverts, improved roadside drainage channels, and regular maintenance to prevent blockages.
2. KeNHA Contractors	Ensure that all drainage infrastructure is completed in accordance with approved engineering designs and that temporary drainage solutions are installed in areas where permanent drainage systems are still under construction. Contractors should also ensure that construction debris and materials do not obstruct drainage channels during project implementation.
3. National Land Commission (NLC)	Improve transparency and communication in the compensation process by providing clear and publicly accessible information regarding PAP eligibility criteria, valuation processes, compensation timelines, and grievance procedures. Community information sessions should be conducted periodically to update affected persons on the progress of compensation payments.
4. National Land Commission (NLC)	Strengthen community liaison desks within affected areas to allow PAPs to seek clarification, submit documentation, and track the progress of compensation claims. This would reduce confusion regarding institutional responsibilities and improve responsiveness to community concerns.
5. County Government (Mombasa County)	Strengthen community outreach and public participation mechanisms to ensure residents are informed about environmental safeguards and project monitoring processes. The County Government should support regular community forums where residents can raise concerns related to road safety, drainage, environmental impacts, and access to public infrastructure.



STAKEHOLDER	DETAILED RECOMMENDED ACTION
6. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)	Conduct community awareness and capacity-building initiatives to educate residents on how to access grievance redress mechanisms and report environmental or social concerns related to the project. CSOs can also support community-based monitoring by documenting concerns and facilitating dialogue between communities and project implementers.
7. Directorate of Children Services	Collaborate with schools, community leaders, and relevant government agencies to strengthen child protection measures along the road corridor, including raising awareness on road safety risks affecting learners and advocating for child-sensitive infrastructure such as safe crossings, signage, and traffic calming measures near schools.
8. County Department of Gender and Social Services	Integrate gender-responsive and protection-sensitive approaches in community engagement processes related to infrastructure projects. The department should support awareness programs addressing the protection of vulnerable groups, including women, children, and persons with disabilities, and ensure that grievance mechanisms are accessible and responsive to gender-related concerns.
9. KeNHA and Contractors	Integrate inclusive infrastructure design principles in road construction, including accessible pedestrian crossings, smooth and continuous sidewalks, and temporary safe crossings during construction activities to accommodate persons with disabilities and other vulnerable road users. Ensure that construction sites are regularly inspected to confirm that trenches, barriers, and temporary diversions do not restrict mobility for pedestrians, particularly persons with disabilities, elderly individuals, and school children. Strengthen Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRMs) by reactivating and supporting the functionality of local Grievance Redress Committees. This should include training GRC members, establishing clear complaint documentation systems, and ensuring timely follow-up on reported grievances.



5.0 MONITORING AND EVALUATION INDICATORS

OBJECTIVE	INDICATOR	MEANS OF VERIFICATION
Improve drainage management along the corridor.	Number of drainage structures constructed or rehabilitated in flood-prone areas.	Engineering progress reports and site inspections
Reduce flooding risks near schools and residential areas.	Number of flood-prone sections addressed through improved drainage.	Field monitoring reports
Improve transparency in compensation processes.	Number of PAPs receiving compensation within agreed timelines.	NLC compensation records
Strengthen grievance redress mechanisms.	Number of grievances formally recorded and resolved through GRC structures.	GRC reports and grievance logs
Improve community awareness of grievance mechanisms.	Number of community sensitization meetings conducted on grievance reporting.	Community engagement reports
Improve accessibility for persons with disabilities.	Number of accessible pedestrian crossings or inclusive infrastructure features installed.	Infrastructure inspection reports



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