

Liberia: Citizen Helpdesk Survey Report

February 2018



Introduction

In Liberia, mining has a significant impact on the economy, health, and well-being of local communities in concession areas. In an effort to mitigate harmful effects, Mineral Development Agreements (MDAs) are often developed among the government, the mining company, and the community. These agreements establish services and payments owed to the community by the company and the government in exchange for the use of local natural resources.

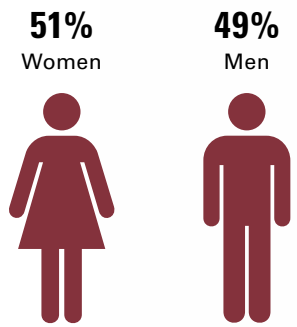
MDAs are often long and highly technical, and too little effort is invested to simplify information and communicate the rights and responsibilities included in the MDA. This is the case at the Bea Mountain concession in Grand Cape Mount County, where Accountability Lab Liberia, with support from GIZ, is working to address these challenges through **Citizen Helpdesks**. Five Community Frontline Associates (CFAs) and one Local Mobile Journalist (LMJ) have been recruited from the local population and trained in community engagement, constructive dialogue, and data collection and analysis.

In October, this team surveyed 996 residents of five towns in the concession area to gauge the community's familiarity with the MDA, the satisfaction with the mining company's efforts, and the quality of the discussions among stakeholders. The goal: to gather data that will guide decision-making, ensure fair treatment of citizens, and build trust and accountability among the government, the community, and the mining company.

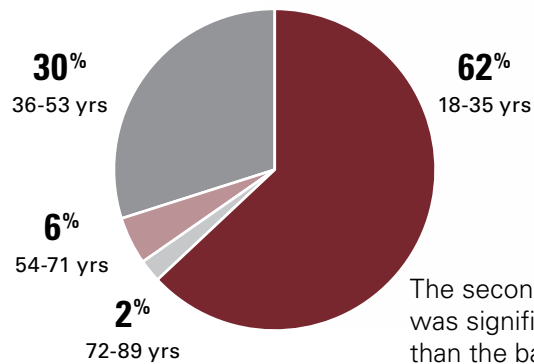
Three months later, the team surveyed the towns again. This time, 1,492 residents out of a total population of 15,000 were randomly polled, a 50% jump from the prior survey ("the baseline"). This survey group was not only bigger but also reflected a large influx of newcomers to the region since the first survey. These newcomers were drawn by job openings posted by the company. At the time of the survey, the postings had not yet been filled.

Demographics

New Kinjor
Vai Town
Jawajeh
Dayleh
Jenkandeh



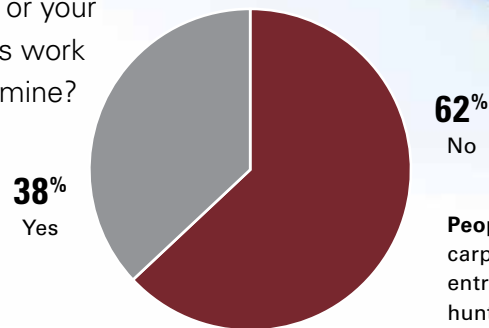
Age



The second survey group was significantly younger than the baseline group and less tied to the mine.

Employment

Do you or your relatives work for the mine?

