

Liberia: Citizen Helpdesk Survey Report

November 2017



Catalyzing a New Generation of Active Citizens
and Responsible Leaders Around the World



Introduction

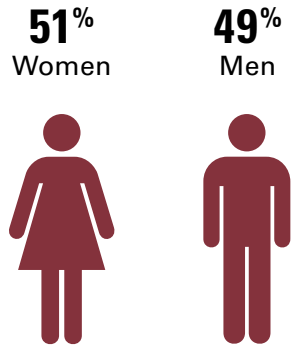
In Liberia, mining has a significant impact on the economy, health, and well-being of local communities in concession areas. Mineral Development Agreements (MDAs) establish incentives, payments, and responsibilities between the concession company and the government, but do not always follow international best practices for engaging and protecting the community affected by the resource extraction. MDAs can be long, complex, and highly technical, and too often little effort is invested to simplify information and communicate any rights of the community or obligations of the company included in the MDA.

This is the case at the Bea Mountain concession in Grand Cape Mount County, where Accountability Lab Liberia, with support from German Cooperation through GIZ, is working to address these challenges through Citizen Helpdesks. Five Community Frontline Associates (CFAs) and one Local Mobile Journalist (LMJ) have been recruited, trained in community engagement, constructive dialogue techniques, and methodologies for data collection and analysis. This team is now working with the local community through a baseline engagement survey to understand key issues and concerns.

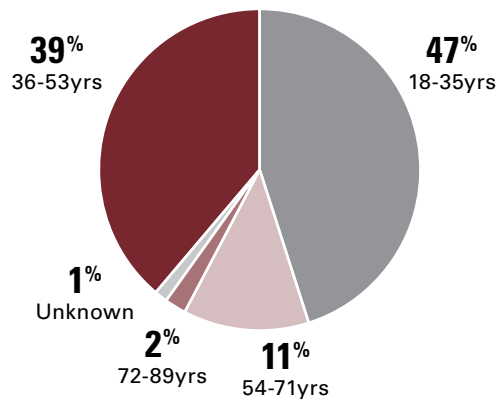
In an effort to understand key issues and concerns, the CFAs carried out a 3-day survey in the 5 towns in the concession area. Of the total population of 15,000, 996 residents were randomly polled. The key objective of this survey was to develop citizen-generated, evidence based data that will guide future decision-making, ensure fair treatment of citizens and build trust and accountability among the communities, government and the mining company.

Demographics

**New Kinjor
Vai Town
Jawajeh
Dayleh
Jenkandeh**



Age

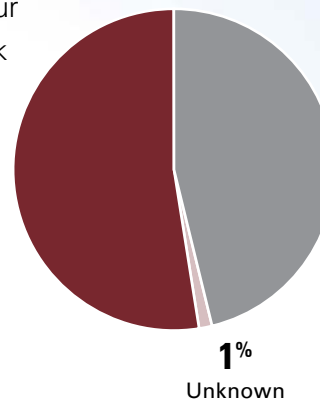


Employment

Do you or your relatives work for the mine?

52%
Yes

47%
No



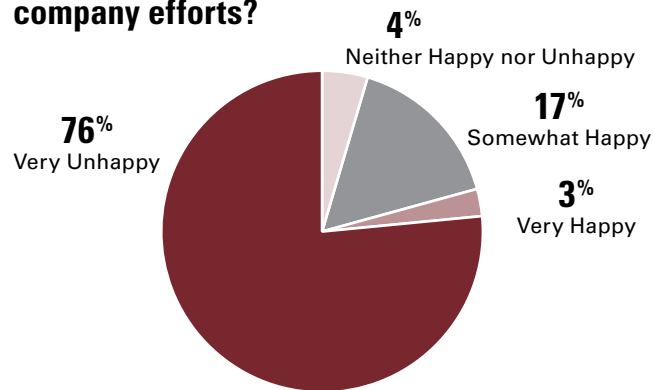
People's jobs include:

Farmer, Entrepreneur, Mine Blaster, Mason, Engineer, Carpenter, Plumber, Hunter

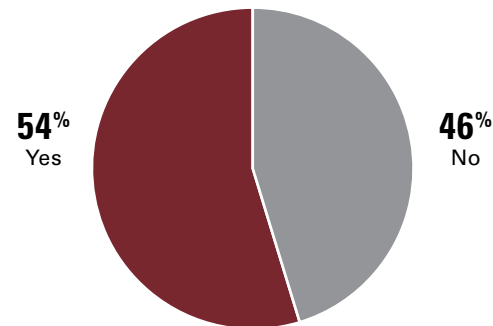
Mine - Community Relations

While a good proportion of the community in Bea Mountain is familiar with the MDA, very few people understand the details of the MDA, including what they are owed by the company, what they are owed by the government, and what the government is owed by the company. Further, of the few people who said they were familiar with the obligations, even fewer were actually able to explain or provide figures backing up their assertion of familiarity. A significant majority of the population is also dissatisfied with the efforts being made by the mining company in the community.

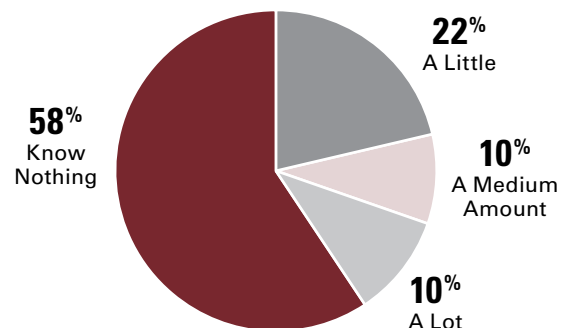
How satisfied are you with mining company efforts?



