Local Voices Case Study
Yamana Gold in Latin America

Context

Yamana Gold is a mid-sized multinational mining company operating in Canada, Brazil, Argentina and Chile. In 2015, the company adopted a new approach to measuring health and safety, environmental and social risks across the company. As part of that approach, Yamana Gold has been working with CSIRO and now the spin-out company Voconiq to develop their social licence indices across all operational sites.

At an industry conference in 2020, Director of Health, Safety and Sustainable Development Aaron Steeghs reflected on why Yamana Gold wanted Local Voices data and how it now uses it.

Challenge

Even though social licence consistently featured prominently as a major risk in industry-wide reviews, Yamana Gold had found it challenging to consistently mobilise resources and attention around social licence risks because of a lack of systematic measurement. Having regular and structured site-by-site measurements of trust and acceptance, as well as the factors underpinning them, changed that.

"In a fast-paced environment such as mining, it can be challenging to get the attention of the management team and to facilitate action, when we don't have data to back up the narrative. [The social licence measure] takes it out of the realm of anecdotal qualitative data, and takes it into the realm of science... and we're surrounded by engineers and finance people who live on data."

Solution

In designing the company's new social licence measure (based on Voconiq Local Voices data), Yamana Gold staff asked themselves – what does the general manager of a mine site really need to know about the community, and what does the CEO and the Board really want to know? Those principles fed through into two key features of the new measure.
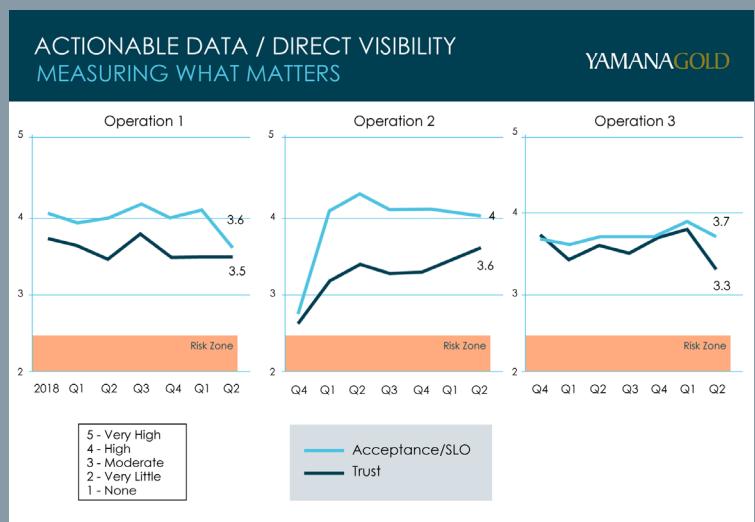
YAMANAGOLD

Solution...

The first key feature is to ensure that the social licence measure produces actionable, strategic data – to know what's happening on the ground; what people think about the company; and how it can be improved. The second feature is to ensure that that data has direct visibility within the company – that it goes to site general managers, senior executives and board members.

Impact

Looking at some recent results, the company saw a significant dip in the trust scores at one of their sites ("Operation 3"), and while the scores were still above the 'risk zone', it immediately lead to action within the company. Within a week of those results coming into the company they had been communicated to the site general manager and community relations teams; to senior functional managers at headquarters. Through these informed conversations, and by digging deeper into the Local Voices data, the company was able to get a better sense of what was going on and what kind of actions they would need to take to address the drop in community trust.

"Within a week of getting these results I was on calls with our executives and senior managers…wanting to understand the results and how to improve them. That kind of phone call doesn't typically happen unless there is some sort of significant issue. Now, we can have the conversation before a situation gets bad…this tool is like the early warning system to say 'something is not right here, let's fix it'."

ACTIONABLE DATA / DIRECT VISIBILITY
MEASURING WHAT MATTERS — YAMANA GOLD

Operation 1 — 3.6 / 3.5
Operation 2 — 4 / 3.6
Operation 3 — 3.7 / 3.3

5 - Very High
4 - High
3 - Moderate
2 - Very Little
1 - None

Acceptance/SLO
Trust

Yamana Gold now also has the ability to consistently report on company wide social performance— through their Social Licence to Operate Indices—to the world via formal governance reports such as their Material Issues Report (the 2019 version is available at yamana.com/English/responsibility/corporate-social-responsibility, see page 44).