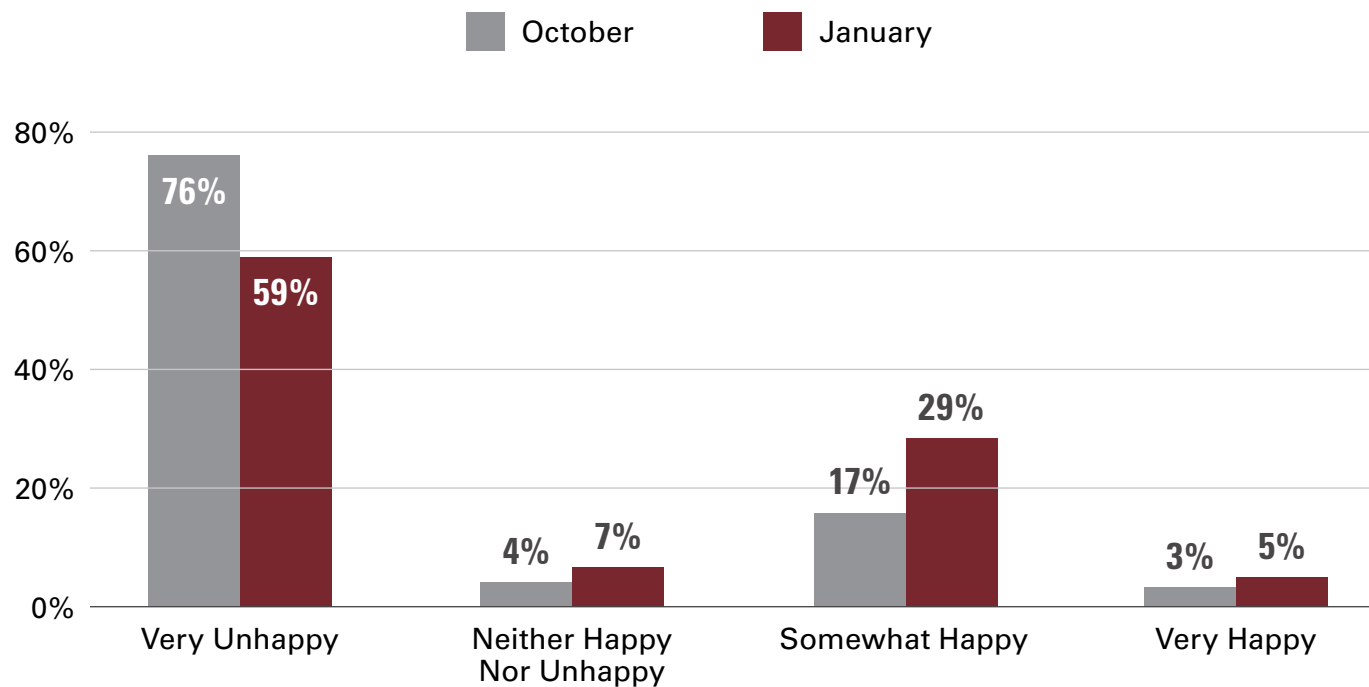


People's jobs include:
carpenter, engineer,
entrepreneur, farmer,
hunter, mason,
mine blaster,
plumber, tailor

Mine - Community Relations

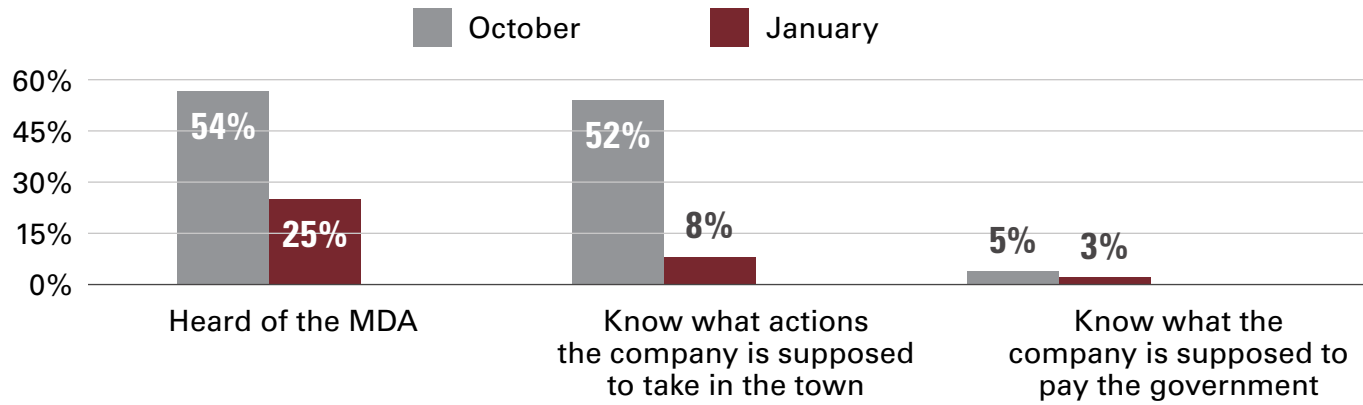
The mining company's image in the community has improved slightly over the past three months, though most people remain unhappy with its efforts.

How satisfied are you with the mining company's efforts?