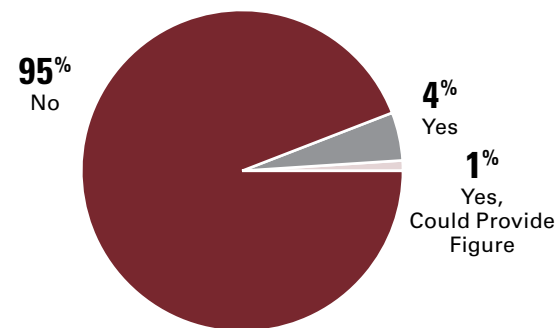
Have you heard about the MDA?



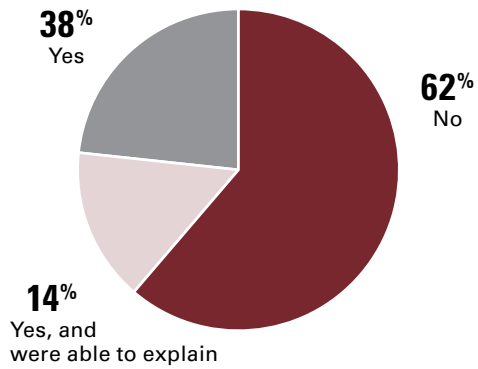
Do you know what the company is supposed to do under the MDA?



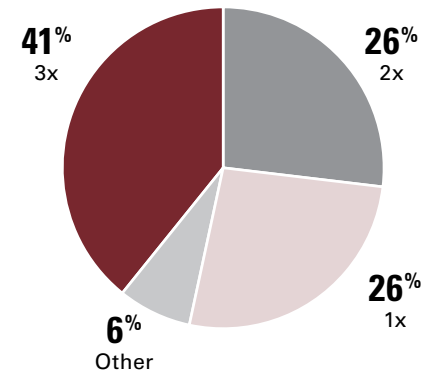
Do you know how much the company is supposed to pay the government in the county and when?



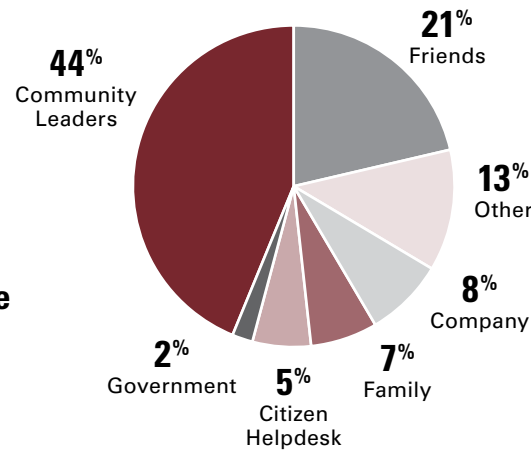
Do you know what services the company is supposed to provide to the town or actions the company is supposed to take in the town under the MDA?



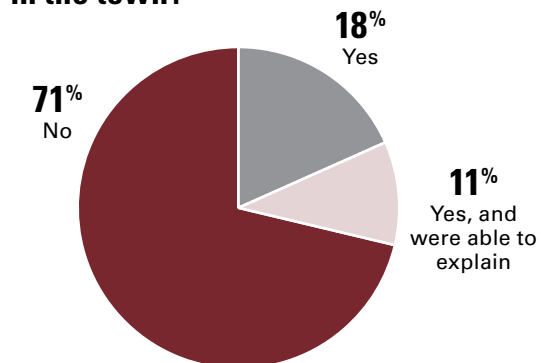
How often do you attend a townhall meeting per month to discuss concessions issues?



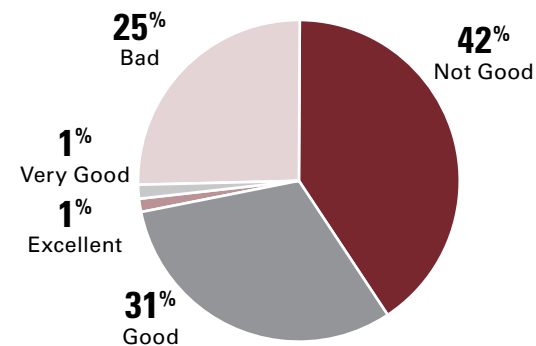
Who do you ask if you want to know something about the agreement?



Do you know what services the government is supposed to provide in the town?



How would you rate the quality of the discussions at the town hall meetings between the community, company, and government?



Key Learnings

Youth

The Bea Mountain community is largely a young community, reflecting the demographics of Liberia as a whole. Efforts to engage the community must find creative ways to work with youth in particular.

Dialogue

The mine plays a critical role in the economic life of the community. It is essential that ways are found to ensure constructive and sustainable engagement between the community and the concession company.

Discontent

More than three quarters of the local communities are unhappy with the role of the concession company. This could clearly be a driver of instability if not addressed over time.

Awareness

At the same time over three quarters of the local community members do not know the provisions of the MDA - so one critical part of the response needs to be efforts to make information about the concession understandable and available to the community and to use this information as the basis for discussion.

Townhalls

Townhall discussions are a key tool for discussing issues related to the concession, but as currently carried out these are not helping to increase knowledge about the MDA or help citizens solve their problems - meaning the process may need to be adapted.

Conclusion

The survey results show clearly that community members in Bea Mountain do not have all of the information they need with regard to the MDA, their rights, and the responsibilities of the company and government. More work is needed to ensure that MDA details are fully understood by communities; that mining companies and the government communicate more clearly exactly what role they can play in the communities; and that more constructive conversations are needed between stakeholders in the process.

The Citizen Helpdesk Survey will be a regular process for collecting feedback from communities around natural resource issues in Liberia.

We welcome any feedback and ideas as to how we can improve this process.

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