



**BUILDING RESILIENT AND ACTIVE COMMUNITIES IN EXTRACTIVE
LANDSCAPES IN GHANA (BRACE) PROJECT COMMUNITY DURBAR
REPORT**





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INTRODUCTION

This report covers durbar meetings organised to introduce the Building Resilient and Active Communities in Extractive Landscapes in Ghana (BRACE) to the engaged communities. The Durbar meetings are part of implementing the project, “Building Resilient and Active Communities in Extractive Landscapes in Ghana”. Funding is from the European Union.

Background

Mining in Ghana has a long history, with the sector playing a significant role in the country's economy. Ghana is renowned for its gold mining, with the precious metal being mined in various forms, including artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM). Ghana is one of the largest gold producers in Africa, with gold mining being a significant contributor to the country's GDP. While mining has contributed significantly to Ghana's economy, it has also led to environmental degradation, social impacts, health impacts, and economic impacts. The environmental impacts of mining in Ghana include deforestation, water pollution, and soil degradation. Social impacts include displacement, loss of livelihoods, and social conflicts. Health impacts include health risks from exposure to toxic chemicals and heavy metals. Economic impacts include the mining sector's contribution to GDP, but the benefits do not always trickle down to local communities. Despite these challenges, efforts are being made to address them. The government has established regulations to ensure responsible mining practices, and some mining companies are engaging with local communities through corporate social responsibility initiatives. Alternative livelihoods are being promoted for artisanal miners, and environmental monitoring efforts are being made to mitigate environmental impacts.

Considering the above statement, The Building Resilient and Active Communities in Extractive Landscapes in Ghana (BRACE) project aims to promote responsible mining practices, safeguard the environment, and empower individuals living in mining areas to advocate for their human right to a healthy environment. In Ghana, mining communities face numerous challenges, including environmental degradation, social injustice, and human rights violations so therefore, the project seeks to address these issues by engaging with local communities, traditional leaders, and other stakeholders to promote responsible mining practices and empower communities to demand their rights. This BRACE project is a three-year initiative funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by Arocha Ghana, Nature and Development Foundation, and Wacam.

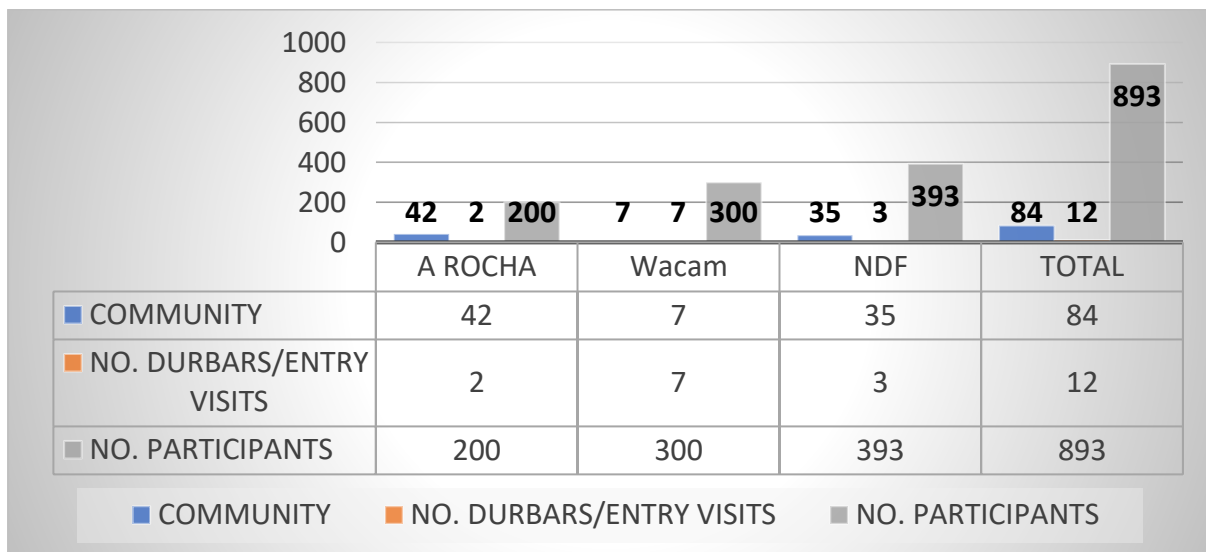
Three durbar meetings were held in twelve communities with a 893 participants within the target regions to introduce the BRACE project. The durbar meetings were organized by the Nature and Development Foundation (NDF) as part of the activities to be implemented under the EU-funded BRACE project. The durbar meeting is a traditional Ghanaian gathering where community members come together to discuss important issues affecting their community.

