

# VPI Activities Report

2023/24



The Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPSHR) are an internationally recognized set of principles that guide companies on how to conduct their security operations while ensuring respect for human rights. To promote implementation of the Principles, the Voluntary Principles Initiative (VPI) was created. The Initiative is comprised of over 75 Members and Observers including companies, governments, and non-governmental organizations that share best practices and mutually support the implementation of the Principles.

2023 was a year of many achievements for the VPI. This document provides high-level information on some of the key activities implemented by the Initiative from May 1, 2023, to April 30, 2024. The VPI recognizes the important contributions made by the Chair, Steering Committee, and Members and Observers who dedicated their time and efforts to support the Initiative.

### **1. Adoption of a new three-year Strategy by the Steering Committee**

After a consultation process with the VPI Members, the new VPI Strategy for 2023-2026 was approved in late 2023 by the Steering Committee at the Strategy Retreat, held in Geneva, Switzerland (more information below).

The new Strategy can be [viewed here](#).

### **2. Strategy Retreat November-December 2023**

The Steering Committee and two additional Members from each pillar met in Geneva on November 30-December 1, 2023, for its annual Strategy Retreat.

During the Retreat, Members delved into key strategic discussions, including how to further on-the-ground implementation of the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights through In-Country Working Groups (ICWGs), strengthening the governance of the VPI, and expanding the VPI beyond extractives and agriculture; among others.

### **3. Strategic Theme: Global Leadership; Strategic Collaboration and Partnerships**

#### **VPI Participation at PDAC 2024**

The Secretariat returned to this year's Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada

(PDAC) Convention with an exhibitor's booth from March 3 to March 6, 2024. Held in Toronto, Canada, PDAC is one of the most prominent events in the mining sector, hosting more than 30,000 attendees from more than 130 countries. The booth garnered good visibility and attracted many visitors who expressed an interest in security-related human rights best practices and the VPI. The Secretariat provided interested visitors with copies of the text of the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPSHR) in several languages, as well as hard copies of the "[Conflict Analysis Tool for Companies](#)", "[10 Steps to Maintain Security in Compliance with Human Rights](#)" (also known as "VPs 101"), and the latest VPI "[Guidance on Respecting the Rights of Human Rights Defenders](#)".

The VPI Secretariat also held various bilateral meetings during PDAC 2024, including with the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development (IGF), the World Bank, the Ghana Chamber of Mines, a number of VPI and non-VPI governments such as Guinea, Mexico, and Papua New Guinea, as well as with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI).



*The VPI Secretariat engaged with visitors at the booth. Visitors appreciated hard copies of VPI resources*

### **VPI Participation – EITI Board Meeting**

The VPI Secretariat was invited to attend the Board meeting of the EITI — Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, in late February 2024 as an observer. Mora Johnson, Head of Secretariat, delivered a presentation regarding the VPI to the EITI Board members and observers, including proposing potential avenues of collaboration. The VPI and EITI Secretariats also met bilaterally to discuss collaboration opportunities.

### **VPI Participation – Ipieca Week (April 2024)**

Representing the VPI, Mora Johnson attended Ipieca week in April 2024 and was invited to speak at the Stakeholder Panel held on the first day of the event. In addition, Mora was



included in a meeting with the Ipieca Executive Committee to help inform the development of Ipieca's new strategy. She also participated in a panel discussion featuring the VPI Human Rights Defenders Guidance, along with author Bennett Freeman. Mora also had the opportunity to meet many VPI Members at Ipieca Week.



*Ipieca Week 2024 Stakeholder Panel*

## **Mapping and Implementation Working Group**

In 2023, the VPI launched a new multistakeholder working group to support important workstreams relating to the adaptation of the VPI to mandatory human rights due diligence in many jurisdictions. Since August 2023, the Mapping and Implementation Working Group has overseen a project to map the global regulatory landscape and industry association requirements with respect to the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPSHR). The objective was to help the VPI understand the rules proposed in a variety of jurisdictions, the VPSHR's role as a security and human rights standard in industry and legislative requirements, as well as the potential role the Initiative could play in demonstrating companies' conformity with mandatory human rights due diligence. The VPI will continue to explore how it can contribute to provide guidance on the implementation of security-related human rights due diligence.

