

came to light in a 2018 High Court ruling.

And local protests against the project have been met with harassment by Kenyan security forces.

The economic livelihoods of hundreds of local fishermen will be disrupted by the port because its extensive restricted area restrains access to viable fishing grounds. And in contravention of a court ruling that awarded fishers about KSh1.7 billion (US\$ 18.4 million) compensation for their economic losses, the government has delayed the payments over disagreements about the list of beneficiaries and the mode of compensation.

Concerns about employment opportunities to residents are also growing.

So far, around 100 youths from Lamu have secured employment at the Lamu port.

Lastly, there are security concerns. In the last 15 years or so, Lamu has become a highly volatile region. Attacks by the al-Shabaab militant group have brought violence to the area and turned it into a highly securitised region. Security operations have significantly reduced insecurity incidences. But periodic al-Shabaab attacks have affected construction activities.

How should these concerns be handled?

The concerns from the community are weighty and require serious attention since they affect many aspects of their daily lives.

Our ongoing research shows that many of the concerns could have been averted if due process had been followed from the project's inception. This includes timely and adequate compensation to everyone affected by the project. It also includes proper and robust environmental and social impact assessments as well as considering qualified residents for employment opportunities. Finally, there's the issue of addressing the perennial problems of land rights in Lamu.

It's vital that Lamu residents are treated as direct stakeholders and partners to the project. Their voices, concerns and aspirations should be taken seriously.

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