



REPORT TO THE VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLES INITIATIVE 2019

International Alert has been actively engaged with the Voluntary Principles (VPSHR) since the inception in December 2000. As an NGO participant, Alert firmly believes that the VPSHR and their implementation make a difference in the global effort to protect fundamental human rights.

Alert considers the VPSHR a valuable entry point for company engagement with host country governments and civil society organisations' promotion of security and human rights issues. Alert has consistently advocated for states' and companies' accountability on their separate but complementary human rights commitments. Alert also believes the VPSHR provide an effective way for companies to use their influence on host states.

Hence, Alert has played an active role in promoting the VPSHR in international forums, HQ level with companies, governments, and in host countries, including Albania, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Greece, Italy, Mali, Mexico, Myanmar, Peru, South Africa, and Uganda. Alert believes the VPSHR provide useful guidance to company executives operating in a range of conflict contexts, or contexts with high levels of social protest, where security forces providing protection to the company's facilities have a history of human rights abuses, and/or there is a risk of security committing acts implicating the company in human rights abuses in the future. The VPs also require companies to ensure that its key staff members are aware of their human rights responsibilities, and in arranging for security for their operations, bear in mind those responsibilities.

In the 2018 reporting period, Alert has continued with our efforts to advance VPSHR implementation and promotion, at both an international level and at a field-level in a number of contexts. Key activities and events of note in 2018 include the following:

- **VPI Participation - Participation in the VPI Impact Assessment Working Group**
- **Accompaniment to both VPI member and non-member companies on VPSHR implementation**
- **Colombia - Withdrawal from the Energy Mining Committee on Security and Human Rights**
- **Myanmar - Participation in the In-Country Working Group**
- **Mexico - Facilitation of VPSHR workshop held by IPIECA and AMEXHI**
- **Mali - Engagement with security forces at the community level**
- **DRC - Stabilisation programme in South and North Kivu**

The report contains a number of reflections on lessons learnt and plans or opportunities to advance the VPSHR in the future, particularly work on impact assessments and advancing local CSO' awareness of the VPSHR in countries where Alert works.

International level participation in the Voluntary Principles Initiative

1) International Alert's participation in the Impact Assessment Working Group

- Reporting Guidelines on A1, A2, A3, E13

Following the Steering Committee Retreat of 2018, Alert was appointed Chair of the Impact Assessment Working Group. The purpose of the group is to develop an approach for measuring impact of VPSHR implementation, and the VPI. Alert has led the group logistically throughout the year, to ensure discussions continued and that the group reached consensus on the way forward by Plenary 2019. The result is a Concept Note with a proposed way forward for the 2019-2020 year, which is open for feedback from the Pillars at the time of writing.

Alert notes that it believes that meaningful results of this work are fundamental to the progress and legitimacy of the VPSHR/ VPI going forward. In International Alert's own peacebuilding work implemented in over twenty countries over the past thirty and more years, there is a strong need to understand and communicate on the impact of our peacebuilding interventions. We require a clear approach to measuring the progress towards our project aims and understanding the impact that our work is having on societies. Understanding how we contribute to peace is the foundation of our effectiveness and we are committed to continuously improving the way we work. We are constantly looking at how we can improve how we measure and communicate our impact.

Alert believes that these principles are just as true as for the VPSHR and VPI. Having been implemented for almost twenty years, there remains a lack of clear understanding, particularly among those not involved in the VPSHR/VPI, on the impact of VPSHR implementation. Current reporting procedures focus primarily on processes and procedures, and fail to provide a broader outline of the positive impact of the VPSHR on-the-ground. In order to ensure that VPSHR implementation is continuously improved and relevant to the contexts in which the standards are implemented, it is vital that those implementing the standards gain a better understanding of the impact of their interventions, and have the necessary tools to build this understanding.

Further, better messaging and understanding on the on-the-ground impact of the VPSHR is vital for the legitimacy of the VPI/VPSHR, and to promote membership of the VPI and uptake of the VPSHR.

2) Continuous input into VPI working groups and processes

- Reporting Guidelines A1, A2, A3

Alert has been an active participant in all NGO Pillar discussions and processes in 2018, and also participated in the Implementation Working Group. In particular, Alert inputted into the Implementation Working Group's work and discussions to outline the funding needs of in-country working groups. Alert has also regularly attended the UK VPSHR meetings, and has actively inputted into relevant discussions.

Accompaniment to companies

- Reporting Guidelines A3, C5, C7, D9, D10, D11, D12

In 2018, Alert continued its accompaniment of a number of companies on VPSHR implementation, including VPI members and non-members. In 2018, International Alert has trained or accompanied company personnel, private security and public security on the VPSHR, human rights, and human rights and security risk assessments.

