

COMMUNIQUE

Inaugural Lobito Corridor Community and Investment Indaba 2026

13th –14th October 2026 | Solwezi, North-Western Province

Theme: “Connecting Critical Minerals, People and Markets – Building a Corridor for All”

Convened by the North-Western Civil Society Forum and Caritas Solwezi

PREAMBLE

In Solwezi, where land is mother, pharmacy, food store and inheritance, we gathered as custodians of North-Western Province with one conviction: **there must be no development without the PEOPLE.** The Lobito Corridor must benefit people, protect land and empower the communities of North-Western Province.

We, traditional leaders led by Chief Mumena, the Church led by Rt Rev Bishop Charles Kasonde, the Council led by His Worship the Mayor of Solwezi, representatives of communities from Mushindamo, Solwezi, Kalumbila, Ikelenge and Mwinilunga Districts, women, youth, faith leaders, farmers, small businesses and civil society, met with Government, mining companies, the private sector and development partners for two days of conversations and open dialogue. We came with a shared warning and a shared hope.

Our warning is that the Lobito Corridor is being planned, financed and negotiated in high-level meetings, far from the people who live along its route. Memoranda are signed, strategies are validated and investments are announced, while the families whose land, water and livelihoods lie in the corridor’s path are the last to know. Too often our people learn about a project when the pegs are already in the ground.

Our hope is that it is not too late. If the people are brought into the conversation now, before the bulldozers arrive or displacements of people, the corridor can still become what its theme promises: a corridor for all. The world is searching for critical minerals. We must not forget the critical people who live where those minerals are found.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE PODIUM

1. **Local Authority:** His Worship the Mayor of Solwezi, Mr Evans Lubelenga, our Guest of Honour, said Solwezi is open for investment and wants to grow beyond mining into transport, logistics, warehousing and agro-processing, but on terms that serve its people and not as a place that trains and trucks simply pass through. “Nothing about Solwezi should be decided without Solwezi,” he said, and “local must mean local.” He called on Government and the corridor developers to bring the Council to the table now for coordinated and inclusive planning, not when the pegs are already in the ground, and announced that the Council will establish a task team to follow up the outcomes of this Indaba and keep residents informed.
2. **The Church:** Bishop Charles Kasonde of the Catholic Diocese of Solwezi reminded us that mining must create value where it creates impact, and that development must be measured by people, not only by tonnes and kilometres. Communities are the first investors and must be considered as a key partner in every mine or every railway line project: they invest their land, their water, their environment, their culture, livelihood and sometimes their health, yet they are often the last to benefit. Citing Naboth, who refused to surrender the vineyard of his fathers (1 Kings 21), he warned that the land of our people is their inheritance and must never be taken without their voice. Communities do not ask for special treatment; they ask for honest information and transparency on where the route will pass, which land will be affected, what the timelines are and where they can take a complaint. They must be treated as partners, not as receivers of charity. “Leave no one behind.”

4. **Traditional Leadership:** Chief Mumena declared that land is our mother, our pharmacy, our food store and our inheritance, and that God is not creating any more land. The Chief questioned the alienation of customary land through 99-year title deeds and called for lease arrangements that allow land to revert to its original owners, because the common man cannot afford a title deed.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE GATHERING

The First Lobito Community Indaba open dialogue sessions gave the floor to communities, traditional leaders, young people, women and local businesses. They spoke frankly, and four themes ran through what they said.

A corridor no one can see clearly. Participants pointed to conflicting information on the railway line: Government documents show a rail line through the province, while World Bank documents show none. They asked where the Lobito Corridor Strategy can be found, noting that apart from the Memorandum of Understanding nothing is publicly available. Government representatives explained that the strategy is a tripartite document of Zambia, Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo, validated in North-Western Province but not yet finalised or published. The gathering observed that a strategy validated in the province, yet still unseen by its people, shows how far consultation has fallen short of genuine engagement.

Spectators in our own province. Young people and small and medium enterprises spoke of their frustration at watching outsiders take the jobs and contracts while they look on. One community member put the question that many in the room were asking: “What will children and youths in the community benefit?”