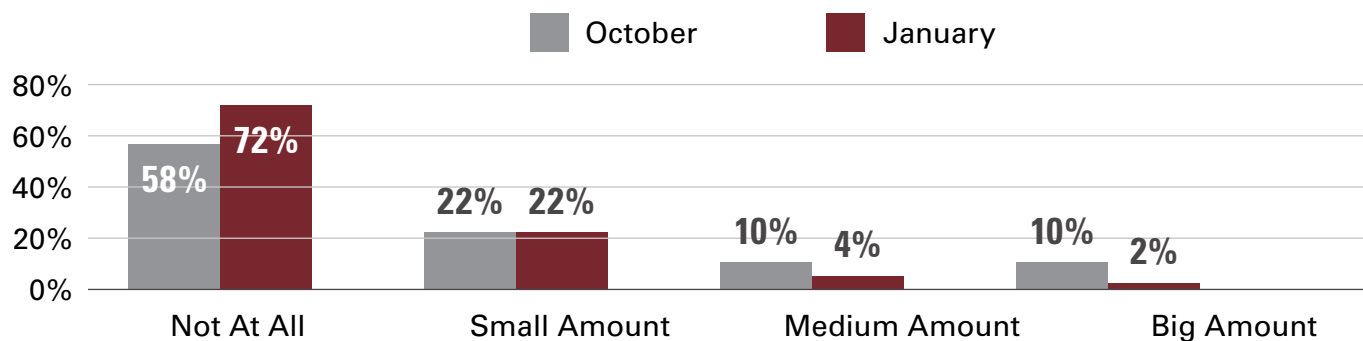
About a third of respondents said they were either somewhat happy or very happy with the company's efforts, up from 20% three months ago.

Knowledge and understanding of the MDA



Thanks to the influx of newcomers to the area, even fewer people were familiar with the MDA or understood its details. Only a quarter of people had heard of the agreement, down from 54% three months prior. Of the people who had heard of the MDA, more than 70% knew nothing about what the company was supposed to do under the agreement, up from 58% in the baseline survey. Only a sliver of respondents knew how much the company is supposed to pay the government for development business in the country.

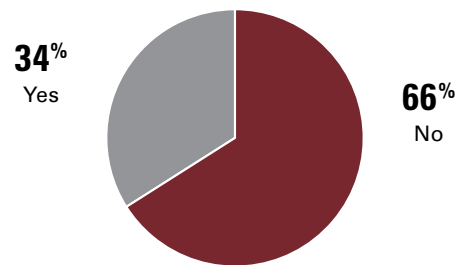
Do you know what the company is supposed to do under the MDA?



Quality of Life Measures

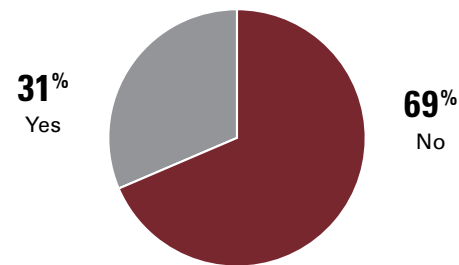
This survey introduced questions on the quality of healthcare, education, and drinking water so the team can begin to track these measures over time. Only about a third of people said they had access to good healthcare, while less than a third said their children and family members were receiving a good education. Meanwhile, 70% of respondents said the water they drink was either unsafe or barely safe.

Do you and your family get good healthcare?



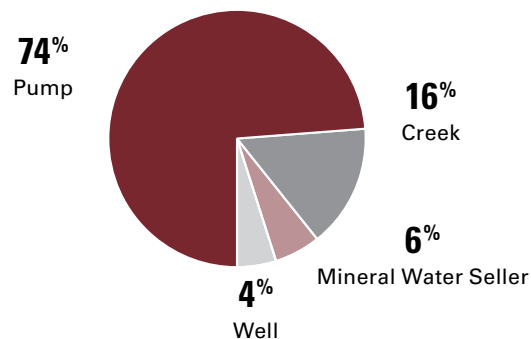
Respondents noted the lack of clinics, good roads, doctors and midwives, and medicines. Some said the company and the government don't have an interest in providing good healthcare.

Are your children and family members getting a good education?

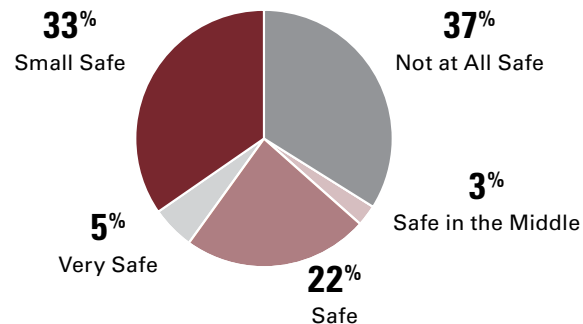


The lack of schools, teachers, classroom materials were all cited as problems by respondents. They also mentioned low teacher salaries and limited interest in education from the government and the company.

