# Business Environment Community of Practice

## Meeting, 20 November 2026

**Minutes**

### Participants

The meeting was attended by 11 participants from 6 agencies:

GIZ, co-chair
World Bank, co-chair
FCDO
JICA
ILO
FAO
DCED Secretariat

Apologies: SECO

### Agenda

1. **Opening and previous minutes**
2. **Member updates**
3. **Update on Industrial parks study**
4. **Update on Mutual benefits work**
5. **Terms of reference for the trade corridor study**
6. **Actions and open points**

### 1. Opening and previous minutes

The group approved the minutes of the Nairobi meeting without any objections and will therefore be uploaded to the DCED website.

### 2. Member updates

- **GIZ/BMZ:** BMZ has moved toward implementing an agenda that balances mutual benefits and donor-country economic interests with global common goods. The emphasis varies by country portfolio, and GIZ is also looking more closely at private sector engagement in fragile contexts, where mutual benefits are not expected to drive the work. Infrastructure corridors, critical minerals, local value creation, jobs and industrialisation remain important. The evolution of priorities under the G7 Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment under the incoming US presidency is being monitored.
- **FCDO:** Following restructuring, Andrew Gartside now leads on business environment reform (BER) and market systems. He was previously active in the DCED's Green Growth CoP. FCDO's BER approach links regulatory change to concrete investment opportunities, described as "deals to rules". He

highlighted FORGE+, an East African sustainable industrial platform with an investment-mobilisation and regulatory assistance component. He also described work on the implications of planned UK human-rights due-diligence and forced-labour measures for emerging-market businesses, and on Good Growth/Beyond GDP.

- **World Bank:** Business environment work continues to focus on predictable regulation and investment facilitation, with growing demand for sector- and value-chain-specific approaches. For corridors, the Bank is interested in evidence of domestic value addition, supplier development and better jobs, not only the movement of goods. Digital and AI questions are high on the agenda as cross-cutting issues, though using AI to help SMEs navigate regulatory requirements remains a forward-looking area rather than an established practice.
- **JICA:** Toru Homma reported on the Africa Kaizen Annual Conference, its sustainability and digitalisation themes, and JICA's renewed industrial-policy dialogue in Ethiopia. Yuto Miwa described progress on a proposed Nigerian onshore startup fund, efforts to attract additional capital, an open-innovation programme connecting Japanese companies operating in African countries with local startups, and emerging work on the content industry.
- **ILO:** Following an organisational merger, the unit is working across SME and industrial policy, productivity, formalisation, and social and solidarity economy issues. Sandra Yu outlined empirical work combining input-output, labour-force and firm data, initially in the Philippines and next in Vietnam. Huong Ngo added that the approach examines change within and between industries and links to economic-complexity work. ILO is also exploring national establishment data and ways to scale value-chain work, including supplier development and decent-work considerations.
- **FAO:** FAO's forthcoming State of Food and Agriculture publication will examine agrifood market structure, including post-farmgate value chains and enterprises of different sizes. An informal SME group is bringing together expertise dispersed across FAO. Building on the DCED's technical paper on the topic, FAO has also commissioned whole-of-government and SME case studies, beginning with Rwanda, Costa Rica and Ireland; discussions about FAO's DCED coordination are under way.

## 3. Study on economy-wide effects of industrial parks

The study is approaching finalisation. Members discussed two possible webinars: a DCED launch aimed at its practitioner audience, moderated by Sandra Yu – most likely in the second half of January; and a separate, more academic discussion with a GIZ-linked network. The academic session could take place before or after the launch; if held first, it would discuss the manuscript rather than serve as the publication launch.

January date options for a DCED webinar have already been explored with Ulla Heher, with the final date to be confirmed in due course. The preference was to schedule the DCED webinar when the report can be made available, rather than present findings substantially ahead of publication. Toru Homma offered to announce the public webinar at the Africa SEZ Annual Conference in Abidjan if a date could be fixed in time.