Wealth that passes us by. Participants noted that North-Western Province contributes allot to national GDP and borders both Angola and the DRC, placing it at the heart of the corridor. Beyond mining which largely is for big mining companies, most people are in mining and yet huge part of the stakeholders like farmers have not been engage and equipped to be part of the process so as to explore more opportunities. Unless farmers and local businesses are connected to the markets that the corridor opens, the province will watch its wealth travel past it.

Decisions made above our heads. The Lobito Corridor strategy has not been seen by the communities have not seen, a route they cannot confirm and environmental assessments they cannot read all point to the same problem: decisions about the corridor are being made far from the people who will live with their consequences. The “High level” meeting being held in Lusaka leaving out communities.

OUR SHARED CONCERNS

1. **Communities left behind by “high-level” engagements:** Engagements on the Lobito Corridor has concentrated on high-level meetings among governments, financiers, investors and senior officials, in capitals and conference rooms far from the corridor. Communities along the route have not been adequately informed, consulted or heard. Where consultations have happened it has too often been a one-off event, in a language people do not use, with no feedback on what was decided. Platforms such as this Indaba, where communities sit at the same table as Government and investors, remain the exception rather than the norm. A corridor planned without the people cannot be a corridor for all.
2. **Speeches, not engagement:** Government officials too often come to make speeches and leave the room without engaging the people. They do not stay to listen, answer questions or take back what communities say, and they do not follow issues through to the end. Expectations are raised and then abandoned, and communities keep meeting to talk about the same problems every year.
3. **Land grab risk:** 99-year title deeds, low awareness of customary land rights, and no clarity on which land the route will take, how families will be compensated or where they will be resettled.

4. **Lack of transparency and information:** No public plan, no accessible to Lobito Corridor Strategy or Development Master Plan, confusion over the what infrastructure projects are being earmarked or key points within the province and no response from the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment on the environmental assessments.
5. **Environmental Impact Assessments not understood:** EIA documents have not been interpreted for local stakeholders or translated into local languages. People cannot read them, so they cannot meaningfully accept or challenge them.
6. **A conveyor belt, not a growth corridor:** There is a real risk that the corridor will simply carry Zambia's raw copper out of the country faster, while Solwezi and North-Western Province are left with the dust, the heavy traffic and the damaged roads. Without processing and value addition, local manufacturing, or a dry port and logistics hub in the province, the corridor will pass our communities by and become a white elephant for Solwezi. The wealth will move along the line, but the jobs, skills and value will not stay with us
7. **Local content only on paper:** The law provides for 20 percent local contracts to be allocated to local businesses, but cartels capture the benefits, and there is no agreed answer to the question "who or what is local?"
8. **Women, youth and children as spectators:** They do not know how the corridor will help them, and no one has told them.
9. **The land, rivers and forests that feed us:** Infrastructure and new mining projects will be developed through miombo woodland, rivers and farmland. Safeguards must be in place before the damage is done, not promised after projects have already commenced.

OUR COLLECTIVE RESOLUTIONS

To the Government of the Republic of Zambia, we demand that it:

1. **Engage the people, not only the high-level meetings:** Put in place a structured and continuous community engagement plan or process for the Lobito Corridor in North-Western Province, with public consultations held in the affected communities of every district, in Kaonde, Lunda and Luvala, before decisions on the route, land and investments are taken, and with feedback to the same communities on what was decided and why. Community representatives, including women and young people, and traditional leaders must sit on the national and provincial structures that plan and monitor the corridor.
2. **Publish the Lobito Corridor Strategy and Master Plan:** Publish and publicise the tripartite Lobito Corridor Strategy as soon as it is finalised by Zambia, Angola and the DRC, together with the Lobito Corridor Development Master Plan, and make both documents available at the provincial administration, district offices and online. There is need to clarify publicly whether, where, and what kind of infrastructure and auxiliary projects will be developed.
3. **Tell communities before the pegs go in:** Map and disclose the corridor route, the land affected, the timelines and the compensation and resettlement standards that will apply, district by district, and establish a grievance mechanism that communities can reach and trust.
4. **Translate and interpret the EIAs:** As recommended by stakeholders, interpret Environmental Impact Assessments to stakeholders and translate them into the three main languages of North-Western Province, Kaonde, Lunda and Luvala, so that every citizen can read, understand and respond to them.
5. **Stay, listen and follow through:** Government officials attending community forums must come to listen and not only to make speeches. They must stay for the dialogue, answer the questions put to them, and report back in writing on what action has been taken. Strategic Government office bearers must make themselves available to meet the people and their Royal Highnesses directly, and pursue issues side by side with duty bearers to the end, so that the expectations raised are not abandoned.