## **Launch of Tools and Guidance**

During 2023-2024, new tools to support security best practices were launched.

- a. IGT Companion Tool — protecting the needs of women and disadvantaged groups**

Publicly launched in October of 2023, the new “[Operationalizing the Voluntary Principles Through the Lens of Protecting and Respecting the Unique Needs and Rights of Women and other Disadvantaged Groups](#)” serves as a companion resource document to the existing [Implementation Guidance Tools \(IGT\)](#) developed by the Initiative in 2011. Funded by Global Affairs Canada, and authored by ESG management consultancy Stratos (now ERM) and VPI Member IMPACT after extensive analysis and research, the IGT Companion Tool equips organizations with a number of important concepts and steps to better identify and respond to potential risks and negative impacts that their security operations may have on women and other disadvantaged groups, along with practical tools, informative case studies, examples and links to additional resources.

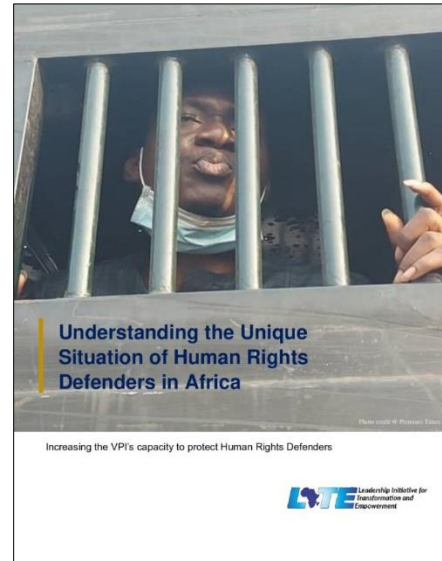
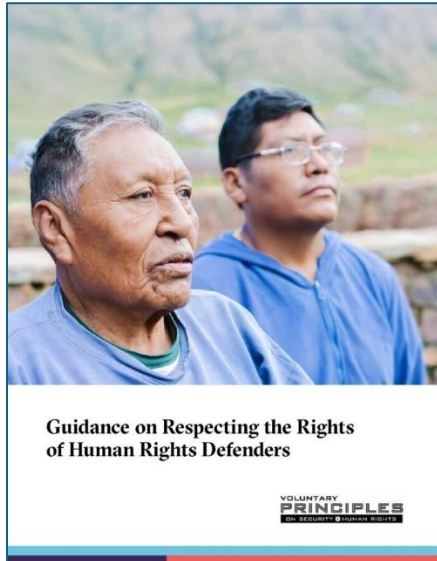


***b. Resources to strengthen protection of human rights defenders***

The “[Guidance on Respecting the Rights of Human Rights Defenders](#)” provides an analytical and operational framework to identify and address risks to human rights defenders across key elements of VPSHR implementation, including risk assessment and due diligence, stakeholder and community engagement, and relationships with security forces and host country governments. Authored by Bennett Freeman Associates LLC, the guidance offers a comprehensive roadmap for stakeholders, such as security managers and company officials at the project level and corporate levels, to navigate the complexities of implementing effective security measures while promoting civic space and protecting human rights defenders on the ground.

The report entitled “[Understanding the Unique Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Africa](#)” by VPI Member LITE-Africa, delves into the challenges, threats, and opportunities faced by human rights defenders related to extractives and agriculture businesses in

Africa. Going beyond sharing first-hand testimonies and observations, this report also provides practical recommendations to strengthen the protection of human rights defenders.



## Submission to the UN Working Group Regarding Just Transition

In 2023, the VPI Secretariat with input from the Steering Committee published a submission to the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights, in response to a call for submissions regarding the Extractive sector, just transition and human rights. See [submission here](#).

## New Outreach Plan

A number of outreach and awareness-raising activities are conducted each year by VPI Members and the Secretariat. To guide this effort, the Secretariat developed a new Outreach Plan for the year 2024, which was been approved by the Steering Committee in February of 2024.