Meetings Objective

The objective of the durbar meetings is to:

1. Disseminate information about the project and its objectives to community members.
2. Solicit inputs and feedback from community members and stakeholders.
3. Identify community concerns and priorities related to mining activities.
4. Build relationships and trust among community members, traditional leaders, and project implementers.

Meeting Details



Purpose of Gathering

Given the purpose of the meeting at each of the durbars, the various facilitators for the meeting mentioned that the purpose of the gathering is to present the concept of the BRACE project to selected mining communities that will be engaged by the BRACE team to build the capacity of community members to demand for their right to the participants present. They also reiterated that the BRACE project is to empower the community with knowledge of their rights and laws regarding mining. In other to achieve the goal of this project, the selected areas must accept the project in good fate to allow a successful implementation. They indicated that there is the need to rise and lawfully demand our rights if there are any environmental violations noted in our communities and there is the hope that by the end of this 3-year EU project implemented by Arocha Ghana, NDF and Wacam, there will be a magnificent impact on the mining communities engaged to a healthy and developed environment. and gather input on how to implement the project effectively. The importance of community engagement and participation in the project's success was also highlighted. Find below the summary of the purpose of gathering statement:

- Introduce the BRACE project to the selected mining communities selected by NDF.

- Empower community members with knowledge of their rights and laws regarding mining.
- Gather input from the community on how to implement the project effectively.
- Identify community representatives to engage with the project.

Presentation on the Overall Objective, Specific Objectives and Outputs of the BRACE project

The overall objective, specific Objectives and outputs of the BRACE project were presented explaining the project's objectives, activities and outputs in detail as follows:

Overall objective

The overall objective of the BRACE project is to achieve sustainable and equitable environmental management and good natural resource governance by communities, government, and private extractives sector actors in Ghana. They stated the specific objectives that the project intends to achieve at the end of the 3year implementation as below:

Specific Objectives

Specific objective 1: is to empower 50 Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), 30 Women Groups (WGs), 10 Traditional Authorities (Tas), 10 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and 20 Media Houses to hold state or duty bearers and private sector actors to account over environmental damage, poor governance, and environmental rights violations in Ghana's extractive sector through evidence gathering, advocacy, and media reporting by early 2025.

Specific objective 2: Is to build the capacity of 90 women and 90 youth from target CBOs, WGs and CSOs in host mining communities to use community-based courtroom advocacy to address environmental violations in the extractives sector by training them as Community Paralegals and establish sustainable financial mechanism for access to CCA by mid-2026.

Specific objective 3: Is to enable 50 CBOs, 30 WGs, 10 CSOs and 10 TAs to engage state actors or duty bearers and seek redress over violations of their environmental rights using Ghana's Business and Human Rights Action Plan and complementary initiatives by the end of 2025.

Specific objective 4: Is to strengthen local environmental protection and natural resource (NR) management by building the capacity of 6 Community Resource Management Area (CREMA) Executive Committees (CRC) to implement their Action Plans with their 108 CREMA communities for sustainable NR use, monitoring, management, and protection by mid-2026.

The activities to be executed under each specific objective and the expected outputs were also presented. Below are the details of his activities and outputs presentation.

Activities for Specific Objective 1

1.1. Education workshops for CBOs, WGs, CSOs, TAs and media to give them a

base of knowledge on what evidence to collect when environmental/ER violations have occurred and who/where to collect it from for use in subsequent advocacy, community-based

courtroom advocacy (CCA) and reporting. Topics would include, for example, environmental and extractives sector laws and governance, roles, responsibilities, and obligations of key actors in the extractives sector (state, duty bearers, private sector), the 2022 UN Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment and the UN Resolution on human rights to a healthy environment⁶.

1.2. Skills training workshops and sharing technologies and tools for CBOs, WGs, CSOs, TAs, and media in evidence gathering for use in advocacy, paralegal work, CCA and evidence based reporting in extractive sector governance and environmental/NR/ER violations and trained in personal safety and security.