## 4. Mutual benefits work

The work, which is jointly funded and managed by the BE, PSE and RM CoPs, comprises a shorter review of academic evidence on mutual benefits from private sector development and Aid for Trade, and a longer stocktake of donor experience drawing on more than 50 interviews and four in-depth agency case studies.

The draft stocktake had been presented to the task team earlier in the week. Members not yet involved could request the draft and comment during the remaining review window. The consultants are expected to finalise a late draft in early December, with final edits taking place until the end of December.

The circulated manuscripts are confidential. The format of any launch and the extent of public release have not been decided: quotations, detail or annexes might be removed from a public version. An interested IDOS researcher could join any public webinar on the mutual benefits work; an invitation to an internal exchange would depend on the task team's decision.

## 5. Terms of reference for the corridor study

Karin Wedig walked through the draft terms of reference (ToR) for a study of local value creation along trade and infrastructure corridors. While recognising that many corridors prioritised by partner governments are transport corridors, the ToR frame the topic more broadly as infrastructure and trade corridors. The specific definition and types of corridor to examine should be discussed with the consultant early in the assignment.

The draft sets out four objectives: (1) review evidence on local value creation and diversification, including gaps; (2) assess relevant policies, infrastructure approaches, investment priorities and political-economy considerations; (3) examine productive linkages and private sector development; and (4) examine decent employment and inclusion. Karin suggested that the third and fourth objectives should form the heart of the study. Four case studies are proposed, with their selection still to be worked through at the early stages of the assignment

Participants provided the following feedback to be considered in the finalisation of the ToR:

- **Investment sequencing:** Andrew Gartside proposed examining whether investment in a corridor's wider economic opportunities is packaged and promoted from the outset or pursued only after the core transport investment. He gave the example of agribusiness opportunities modelled and promoted alongside a minerals-related transport corridor. Transaction advisers and investment-promotion practitioners could be useful interviewees, even where published evidence is limited. Additional wording on this could be added to the ToR, possibly under objectives 1 or 2.
- **Industrial parks, value chains and geography:** Toru Homma suggested the following, presented as suggestions rather than settled additions to the ToR:
    - examining how industrial parks and SEZs benefit from corridor logistics, and how corridors benefit from concentrations of industry, drawing on the group's industrial parks study;
    - asking explicitly how corridors contribute to regional value chains, with attention to particular products rather than only broad sectors;
    - looking for evidence on whether landlocked and coastal countries benefit differently, including the possible "straw effect" of a corridor drawing activity toward larger cities.
- **Local benefits and scope:** Pilar Salgado said the ToR was in good shape, but that it should make unmistakable that the study is about benefits for local economies, not only faster goods movement or higher exports. Her main interest is the policy and regulatory measures that create local linkages, particularly where a corridor serves critical-minerals investment. She advised against naming preferred sectors in the ToR, so that relevant sectors emerge from the cases. If there are several

suitable options later, the group could weigh commercial viability, productive linkages, labour intensity, scalability and applicability to other corridors as sector selection criteria.

- **Case selection:** Pilar Salgado proposed clearer criteria:
    - cases mature enough to show results or impacts;
    - at least one case where objectives were not achieved, to learn from it;
    - room for a developing corridor alongside more mature cases;
    - attention to geographic differences, including the inland-country issue, without making the criteria overly restrictive.

  She strongly recommended considering the Lobito Corridor because of its prominence and the many actors and interventions involved. As it is still developing, a study could examine what is planned and whether lessons from other corridors are being applied, but could not draw firm conclusions about impact. She did not insist on its selection.

Rather than adding a lengthy list of guiding questions to the ToR, which could make the assignment too broad, the group favoured retaining some of the questions raised for discussion with the selected consultant. Members agreed to allow one further week for written comments, including from those unable to attend. **Additional comments can be sent to the Secretariat and GIZ by 27 November.**

The ToR will then be finalised by GIZ and advertised by the Secretariat for proposals before year-end, allowing roughly three to four weeks for submissions. The Secretariat will also facilitate the shortlisting of applicants for review by the CoP. The consultant selection and contracting should happen around mid-January.