The VPI outreach objectives are aligned with the three focus areas of the 2023-2026 Strategy: Global Leadership, In-Country Implementation, and Growth and Sustainability.

## Translation of Key Documents and Tools

To increase accessibility across the globe, the VPI has increased its offer of key documents and guidance on the website in languages other than English — namely French, Spanish, and Portuguese. The materials that are now available in multiple languages include a VPs brochure and the “10 Steps to Maintain Security in Compliance with Human Rights” (also known as VPs101). In April 2024, a version of the “Guidance on Respecting the Rights of Human Rights Defenders” was also launched in Spanish.

The layout of the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights has been updated to reflect the VPs brand and to make the document easier to read; users can access it in six different languages: [English](#), [Portuguese](#), [Spanish](#), [French](#), [Arabic](#), and [Chinese](#).

## Public Outreach Webinars

The Secretariat hosted two public webinars in 2023-2024, designed to share important information about VPI activities, but also to reach a wider audience and raise awareness about the VPSHR and the VPI. They were:

- ✓ Operationalizing the VPs Through the Lens of Protecting the Rights of Women and Other Disadvantaged Groups. More information is [available on this link](#).
- ✓ Rights and Realities: Protecting Human Rights Defenders in the Context of Security. The recording is [available on this link](#).

## 4. Strategic Theme: Support for In-Country Implementation

A number of multi-stakeholder In-Country Working Groups (ICWGs), made up of government, business, and civil society organizations, support the implementation of the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights at national or regional level. The VPI ICWGs are created and supported by the Voluntary Principles Initiative, including Ghana, Nigeria, and Brazil. There are also VPI Partner ICWGs, which are working groups not created by the VPI. These working groups are located in Mozambique, Peru and the DRC.

Each ICWG meets at least once a quarter to discuss national or local issues and plan activities that collectively improve VPSHR implementation. Members identify challenges related to security and human rights and work collaboratively to find solutions to these challenges.

Supporting the work and growth of the ICWGs continues to be one of the major work streams of the VPI in 2023/2024 and beyond.

## Launch of In-Country Working Groups Network

Launched in May 2024, the Network Platform is considered a one-stop site for VPI and Partner In-Country Working Groups (ICWGs) to share issues, questions, events, best practices, and lessons learned on security and human rights. Additionally, ICWGs and their members are able to connect, post about upcoming events, and share ideas or any Voluntary Principles activities around the world.

## Updates from VPI In-Country Working Groups

### ***Nigeria VPI ICWG***

The Nigeria In-Country Working Group has maintained quarterly meetings in Abuja. These meetings serve as a crucial platform for strategizing on program initiatives and engagements, as well as for raising awareness about the Voluntary Principles. The ICWG and its members have actively conducted training sessions focusing on security and human rights, which include sensitization efforts aimed at diverse stakeholders such as companies, public security providers, and private security providers. The ICWG has also undertaken outreach to host communities, particularly concerning mining activities and human rights issues. These communities have been empowered through education on the Voluntary Principles and responsible mining practices.



*Members of the Nigeria ICWG met with the Executive Secretary of the National Human Rights Commission*

### ***Ghana VPI ICWG***

The Ghana In-Country Working Group met regularly on a quarterly basis. In 2023, significant milestones were achieved as the group validated both a baseline study on Security and Human Rights and the Standardized Training Curriculum for Public and Private Security.



To ensure responsiveness to member needs, virtual pillar meetings were introduced throughout the year, shaping subsequent ICWG agendas with insights collected from these sessions. They also served as forums to address challenges within specific pillars. Moreover, the ICWG undertook visits to extractive companies, aiming to deepen understanding of their operational practices, application of the VPSHR, and relationships with host communities.



*With the support of the Ghana ICWG, VPSHR training of police officers deployed to the mines are conducted*

### **Brazil VPI ICWG**

The Brazil ICWG expanded its membership and deepened its outreach to government and the civil society pillars in Brazil with the support of the VPI Secretariat. The members of the Brazil ICWG drafted and approved a workplan with key priority activities:

- The development of a baseline study;
- The identification of best practices for engagement with public security; and,
- Drafting of a context-based template of a Memorandum of Understanding to guide relationships between companies and public security forces in the country.



