

2025 Annual Reports Highlights

Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights Initiative

Membership Implementation of the Voluntary Principles on
Security and Human Rights — VPSHR

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
Preface	2
Executive Summary	3
Corporate Risk Assessments	3
Corporate Security and Human Rights Policies and Procedures	4
Security and Human Rights Training by Corporate Members	5
Companies' Community Engagement	5
Engagement with Public Security	6
Engagement with Private Security	7
Corporate Grievance Mechanisms	7
Audit Process	8
Key Insights from the Government Pillar	8
Key Insights from the NGO Pillar	9
Human Rights Defenders	9
Future Plans	10
Annex 1: Innovative or Leading Practices	11
Annex 2: Emerging Topics and Observations	12



Preface

This Annual Reports Highlights provides an overview of the efforts by the Members of the Voluntary Principles Initiative (VPI) to implement the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPSHR) during the 2025 calendar year. In doing so, the report compiles key insights and themes from NGO, Government, and Corporate Reports to highlight good practices, key lessons learned and continuous improvement in Members' implementation of the VPSHR. In accordance with the Governance Rules, Members are not named in the Highlights.

As in previous years, the sharing of implementation and outreach activities undertaken by Members throughout 2025 provides an opportunity to observe the contribution of the VPSHR at the local, regional, and international levels. This Annual Reports Highlights reflects the submission of 39 reports from VPI Members as of August 2026.

Executive Summary

In 2025, Members of the Voluntary Principles Initiative continued to operate in increasingly complex and volatile environments. A dominant theme across nearly all pillars was the intensification of artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM). Members reported that this dynamic is reshaping security risk profiles, increasing the frequency and severity of intrusions, and in some cases resulting in violent confrontations, injuries, and fatalities involving both security personnel and community members.

Members continued to deepen implementation of the VPSHR through more structured risk assessment methodologies, expanded and more participatory training programs, and closer integration between security and community relations or social performance functions. A clear trend is emerging towards greater formal alignment between the VPSHR and the International Code of Conduct Association (ICoCA), with a growing number of companies requiring private security providers to be ICoCA members or certified.

Government Members continued to promote the VPSHR through diplomatic engagement, trade policy, and support for In-Country Working Groups (ICWGs). NGO Members reported a persistent and worsening funding crisis affecting civil society's capacity to participate in and monitor implementation, alongside continued leadership roles in coordinating national and regional working groups, delivering training to security actors, and supporting the protection of human rights defenders.

Companies increasingly used digital tools, including centralized incident-management systems, secure self-assessment platforms, and enhanced perimeter-monitoring technologies to strengthen prevention, oversight, and evidence-based decision-making.

Looking ahead, Members are focused on strengthening integrated risk assessment methodologies, deepening engagement with public security forces through updated memorandum of understanding, and addressing the security and human rights dimensions of the ASM challenge through both enforcement and formalization pathways.

Corporate Risk Assessments

Risk assessments in 2025 continued to reflect the complex operating environments faced by Members, with several recurring drivers of risk observed across regions.

Across Africa, Latin America, and Asia-Pacific, artisanal mining intensified as a central risk driver, exacerbated in several contexts by record-high gold prices. Members reported groups of illegal miners intruding on concession areas on a daily basis in some jurisdictions, with several Members reporting fatalities among illegal miners (from pit

collapses, confrontations with security, or inter-group violence) as well as injuries to security personnel and community members. In one instance, an attack by a large group of illegal miners on a mine gate resulted in the deaths of two public security officers. Several Members noted that illegal miners are increasingly organized, adopting coordinated tactics such as simultaneous incursions, filming of confrontations to construct adverse narratives, and deliberate targeting of critical infrastructure. Members operating in regions affected by insurgency or organized armed groups reported that security risk assessments needed to account for both the direct threat of violence and the risk that insurgent elements might pose. Members in conflict-affected provinces reported close coordination with military and police forces deployed to protect operations, alongside continued monitoring of political instability following contested elections in some jurisdictions.

Geopolitical instability also featured prominently in 2025 risk assessments. Several Members cited the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, and its escalation into neighboring countries, as a driver of preventive measures including evacuation planning and crisis simulations.