1.3. Skills training workshops for CBOs, WGs, CSOs, and TAs in skills, capabilities and capacities for advocacy, negotiation, dialogue, and conflict management and resolution, and support/collaborate with target groups to initiate local and national advocacy actions. (E.g. Advocate for Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) in the extractives sector so communities can say NO to mining; Advocate for amendment of the new LI2462 on Mining in Forest Reserves so forests continue their carbon sinks/storage and biodiversity protection services).

1.4. Provide finance to Third Parties to implement agreed project activities.

1.5. Community exchange visits for women and youth to learn and implement practices that ensure the protection of their rights and environment.

Activities for Specific Objective 2

2.1. Training workshops for women and youth to become Community Paralegals specialised in environment, NR governance and ER violations; Also share technologies and tools and establish a new Community Paralegal Network to link them together, with a Network Hotline number as a helpline.

2.2. Establish a Legal Access Fund to support community-based courtroom advocacy (CCA) for access to justice over environmental damage and ER violations.

2.3. Establish a database of legal practitioners from across Ghana willing to take on cases on a pro bona basis on environmental, NR and ER violations, also with an online portal for them to answer communities' related legal questions.

Activities for Specific Objective 3

3.1. Establish an online monitoring platform to collate published reports of extractive sector environmental and ER violations for use in advocacy and engagements (e.g. the Committee established in 3.3) and a backwards-facing database of unpublished reports of extractive sector damage for verification and publication.

3.2. Collaborate with the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) for community awareness durbars to educate communities, CBOs, WGs, CSOs and TAs on the government's Business and Human Rights Action Plan (launch due July 2023)

3.3. Establish a national Mining and Human Rights Steering Committee (MHRSC) for target groups to engage state actors/duty bearers on extractive sector ER violations, environmental damage, FPIC, fair benefit sharing, and good mining governance. The MHRSC will include target CBOs/WGs/CSOs/TAs, CHRAJ, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR), Ministry for Food and Agriculture (MoFA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs), Water Resources Commission (WRC) and Ghana Water Company (GWC).

3.4. Prepare and share policy briefs on the current ER, environmental and NR governance threats with recommendations for action.

Activities for Specific Objective 4

4.1. Training workshops for CEC and CREMA communities in skills and capabilities to implement the 4 areas of their CREMA Action Plans i.e:

- 1) Resource Utilisation,
 - 2) Resource Improvement,
 - 3) Resource Monitoring,
- and 4) Resource Protection.

4.2. Community durbars to raise awareness of the CREMA Action Plans and activities to support their implementation.

4.3. CECs implement activities towards Objective 4 (e.g. community awareness in 4.2) using the Third-Party financial support provided to them.

Outputs for Specific Objective 1

1.1. 50 CBOs, 30 WGs, 10 CSOs, 10 TAs and 20 media have new knowledge needed to support evidence gathering (in 1.2), advocacy (in 1.3) and paralegal advice (in 2.1).

1.2. 50 CBOs, 30 WGs, 10 CSOs, 10 TAs and 20 media trained in gathering evidence for advocacy and evidence-based reporting; Also trained in personal safety/security; and supported with necessary technologies and tools for gathering, analysing, and reporting the evidence.

1.3. 50 CBOs, 10 WGs, 10 CSOs & 10 TAs have new capacities, capabilities, and skills to engage and hold duty bearers, state, and private sector actors to account for extractives sector environmental damage, poor governance, and ER violations, and are leading advocacy actions.

1.4. Four (4) small organisations from the target groups have implemented project activities using small grants provided to them as Third-Party financial support.

1.5. Six (6) community exchange visits for 60 women and youth on each exchange visit (360 people total) from target CBOs, WGs and CSOs completed.

Outputs for Specific Objective 2

2.1. Ninety (90) women and 90 youth (15 women and 15 youth x 2 trainings x 3 years) from target CBOs, WGs, and CSOs trained and established in host mining communities as specialised Community Paralegals, supported with technologies & tools (e.g. manual) and linked in the Community Paralegal Network.

2.2. Legal Access Fund established to provide access to justice.

2.3. Database established of legal practitioners and an online Q&A portal.

Outputs for Specific Objective 3

3.1. One online monitoring platform established to publish extractive sector environmental, NR and ER violations.

3.2. 200 host mining communities and 100 target groups (CBOs, WGs, CSOs, TAs) have new knowledge of the Ghana government's Business & Human Rights Action Plan.