*The Brazil ICWG met in in Brasília in November 2023*

## **Partner ICWGs – Mozambique, Peru, DRC**

The VPI Partner ICWGs, formed by a variety of stakeholders committed to security and human rights best practices, both Members and non-members of the VPI, carried out various meetings and training sessions in 2023-2024 to raise awareness and promotion of the VPSHR.



*Meeting in Luhihi (South Kivu), DRC, facilitated by the ICWG to promote peaceful artisanal mining in the area*



*Training of public security providers in Mozambique*



*Presentation on security and human rights for leaders of the rural communities of the district of Colquamarca, Cusco, Peru*



*Training on security and human rights for police personnel and journalists in Cusco, Peru*

## **Technical and Financial Support to Existing In-Country Working Groups**

Through a funding framework, the Voluntary Principles Association (VPA), the entity that addresses the financial and administrative needs of the VPI, has been disbursing Core and Activity funds to In-Country Working Groups since 2019.

During 2023-2024, the Secretariat has managed the administrative, technical, and financial aspects of the Core and Activity funding provided by the VPA to ICWGs based in Ghana and Nigeria. The tasks performed include the development of templates for narrative and financial reports, providing assistance and quality control during the application process, making recommendations to the Initiative's Steering Committee/Board on the funding applications, participating in periodic meetings with the ICWGs to monitor their activities and projects, and operationalizing the reporting and financial components included in the agreements with the ICWGs, among others.

In 2023, the VPI Secretariat organized monitoring calls with the In-Country Working Groups to receive updates on implementation. Additionally, the reporting templates were updated to capture information on lessons learned, best practices and case studies.

### **5. Other VPI Activities**

#### **2024 Plenary Meeting in Washington, United States**

The 2024 Annual Plenary took place in Washington, DC area, United States, between 14-17 of May. Approximately 120 participants attended the four-day program, including



VPI Members, new applicants, subject matter experts, and invited guests.



*At the Annual Plenary attendees have an opportunity to network, discuss current challenges, and exchange ideas on VPSHR implementation best practices*

## **Membership Growth**

At the 2024 Annual Plenary Meeting, a record number of organizations were accepted as Engaged and Full Members, representing all pillars, including seven Engaged Members and three Full Members.

In the occasion, the VPI was proud to welcome the Government of Mozambique as an Engaged Government Pillar Member. Mozambique is the third African country to join the Initiative, a timely move given the country's mineral and energy productions being challenged by ongoing violence. Before being approved as Full Members, Engaged Members must fulfill certain requirements, which includes demonstrating their efforts to implement or support the implementation of the VPSHR. In the case of new governments, such requirements include the development of a National Action Plan detailing steps to promote security and human rights, particularly relating to the extractive sector.

In addition to the Government of Mozambique, the VPI also welcomed the following new Members to the Initiative:

- Full Corporate Members
  - Alcoa
  - Fortescue
  - Pan American Silver



- Engaged Members
  - Gran Tierra Energy (Corporate)
  - African Law Foundation (NGO)
  - Human Rights and Forest Brain Africa (NGO)
  - Motherhen Development Foundation – MDF (NGO)
  - SaferGlobe (NGO)
  - USALAMA (NGO)

The VPI looks forward to valuable exchanges with its new Members and strengthening measures to respect human rights in the context of security.

## **Communications**

In 2023-2024, the Secretariat continued to implement communications activities for both internal and external audiences to support the strategic goals of the Voluntary Principles Initiative. Communications activities included: production of monthly newsletters and digital messages for VPI Members and Observers, website update and maintenance, management of X (formerly Twitter) account, production of external newsletters to subscribers, and management of information requests received via website. Additionally, in March of 2024, the VPI launched its [LinkedIn page](#).

## **Annual Reports from VPI Members**

As required under the Governance Rules, Members submitted annual reports regarding their efforts to implement, or assist in the implementation of the Voluntary Principles in 2023. All public Annual Reports submitted since 2018 are available on the VPI website. The 2023 Annual Reports can [be accessed here](#).

**Voluntary Principles Secretariat**  
**August 2024**