

The 2022 Annual Report of the Nigeria Working Group (NWG) on the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights

Introduction

This report highlights the activities of the Nigeria Working Group (NWG) on the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights, demonstrating its commitment to implementing the VPs in Nigeria. The NWG through its activities has enhanced the promotion of the VPs, created awareness and engaged critical external stakeholders, especially relevant government ministries at the highest level in the Nigerian government. These activities are geared towards strengthening the implementation of the VPs and getting the Nigerian government to become a member of the Voluntary Principles Initiative (VPI), with the conviction that membership will mainstream the initiative's implementation in Nigeria. It is instructive to note that since the inauguration of the NWG on 6 June 2017, it has continued to serve as a safe space for dialogue among cross-pillar members and other critical stakeholders on security and human rights and a variety of other issues relating to the implementation of the VPs in Nigeria. It has also continued to serve as a resource hub. This report highlights the progress made, challenges, lessons learnt and issues over the reporting period.

A. Commitment to the Voluntary Principles

The Nigeria Working Group is committed to providing leadership, supporting and promoting the implementation of the VPs in Nigeria through its members and outreach programmes. The NWG through its co-chair Leadership Initiative for Transformation and Empowerment (LITE-Africa) attended all the steering committee and pillar meetings in the past year where we fully participated and made meaningful contributions to the growth of the VPI. The efforts of the NWG and the support of the VPI have now brought Nigeria to the brink of finally committing to membership in the Voluntary Principles Association. Through the group's outreach and sensitisation of stakeholders, the NWG were able to welcome three new memberships within the year under review; one for each of the three pillars of the initiative.

The NWG conducted its four hybrid coordination meetings with attendance from across all pillars including ministries and agencies of the Nigerian government. This has further underlined the commitment of the NWG members to the cause of the VPs in Nigeria.

Its co-chair LITE-Africa represented the NWG as part of the VPI delegation to Mozambique from 7-9 November 2022. The delegation raised awareness and supported the Mozambique In-Country Working Group and the government of Mozambique on the VPSHR. In addition, the delegation shared information on the broader context of business, security and human rights.

The LITE-Africa co-chair represented the NWG at VPI Steering Committee Retreat from 1-2 December 2022. The retreat discussed in detail the recommendations of the strategic review of the VPI and the next steps were outlined and agreed upon.

The NWG welcomed the head of the VPI Secretariat Mora Johnson and the deputy head of the Secretariat Patricia Jacopucci to Nigeria during the NWG 3rd quarter meeting on 25th October 2023. They participated in the NWG 3rd quarter meeting where they provided training for NWG members on the new VPI tools (VPs 101, gender and conflict tools) and also met with stakeholders including NGO members, governments and foreign missions.

B. Procedures

The NWG has always been represented at the annual plenary meetings by its co-chair LITE-Africa where presentations are made on the activities of the group and its workings. LITE-Africa is also a member of the VPs steering committee where it contributes to the progress and implementation of the VPs through discussion of issues of relevance to the VPs and voting on admission of new members to the VPI.

The NWG members also participate in open discussion and peer review of VPs implementation through participation in pillar calls, verification of would-be members, working group meetings and review of

membership admission guidelines and governance rules. The NWG develops its annual report which it shares with the VPI and members to update them on implementation support and activities of the working group. The NWG engages in open discussions through its activities and the activities of its members to address issues of concern to mining and exploration host communities.

C. Promotion of the Voluntary Principles

The Nigeria Working Group promoted and created awareness of the VPs at a number of forums outlined below.

- 1. Training Activities:** The working group and its members have carried out training activities on the VPs for Government Security Forces (GSF) and private security personnel manning the facilities of oil companies. Members also used the VPs training App and handbook they developed to train GSF and private security personnel. Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), personnel were also trained on the VPs to enhance their knowledge and awareness to respect human rights while securing pipeline installations in Nigeria.
The trustees of host community management committees of oil exploration host communities under the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) were trained on the VPs during their onboarding programmes in Akwa-Ibom state. VPs training was deployed for community members in Rivers State with the incorporation of the PIA in the training curriculum. Mining host communities in northern Nigeria were sensitised on the VPs, human rights and responsible mining. The members of the Association of Licensed Private Security Providers of Nigeria personnel were trained on the VPs. Solid minerals host communities in Nigeria and West Africa were enlightened on their rights and how to protect their community interests in the industry.
The NWG conducted sensitisation and training on the VPs for Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMOU) communities in Delta and Imo states of Nigeria. In collaboration with the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corp and the Association of Licensed Private Security Providers of Nigeria National Stakeholders Forum on Private Security and 2023 election in Nigeria was conducted.
- 2. Outreach to the Commandant General of the NSCDC:** A member of the NGO pillar engaged the Commandant of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) on the need for adherence to the provisions of the Voluntary Principles in the course of the Commands fulfilment of their function of protecting oil installations from vandalism in Nigeria. The NSCDC is the paramilitary security in charge of regulating private security companies in Nigeria.
- 3. Outreach to non-members of the VPI:** Through its outreach and sensitisation of stakeholders the NWG welcomed three new members within the year under review, one member in each of the three pillars of the VPs.
- 4. Advocacy engagement with relevant government entities:** The Co-Chair of the NWG engaged with the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice on the efforts for Nigeria's membership of the VPI.