3.3. One national Mining and Human Rights Steering Committee (MHRSC) established where target groups are engaging state actors/duty bearers over environmental, NR and ERs violations.

3.4. 3 policy briefs prepared on mining, environment, NR governance, and ERs.

Outputs for Specific Objective 4

4.1. 6 CECs have new capacities and capabilities for implementing the 4 areas of their CREMA management plans.

4.2. 108 CREMA communities have new awareness of their CREMA Management Plans to support implementation by the CREA Executive Committees (CECs)

4.3. Two (2) CECs have implemented project activities (e.g. 4.2) using small grants provided them as Third-Party financial support.

It was however Indicated that the project is going to engage target groups in each selected mining community to be engaged in the project. He mentioned representatives from the target groups will be trained on activities specific to build their capacity on their right to promote responsible mining. The project has set out target groups that will be engaged throughout the 3-year execution of the project and they are as follows:

- 50 Community Based Organisations (CBO) especially youth groups
- 30 women's groups (WG)
- 10 Civil Society Organisations (CSO)
- 10 Traditional Authorities (TA) in host mining communities (TAs)
- 20 Media (local and national print and radio, including Community Radio)
- 6 CREMA Executive Committees (CEC)

- 108 CREMA communities
- 200 host mining communities

Stating that the project is being implemented at some mining landscapes in the Ashanti Region, Eastern Region, Western Region, Western North Region and the Ahafo Region.

Communities Engagement and Feedback

The facilitators at all durbars engaged the participants in a discussion on the importance of mining, its benefits, and its negative impacts. In the plenary session, some benefits of mining mentioned included revenue generation, employment creation, and community development. However, participants also highlighted negative impacts such as water pollution, land degradation, teenage pregnancy, and loss of human lives. Ms Margaret clarified that the project would engage target groups, including Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Traditional Authorities (TAs), Women's groups, Youth, and the Media, to train and build their capacities on their rights and laws governing mining. Below are the positive and negative impacts of mining:

The positive impact of mining mentioned by the participants during the durbar meetings:

- Increases economic activity through buying and selling
- Employment opportunities for youth
- Promoting exchange learning and development
- Access to education and social amenities
- Encouraging community development

Negative impacts of mining identified during the Durbar meetings:

- Water pollution
- Air pollution
- Destruction of farmlands (cocoa farms)
- Food poisoning from chemicals used in mining
- Uncovered pits causing loss of life
- Social vices and school dropouts among youth
- Spread of diseases
- Divorce and family breakdown



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- Massive destruction of forest cover
- Increased robbery incidents and hardships
- Building cracks and health implications from blasting

In the quest to know what the participants think should be done to promote responsible mining in their communities, participants suggested ways to ensure responsible mining practices, including:

- Enacting and enforcing policies to safeguard mining
- Educating mining communities on responsible mining practices
- Ensuring Traditional Authorities stand firm against irresponsible mining
- Government ensuring allocated concessions follow the right procedures

The participants present at each of the meetings suggested the following to consider for effective project implementation:

- Engage mining communities to educate them on their rights and laws
- Provide in-depth training on mining regulations
- Continuously engage with mining communities
- Collaborate with the Minerals Commission to engage miners on regulations
- Educating mining communities on responsible mining practices

Closing Remarks

At every durbar meeting the community leaders gave the closing remarks to end the meeting. They expressed gratitude to the project implementors for considering their landscapes to be part of the project. They acknowledged the success of the program and the community's willingness to embrace the initiative to tackle irresponsible mining for a better Ghana. They further expressed their willingness to listen and implement whatever they learn to ensure that the overall aim of the project is achieved.

Conclusion

The durbar meetings successfully introduced the BRACE project to the selected mining communities. The meeting also gathered valuable input from the community on how to implement the project effectively. The Durbar engagements with the communities successfully highlighted the importance of responsible mining practices and the need for collective action to address environmental pollution and social impacts. The BRACE project aims to promote responsible mining practices, safeguard the environment, and empower

individuals living in mining areas to advocate for their human right to a healthy environment. The engaged mining communities are excited and can't wait to be part of the training activities to promote responsible mining in their communities.

