



# **2023/2024 Annual Report Voluntary Principles Initiative (VPI)**

## About IMPACT

IMPACT transforms how natural resources are managed in areas where security and human rights are at risk. We investigate and develop approaches for natural resources to improve security, development, and equality. We are an independent non-profit, collaborating with local partners for lasting change.

IMPACT is headquartered in Ottawa, Canada and has offices in Burkina Faso, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Uganda.

Learn more at [www.impacttransform.org](http://www.impacttransform.org)

## **1. Statement of commitment or endorsement of the Voluntary Principles**

IMPACT is committed to promoting the implementation of the VPSHR internationally and believes that the VPSHR initiative can help promote multistakeholder dialogue and problem-solving between governments, companies, civil society organizations and local communities impacted by extractive sector operations. Furthermore, we believe that the VPSHR provides an important basis upon which oil, gas and mining companies can implement effective policies, procedures and commitments to minimize the risk of contributing to human rights violations. Like all multistakeholder processes, IMPACT believes that the VPSHR must continue to progress and evolve to maintain its relevance. This includes clearly demonstrating positive impact, where able, as well as improving accountability for their implementation.

## **2. Relevant policies, procedures, and guidelines to implement the Voluntary Principles**

IMPACT adopted and operationalized a new security management system in 2018, which includes site assessments, incident reporting, and various tools for staff, amongst other components. IMPACT also updated its Code of Conduct, adopted a Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy and adopted a draft Conflict of Interest Policy and a draft Safeguarding Policy. Also, on 15th October 2018, IMPACT signed on to the Canadian Council for International Co-operation's (CCIC) Leaders' Pledge on Preventing and Addressing Sexual Misconduct. IMPACT has also developed a policy for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and is operationalizing this policy through various changes in procedures, processes and training requirements for current and new staff.

## **3. Integrating the VPs into IMPACT's security management**

While the VPs were first designed for oil, gas and mining companies, as an NGO working in high-risk areas and making use of private security personnel, IMPACT has drawn from the IGT for the Voluntary Principles in its own implementation of effective security management policies and processes. While at times IMPACT may contract a very small number of unarmed, private security personnel at one or some of its local offices in Africa, we believe it is important to ensure that these personnel abide by IMPACT's policies and procedures and will continue to receive briefings on these accordingly. All of IMPACT's contractors are contractually obligated to abide by IMPACT's policies. As an additional measure, IMPACT requires its contractors to sign its Code of Conduct to confirm acknowledgement and commitment to abide by it.

IMPACT has also worked with ASM cooperatives with regards to their security arrangements on site to align with better practices and demonstrate progressive improvement towards international laws, norms and standards. This includes having facilitated dialogues with respect to what it means to provide security and concepts of abuse of power and excessive force.

## **4. Examples of promoting awareness of the Voluntary Principles throughout the organization**

IMPACT regularly holds internal information sessions for staff to ensure that they are aware of IMPACT's role in the VPs. IMPACT also holds regular staff meetings to share information across the organization's different focus areas (Regulatory and Legal Reform; Supply Chain Transparency; Illicit Trade and Financing; Gender Equality; and Environmental Stewardship). VPs are included in these discussions, as IMPACT identifies ways in which it can incorporate the VPs, both process and principles, in its existing programming.

## **5. Promoting and advancing awareness or implementation of the Voluntary Principles internationally**

This year, IMPACT participated in a webinar launch for the new *IGT Companion Tool: Operationalizing the Voluntary Principles through the Lens of Protecting and Respecting the Unique Needs and Rights of Women and Other Disadvantaged Groups*. This offered an opportunity to promote the Companion Tool, and the importance of implementing the VPs through an approach that includes different groups who may be at a disadvantage or vulnerable, and who may have varying experiences and suffer disproportionate risk of human rights violations. IMPACT has also used its social media channels to help publicize the Companion Tool and encourage its use. IMPACT also participated on a panel at the 2024 Plenary to discuss the emergence of mandatory due diligence legislation across various geographies and the implications for the VPI initiative and its members.

## **6. Engagements with stakeholders on country implementation**

IMPACT has limited ability to participate in engagements with stakeholders on country-level implementation. Where able, we participate in VPs meetings hosted by VPI member governments in Kinshasa (DRC), and our staff members participate in events where accessible.

## **7. Lessons or issues from this reporting year, as well as plans or opportunities to advance the Voluntary Principles for the organization**

IMPACT continues to scale up its work in Central and West Africa, which focuses significantly on artisanal and small-scale mining, supply chain transparency, illicit trade, gender equality and mining as well as broader governance and security-related issues in the extractives sectors. This includes projects in the DRC, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Uganda, Burundi, Kenya and Zimbabwe. IMPACT will use these opportunities to more thoroughly assess if and how we may be able to further integrate promotion and/or implementation of the VPs with the various stakeholders we work with in this region, as well as at the level of our field operations in several countries.