Alert's approach focuses on highlighting the relevance of the VPSHR as a risk and impact management and community engagement tool and approach in the broader area of conflict-sensitive business practice. Alert sees the relevance of the VPSHR both in areas of active conflict, such as DRC, as well as contexts suffering from high levels of labour protest, for example South Africa, and social protest, for example continental Europe. Further, Alert notes the VPSHR as an entry point for broader discussions on business and human rights with companies and governments.

Anglo American

Our accompaniment with companies includes International Alert's strategic partnership with **Anglo American**, now entering its ninth year, which focuses on support for VPSHR implementation, including training, and other human rights and conflict issues across the Anglo American group. International Alert's work in 2018 took place at a Group level in London, and in **South Africa, Brazil, Chile** and **Peru**.

In South Africa, International Alert's work on the VPSHR continued to focus on training and refresher training, with the particular aim of identifying ongoing gaps in implementation and action points, requiring cross-functional collaboration, to address said gaps.

In Latin America, much of our work with Anglo American has focused on both the VPSHR and more broadly on applying a human rights lens to various aspects of the operations. This has included trainings on human rights and the VPSHR, VPSHR gap analyses, human rights risk assessments and trainings on social leaders and risks in the Latin American context.

At a Group level, International Alert inputted into Anglo American's new human rights working plan, which includes a strong focus on security and human rights related issues.

Other accompaniment

In 2018, International Alert also supported **Trans-Adriatic Pipeline AG** with VPSHR training, refresher training, training of Trainers training, and risk assessments in **Albania, Greece and Italy**.

In addition, International Alert conducted an audit of VPs implementation by **Cerrejón** in **Colombia**, which assessed both compliance, quality and effectiveness of VPSHR implementation by the company.

VPSHR/ Security and Human Rights Work at Country Level

1) Colombia – Withdrawal from the Energy Mining Committee on Security and Human Rights

Reporting Guidelines – A2, A3, C6, D12, E13

In February 2018, International Alert formally announced its withdrawal from the Energy Mining Committee on Security and Human Rights (CME) in Colombia, which Alert co-founded in 2005. Alert had believed that the CME was a multi-stakeholder space to promote responsible business practices in the area of human rights, and to drive the Colombian Government to apply international security and human rights standards. Unfortunately, developments in recent years forced us to reassess the CME's legitimacy as a multi-stakeholder initiative promoting respect for human rights.

Today, Colombia is at a transcendental moment of implementing the Peace Accords with FARC-EP and is making efforts to move forward the peace dialogue with the remaining active guerrilla groups in the continent, namely the National Liberation Army (ELN). At the same time, however, social leaders are being systematically assassinated in the regions and there is growing opposition to extractive activity, which is echoing in the courts and popular consultations on extractive projects.

International Alert believe that the CME is not currently analysing or addressing the most relevant human rights and security issues required by the current context in Colombia, and that this lack of action is due to the unwillingness to undertake dialogue with national and local civil society – which Alert, together with Fundación Ideas para la Paz (FIP) and El Centro Regional de Empresas y Emprendimientos Responsables (CREER), requested on numerous occasions and which, undoubtedly, is becoming increasingly necessary in Colombia at this time.

In addition, International Alert has concerns on the admission procedure and dispute resolution mechanism procedure of the CME, and has raised these concerns directly with the CME. Alert fought hard for greater transparency in the decision-making process around entry of new members in the CME. This was particularly the case for the entry of two companies in 2017. Alert raised concerns about these two companies and their level of commitment on human rights in the country – particularly as they face accusations of complicity in egregious human rights violations. However, due to weak governance, lack of clear procedures, and

informality in the management of disagreements, we were not able to, even at a minimum, raise our questions (much less to have a discussion around the issue) in the Initiative.

International Alert believes that the CME today must i) strengthen its multi-stakeholder nature, ii) rethink and improve its relationship with civil society organisations and iii) improve management, including financial management.

With the lack of movement on these issues, International Alert re-assessed its role in the CME framework and the initial reasons that led us to support and contribute to the initiative, and concluded that International Alert's vision of the role of the CME is not shared within the CME.

Further, International Alert's mandate demands that we approach our relationship with our different stakeholders with full responsibility. This responsibility requires us to be coherent and transparent in our relations with all stakeholders, which includes national and local civil society organisations. These organisations doubt the legitimacy of the CME and International Alert's failed effort to change the CME's approaches, which consequently led us to rethink our role in the CME.