Where do the town people get drinking water from?

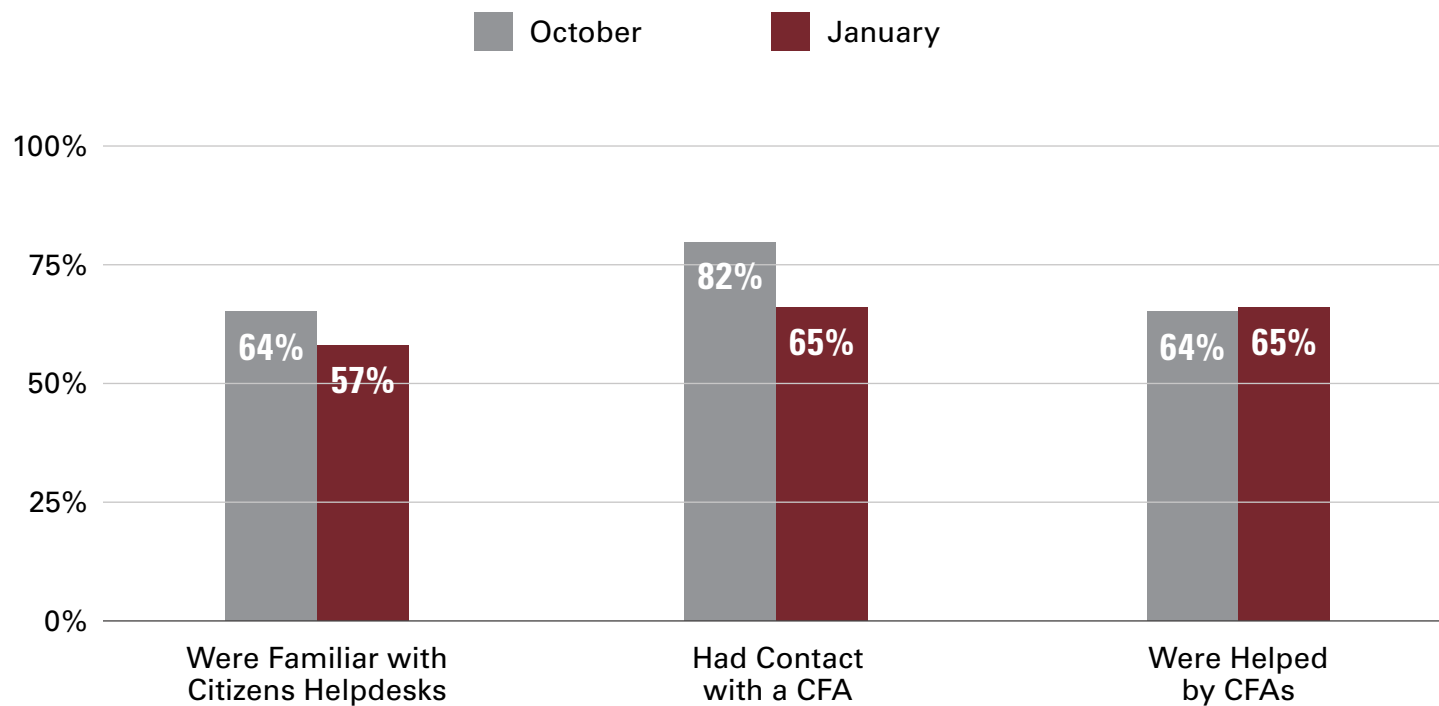


How safe is the water that you drink?