Members continued to mature their risk assessment methodologies, with several describing two-cluster or multi-factor models that weigh country-level security and human rights indices (often sourced from external risk-analytics providers) alongside company-specific exposure factors such as personnel presence, use of armed security, and strategic significance of the operation. Human Rights Impact Assessments (HRIAs) and Human Rights Risk Assessments (HRRAs) conducted by independent third parties remained a standard tool, typically on rolling three- to five-year cycles for higher-risk sites, with several Members reporting the completion or initiation of new assessments in 2025, including at newly acquired assets following mergers and acquisitions.

Multiple Members reported extending risk assessment obligations to joint ventures, noting that shared governance structures and differing partner mandates can constrain a company's direct influence over security practices, requiring dedicated engagement strategies with joint venture partners.

Corporate Security and Human Rights Policies and Procedures

Members in 2025 continued to embed VPSHR expectations into corporate policy frameworks, increasingly through dedicated security-specific standards distinct from broader human rights policies. Several Members updated or introduced standalone Human Rights Standards or Security Standards in 2025 to strengthen due diligence in conflict-affected and high-risk areas and to clarify accountability structures.

Security and Human Rights Training by Corporate Members

Training remained a key component of VPSHR implementation in 2025, with Members reporting training of personnel across private security, public security, employees, and community members. Members increasingly moved beyond one-off induction sessions toward programs combining mandatory online modules and periodic refresher training (commonly annual, and in some cases quarterly for higher-risk roles).

Scenario-based and participatory training methods continued to expand, with several Members developing interactive workshops using fictional or realistic country scenarios involving government security forces, private security companies, and armed groups, in which participants were asked to identify VPSHR-related issues and appropriate reporting responses. Train-the-trainer models were widely used to extend training capacity to public security forces, with several Members reporting that officers trained through these programs went on to train colleagues who had not been directly reached by the company, multiplying the awareness-raising effect. Body-worn cameras were used by one Member during training exercises to allow facilitators to review footage and provide targeted feedback on communication and restraint.

Several Members reported developing or refining dedicated e-learning modules on the VPSHR, in some cases available in seven or more languages, and in one case supplemented by a video specifically developed to mark the VPSHR's twenty-fifth anniversary. Members also reported embedding VPSHR content into broader security manager certification or onboarding programs delivered through multi-module e-learning curricula. A number of Members introduced or expanded practical assessment tools, such as periodic random testing of guards on VPSHR topics.

Several Members reported training public security officers prior to deployment as a contractual or MoU-based precondition, with pass-rate thresholds (in one case 80%) required before deployment was authorized.

Corporate Community Engagement

Community engagement continued to be highlighted as a critical component of VPSHR implementation. Members described a range of structured dialogue platforms, from monthly or quarterly meetings with traditional leaders and civil society, to dedicated community liaison forums including elders, youth representatives, and women's associations.

Several Members formalized community-based monitoring models, training and appointment of community representatives (in some cases balanced by gender and

paired with village leadership) to relay concerns, participate in awareness sessions on security and human rights, and, in select cases, take up employment as security guards as part of alternative livelihood programming. Members reported that sustained, inclusive engagement functioned as an early-warning mechanism, helping to surface grievances before they escalated into protest or conflict, and that communities regularly consulted were more likely to raise issues through dialogue rather than confrontation.

Community-feedback tools continued to expand, including WhatsApp-based reporting channels, SMS platforms with case-tracking numbers, mobile applications enabling photo submission, and low-tech adaptations such as community complaint kiosks for populations with limited literacy or connectivity.

Members operating in regions affected by artisanal mining described sustained investment in community education about the dangers of artisanal mining, alternative livelihood programs, and collaboration with local authorities to reduce incentives for illegal activity, while acknowledging that community relationships in some of these areas remain strained by historical grievances, environmental legacy concerns, or competition over land and resources.

