

MERCADO (ANGOLA) · ANGOLA

Lobito Corridor locks out African builders on capacity

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No African construction company has reached the final stage of the Lobito Corridor procurement process, according to Samaila Zubairu, due to a lack of demonstrated experience delivering large infrastructure projects on time and within budget. The disclosure underscores a structural gap between the ambition of African-led industrial development and the current capacity of the continent's engineering and construction sector to compete for its flagship projects.

Zubairu, speaking on behalf of the Africa Finance Corporation (AFC), which has been selected to lead or co-lead elements of the corridor initiative, pushed back firmly against the narrative that the Lobito Corridor is designed primarily as a mineral export route. He framed the project as an industrialisation vehicle for Angola, Zambia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, arguing that the railway and associated infrastructure would catalyse domestic value addition rather than simply accelerating raw commodity flows to ports for overseas processing.

The Lobito Corridor is among the most watched infrastructure undertakings on the continent, stretching from the Atlantic port of Lobito in Angola through Zambia and into the DRC's copper and cobalt belt. Its strategic importance has attracted attention from Western governments, development finance institutions, and private capital as a counterweight to Chinese infrastructure influence in the region. The AFC's role signals that pan-African financial institutions are positioning themselves at the centre of deal structuring, even as execution capacity questions remain unresolved.

The exclusion of African contractors from the final stages is commercially significant beyond optics. It means that the largest capital flows generated by construction activity — equipment, civil works, project management fees — are likely to flow to international engineering and construction firms from Europe, Asia, or North America. For Angola in particular, which has spent years trying to build a domestic contractor base through local content frameworks in the oil sector, the corridor outcome represents a parallel challenge in the infrastructure domain.

For the energy and industrial services community, the corridor's trajectory matters because rail and port infrastructure of this scale typically precedes or accompanies investment in power generation, fuel logistics, and industrial processing facilities along the route. Angola's existing pipeline and LNG infrastructure on the Atlantic coast, combined with the corridor's terminus at Lobito, positions the country as a potential hub for energy supply into the landlocked DRC and Zambia as industrial activity develops. The AFC's involvement as a structured finance lead also suggests that project finance advisory and technical due diligence mandates will emerge as the corridor moves toward construction-phase contracts.

Why this matters to partners and clients of Saga

The Lobito Corridor is currently in procurement and structuring phases — Norwegian service companies should monitor AFC-led tender processes and relationship-build with AFC and development finance co-investors rather than pursuing procurement outreach at this stage. As the corridor advances, energy infrastructure sub-projects — fuel logistics, power supply, port energy systems at Lobito — are likely to follow, creating entry points for Norwegian firms with relevant project execution credentials. Building early visibility with AFC and corridor sponsors now positions Norwegian companies ahead of those downstream tender cycles.

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- **Pipeline:** Fuel and gas supply infrastructure serving new industrial zones along the corridor route will require pipeline engineering expertise — monitor AFC announcements for energy logistics tenders.

- **LNG:** Angola's Atlantic LNG position makes it a candidate energy supplier to corridor-linked industrial demand in Zambia and DRC; Norwegian LNG service firms should track industrial load forecasts emerging from corridor planning.
- **Subsea/FPSO:** No direct subsea angle at this stage, but Lobito port expansion linked to corridor traffic could involve marine infrastructure works worth monitoring for future tender activity.
- **Service:** The capacity gap identified in African construction firms signals demand for project management, quality assurance, and HSE consultancy services from internationally credentialed firms — a potential niche for Norwegian technical service providers.

[Original source: Mercado \(Angola\) →](#)

Saga Advisory

General: info@saga-advisory.com · saga-advisory.com

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