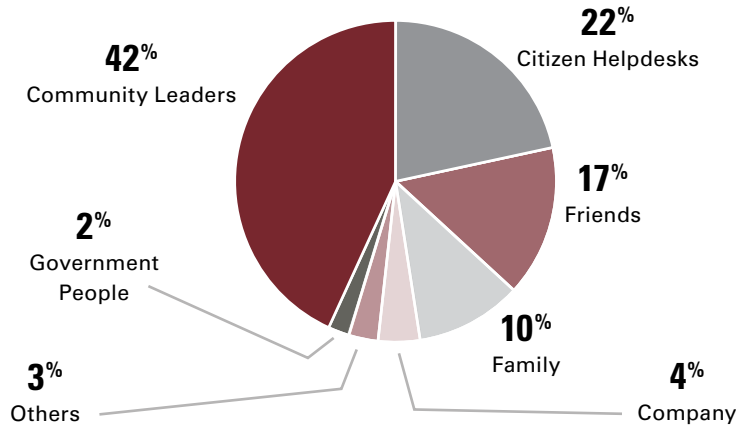


Citizen Helpdesks Efforts

Slightly more than half of respondents were familiar with Citizen Helpdesks, a drop from 64% three months prior. The share of people who said they had been helped by CFAs to understand the MDA stayed flat — and relatively high — at around 65%. Meanwhile, the share of people who had been in contact with a CFA fell to 65% from 82%. Our team believes respondents in the baseline survey included their interactions with CFAs on a personal basis when they answered this question, which inflated the response in the baseline.

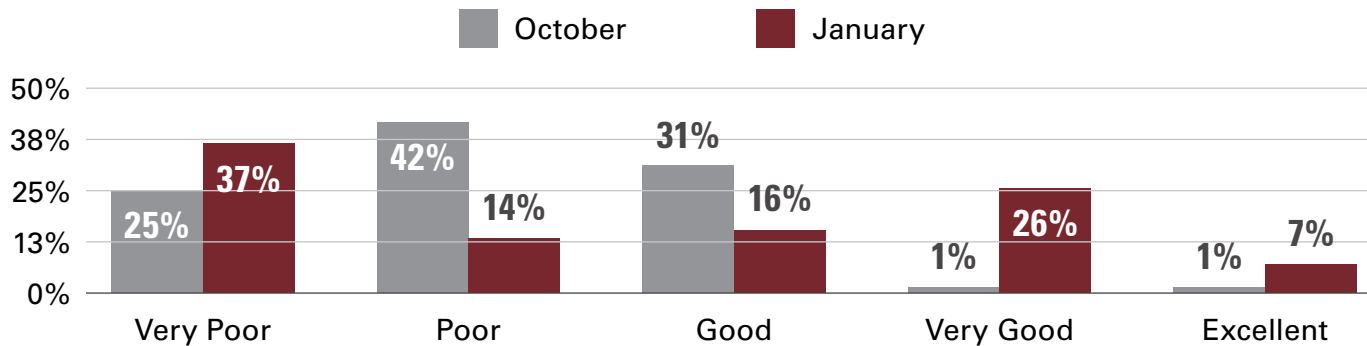


Who do you ask if you want to know something about the agreement?



Though they are still working to boost their profile, the CFAs seem to be gaining traction. More than 22% of respondents said they turn to Citizen Helpdesks with questions on the agreement, up from just 5% three months ago. That makes the program citizens' No. 2 information source on the MDA after the community leaders.

How would you grade the discussions at the town hall meetings?



Meanwhile, the town hall meetings are becoming better venues for educating citizens and fostering discussion among stakeholders. But there's still room for improvement: just a third of respondents rated the quality of the discussions very good or excellent — though that jumped from 2% three months ago.

Key Learnings

Demographic Shifts

The inflow of jobseekers to the region changed the makeup of the respondent pool and drove big shifts in some survey responses.

Discontent

Two-thirds of people say they can't access good healthcare and their children don't get a quality education. This is likely driving the high levels of dissatisfaction with the company's efforts in the community, though the company's image has improved somewhat.

Outreach

Despite the stream of newcomers to the community, the CFAs continue to make headway. They are now a prime source of information about the MDA, and majorities of respondents say they have had contact with a CFA and have been helped by one.

Awareness

Awareness of the MDA and knowledge of its details has deteriorated even further from already dismal levels. Disseminating this information remains critical to the success of the MDA.

Town Halls

Satisfaction with the town halls is improving, though there's still a long way to go to make them more useful to citizens and to foster dialogue among the stakeholders.

Conclusion

The survey results show that the residents of the Bea Mountain concession are still sorely lacking the information they need about the MDA to ensure their rights are respected. Though the CFAs appear to be gaining traction and the discussions at the town halls are improving, more work needs to be done to ensure the MDA's details are fully understood by the community. Meanwhile, the community's broad dissatisfaction with the access to good healthcare and education may continue to drive discontent with the mining company.

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.

Contact:

Otis S. Bundor, Citizen Helpdesk Manager

otis@accountabilitylab.org

+231-886-964-818

supported by:



Implemented by