6. **Reform land tenure:** Introduce lease arrangements on customary land that directly benefits communities and further have a provision that allows for it to revert to the original owners after investment, rather than permanent 99-year alienation. The common man cannot afford a title deed.
7. **Build a growth corridor for Solwezi:** Ensure the corridor is not just a conveyor belt for raw copper and other critical materials. Build a dry port, warehousing and value-addition facilities in Solwezi.
8. **Make opportunities known:** Map the development and business opportunities for Zambians along the corridor and make them known to communities by district, including Mushindamo, Kalumbila and Solwezi, with information on how local people and businesses can take them up.
9. **Define and protect local content:** Define “local” clearly within law and enforce the local contracts quota with transparent training, financing and monitoring to prevent cartels.
10. **Retain royalties locally:** Retain a share of corridor royalties and transit fees within the host province to finance social and infrastructure projects such as schools, hospitals, roads and housing.
11. **Involve councils and chiefs:** Involve local authorities, , key government agencies and departments, traditional authorities and communities from the outset in planning, implementation and monitoring.

To development partners (EU, World Bank and ADB, etc), investors and corridor developers, we call on you to:

1. Engage host and affected communities directly and early, and not only through Government or high-level forums. Disclose your plans in language people understand and give communities a grievance mechanism they can trust.
2. Make local mean local: buying from Solwezi’s businesses, train and employ our young people and women, and publish what you spend on local suppliers and how many local people you employ.
3. Put environmental safeguards in place before construction begins, and commit to rehabilitation when mining ends.

To development partners and financiers of the corridor, we call on you to:

1. Make meaningful, documented consultation with affected communities a condition of the financing you provide and require that project documents are published locally and in local languages.
2. Support community participation in the corridor, and not only high-level dialogue, so that communities can organise, be informed and hold duty bearers to account.

To traditional leaders, civil society, the media and communities:

1. Your Royal Highnesses, as custodians of the land, your voice must be heard from the very beginning. Stand with your subjects in every negotiation over land.
2. Civil society and the media: Empower local community to know their rights, demand transparency and accountability, keep asking the hard questions and carry information about the corridor to the villages in the languages people speak.
3. Communities: speak for yourselves. This Indaba has given you space to do so. Use it, and demand it wherever decisions about the corridor are made.

THE COMMUNITY CHARTER AND HOW WE WILL FOLLOW UP

The Indaba adopts the five-point **Lobito Corridor Community Charter**, annexed to this communiqué with its action matrix, as the framework for following up everything resolved here. Every concern and resolution above is tied to one of its five points:

1. **Nothing about us without us: engage the people.**
2. **Our land is our inheritance.**
3. **Value and opportunity stay with us.**
4. **Protect our common home.**
5. **Open information and follow-through.**

This communiqué is also issued together with the Solwezi Commitment adopted at this first Indaba. We will not let these become another document on a shelf. To make sure of it, we agree on the following follow-up mechanism:

Our follow-up mechanism

1. **The organisers hold the pen.** The North-Western Civil Society Forum and Caritas Solwezi keep the Charter as part of their ongoing work.
2. **One letter.** Within 30 days, the Committee will deliver the Charter to government ministries, departments, agencies, Members of Parliament, local authorities, traditional leaders, private sector and the development partners.
3. **The Committee will conduct a rapid community learning and documentation assessment of the Lobito corridor in selected communities and disseminate the results.**
4. **Existing meetings, not new ones.** Charter progress becomes a standing item at chiefs', council, church and civil society meetings.
5. **A one-page update every six months,** shared through community radio, church announcements, WhatsApp and traditional leaders.
6. **Review at the next Indaba,** with the October 2027 date still highlighted.

***The corridor should not only move minerals. It should move opportunities closer to the people.
There must be no development without us.***

Issued at Solwezi on 14th October 2026