This, together with i) the absence of the Colombian government in the CME; ii) the withdrawal of companies such as Isagen and Empresas Públicas de Medellín (EPM) from the CME; iii) the absence of business leaders such as Ecopetrol; and iv) and the need to optimise International Alert's limited resources, led to our decision to withdraw.

If, in the future, the CME genuinely considers bringing civil society voices to the table to enrich the dialogue on security and human rights, allows the participation mechanisms and work to be subject to analysis and improvement from a multi-stakeholder perspective, and sees in International Alert an actor that can build bridges and facilitate dialogue that contributes to the growth of the CME, then International Alert will be more than willing to reassess our participation in the CME.

2) Myanmar - Participation in the In-Country Working Group Activities

Reporting Guidelines – C5, C6, E12

In early 2018 International Alert, the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB), and PeaceNexus proposed to the VPI to implement a scoping study to inform the implementation of an In-Country Working Group in Myanmar. Since the group's formal establishment in June 2018, International Alert has been involved in ICWG activities.

This has included presenting on the role of NGOs in the VPI/ for VPSHR implementation at the Awareness-Raising Workshops held in Yangon in November 2018.

Further, in January 2019 Alert co-hosted a workshop, alongside the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business, Fund for Peace and DCAF, to introduce Myanmar CSOs to the VPSHR and discuss whether they could be useful for them in pushing for more responsible extractive practices. Around 30 participants, mostly civil society organisations (CSOs) from Mandalay

and Sagaing Regions, and Karen, Kayah, and Eastern and Southern Shan States, attended and discussed concerns about community-company relations and security issues related to mining operations in their areas.

Alert intends to continue to be involved in the ICWG, and views the participation of NGOs in the group as fundamental for its progress and relevance as a multi-stakeholder initiative. Accordingly, dependent on time and financial resources, Alert intends to focus its efforts related to the VPSHR in Myanmar on raising awareness of the ICWG and the VPSHR among national and local civil society.

3) Mexico - Facilitation of IPIECA and AMEXHI Security and Human Rights Workshop

Reporting Guidelines – C5, C7

In February 2018 International Alert facilitated the IPIECA and AMEXHI Security and Human Rights workshop in Mexico. Alert presented and led group work on themes including the following: security and human rights in Mexico; introduction to the VPSHR, the VPSHR and Human Rights Governance; challenges of community engagement in the Latin American context; understanding protests and examples of conflict sensitivity; and private security and stakeholder engagement.

Alert brought its rich expertise on working on the VPSHR from other Latin America contexts, including Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Brazil. Given the social, economic and political context in Mexico, for example the high murder rate of human rights defenders, Alert believes it is highly necessary and relevant that the government and companies operating in Mexico implement the VPSHR.

4) Mali – Engagement with security forces at the community level

Reporting Guidelines – D11

In Mali, International Alert has engaged security forces to improve their understanding of the context they are operating in through conflict analysis training, and direct engagement with communities affected by conflict in the regions of Mopti, Segou, Timbuktu.

Malian security and defence forces are now holding monthly meetings with communities, administrative and customary leaders across the three regions, contributing to strengthening inclusivity of the security analysis and response, and coordination of the response. As trust between security, state actors and citizens increases, we are picking up evidence of improved accountability at the local level.

5) DRC - Stabilisation programme in South and North Kivu

Reporting Guidelines – D11

Under the auspices of the stabilisation programs with the MONUSCO in South and North Kivu, International Alert continued to work in 2018 on the security governance pillar of the

stabilisation programs. For this end, International Alert has engaged the security forces in the Ruzizi Plain (South Kivu) to train them on the basic rights, how to engage with the communities in a more collaborative manner and sensitise them on various issues including sexual violence.

Through these stabilisation programs, Alert also helped the creation of Communal Security Units (Unité Communautaire de Sécurité – UCS). These units are creating the liaison between the security forces and the community, as well as advocating with the armed groups for their possible demobilisation.

The programmes also take active part in community demobilisation initiative, whereby the advocacy efforts helped the development of ordinance for inter-provincial DDR strategy.

Internal advocacy

Reporting Guidelines – A2

In January 2019 International Alert held an internal brownbag on the VPSHR and VPI, in order to increase internal cross-functional staff from across Alert offices' awareness and understanding of the standards and frameworks. This was aimed towards increasing knowledge and transparency internally on Alert's work to implement or support implementation of the VPSHR, particularly on how Alert's country programmes are involved or have been involved in VPSHR programming and advocacy.