D. Country Implementation

The Nigeria Working Group (NWG) on the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights was created in June 2017. The group promotes the implementation of the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights in Nigeria through a mix of activities including periodic review meetings, research, advocacy engagements, multi-stakeholder dialogues, community outreach, public awareness, and capacity building initiatives. The group holds four quarterly meetings each year with the three pillar members in attendance and these meetings are used to sensitise members, share updates from all pillars and strategise on implementation strategies. The NWG also enhance collaboration between government representatives, NGOs, companies, and other local civil societies. It helps to identify and respond to local in-country challenges related to the implementation of the Voluntary Principles through mutual solutions.

- **Training Activities:** The VPSHR training activities by the NWG and its members for Government Security Forces, Private Security Guards, Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps, government ministries officials and extractive industry security personnel have created

awareness of the promotion and protection of human rights which have helped to strengthen the rule of law in the country. The VPSHR training design for these groups also incorporates chapter four of the Nigerian 1999 constitution as amended which deals with issues of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

E. Lessons and Issues

Lessons

1. **The working group approach works:** Prior to the adoption of the working group approach, advocacy and promotion of the VPs in Nigeria tended to be uncoordinated, and haphazard, with many enthusiasts working in silos, covering the same fields, individually meeting the same government entities multiple times, and inadvertently putting undue pressure to the point where the VPs and its proponents were viewed with suspicion of trying to foist a foreign agenda in Nigeria. The working Group approach has brought about a refreshing difference by enhancing coordination, information sharing, joint advocacy, leveraging on the collective strengths of the Group, while also providing a platform to get government entities to have a good grasp of the relevance of the VPs over time and in a respectful manner.
2. **Strategic recruitment is beneficial:** The Group has been strategic about new organizations that join the NWG, apart from those that sent in applications to join, the NWG also encourages organizations that have the potential to promote the implementation of the VPs Initiative.
3. **Flexibility and adopting a multi-pronged approach:** The NWG operates with a great degree of resourcefulness and adaptability, while also adopting a multi-pronged approach to its activities. For example, to guide its activities, the NWG develops an annual work plan which helps the group to meet its target. Multi-pronged approaches are adopted when it comes to initiating advocacy meetings. At times the Government Chair initiated meetings, at other times the task was assigned to other signatory governments or NGOs, and at times it was assigned to the NHRC. The NWG was also able to adopt hybrid meeting options to make sure that those who were not able to attend physically for one reason or the other are still able to participate in the meeting.
4. **Desk officers are really focal:** Having passionate, committed and hard-working desk officers who are willing to learn and grasp, especially from government entities is priceless. Desk officers are the pathways of their respective ministers and play a big role in securing the support and full cooperation of their ministries whether on issues of implementation or membership. Once they have their capacities built to understand the relevance and value of the VPs they can be counted on as dependable collaborators promoting the VPs and reaching out to other government entities. The contributions of desk officers from various government agencies and departments have been very instrumental in expanding the knowledge of the VPs.
5. **Putting Nigerians at the centre and adopting peer advocacy:** Putting Nigerians at the centre and encouraging them to peer advocate for the VPs has helped to advance the promotion of the VPs in Nigeria. It is also a more sustainable model.
6. **Knowledge of the VPs among NWG Members:** Members of the NWG are at different levels of knowledge in relation to the VPs, ranging from those with expert knowledge to those who join with little knowledge of the VPs. Training is essential for bridging the knowledge gaps and ensuring all members of the Group have the requisite capacity to competently advocate and promote the VPs. The NWG raise awareness of the VPs among members through training, coordination meeting and information sharing.

Issues

1. **Bureaucratic bottlenecks:** The advocacy engagements of the NWG with some relevant government entities have been slowed down by bureaucratic bottlenecks especially the Ministry of Justice saddled with the submission of a council memo for Nigeria's membership of the VPI. This bottleneck stems from staff turnover at the ministry which affected smooth operation of the planning for engagements. At times when meetings are secured after a long wait, they will be cancelled at the last minute.
2. **Lack of representatives of key government entities in the NWG:** While some ministries are already actively represented in the NWG, the absence of some key ministries is still a challenge.

3. **NGO attendance at meetings:** Most NWG Members particularly NGO members located outside the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) face difficulties in attending regular NWG meetings or advocacy engagements due to budget constraints, even though the funding from the Voluntary Principles Association provided some relief.
4. **Nigerian Government's Non-membership of the VPI:** Nigeria's non-membership of the VPA constraints nationwide implementation of the VPs, as some government entities will not openly and publicly support the VPs or its implementation.
5. **Low awareness of the VPs:** Due to the large size of the Nigerian nation and the number of states within it, there is still low awareness of the VPs amongst communities hosting extractive, harvesting and agricultural companies; amongst them non-signatory companies; private and public security forces and other stakeholders. The Group is working to bridge the knowledge gap amongst stakeholders by holding trainings, sensitisation and consultations, nonetheless, there are still a lot of people that are not aware of the VPs.