Engagement with Public Security

Several Members signed new or renewed memorandum of understanding (MoUs) with defense or interior ministries, police services, or armed forces, explicitly referencing the VPSHR and, in some cases, international instruments such as the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms and the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials. At least one Member signed a new national-level MoU with a host government specifically to support a major infrastructure project, while another Member reported updating a longstanding MoU to include more specific clauses on use of force, training requirements, and the human rights records of officers assigned to site.

Members generally emphasized that public security personnel operate under their own chain of command and that the company does not direct or control their operations. They continued to advocate, however, for adherence to the VPSHR through training, briefings, and regular liaison meetings, including in some cases daily coordination meetings between company security, public security commanders, and private security management to review incidents.

A number of Members reported that formal MoUs remain absent in some operating contexts despite ongoing dialogue, either because host governments have been reluctant to formalize arrangements or because public security support is provided only on an ad hoc, as-needed basis. Members in some jurisdictions noted that political transitions or leadership turnover within public security institutions necessitated

renewed relationship-building and repeated training to sustain awareness of VPSHR commitments.

Engagement with Private Security

Private security providers continued to play a central role in protecting operations in 2025. Members reinforced due diligence and oversight through pre-contract vetting (criminal background checks, in select high-risk cases supplemented by polygraph examinations focused on prior involvement in human rights abuses), mandatory VPSHR clauses in contracts, and ongoing monitoring through compliance reviews, non-conformance reporting, and quarterly or more frequent contractor management meetings.

A defining trend in 2025 was the increasing use of ICoCA certification or membership as a due diligence proxy and contractual requirement for private security providers, with several Members reporting active mapping of their contracted providers against ICoCA membership lists and working with non-certified providers to pursue certification or reviewing contract continuation where providers were unwilling to do so.

A number of Members explicitly prohibit the use of firearms by private security personnel, reporting this as an effective measure to reduce the risk of excessive use of force incidents, with public security called upon only where legally mandated or where risk assessments indicate private security capability is insufficient.

Several Members described specific incidents in 2025 in which security personnel used force in response to violent intrusions by illegal miners or trespassers, resulting in injuries or, in a small number of cases, fatalities. These incidents typically triggered internal investigations, contractor disciplinary action, and enhanced training.

Members increasingly deployed technology, including drones, CCTV, AI-enabled cameras, tracking tags, and non-lethal deterrents (including one custom-developed non-lethal dispersal tool), to reduce direct contact between security personnel and intruders and to strengthen perimeter monitoring and evidence-based incident analysis.

Corporate Grievance Mechanisms

Reports continued to reflect that grievance systems serve not only to resolve disputes but also as an early-warning and accountability mechanism. Members widely referenced alignment with the UN Guiding Principles' effectiveness criteria (legitimate, accessible, predictable, equitable, transparent, rights-compatible, and a source of continuous learning), with several Members reporting independent monitors overseeing the performance of site-level grievance mechanisms and publishing monitoring reports.

The scale of grievance activity varied across Members, from several hundred community comments or claims received and resolved within weeks, to mechanisms reporting zero grievances related to security in a given year. Several Members explicitly cautioned that an absence of reported grievances should not be interpreted as an absence of underlying concern or impact and committed to continued assessment of the accessibility and effectiveness of their mechanisms.

Several Members integrated security-related grievances into centralized incident and event management platforms that support root-cause analysis, escalation protocols, and Board-level reporting on serious cases.

Assurance Process

Several Members reported continuing to integrate VPSHR indicators into internal audit frameworks, with security and human rights reviewed on a risk-based cycle alongside financial and operational performance. Members described internal audits identifying inconsistencies such as gaps in incident-recording practices or incomplete training records among subcontracted guards, prompting standardized reporting templates or renegotiated subcontracting arrangements.

Independent third-party assessments against the VPSHR remained a widely used tool, typically conducted on a two-to-three-year cycle for higher-risk sites and at least once every three years for medium-risk sites. Several Members reported that third-party assessments in 2025 found substantial progress since prior assessments, alongside continued opportunities for improvement, such as ensuring complete background-check documentation for all guards or updating public security MoUs to reflect updated standards.

Members also increasingly linked VPSHR conformance to broader external assurance and certification schemes, including sector-specific responsible-sourcing standards and mining assurance initiatives.

Key Insights from the Government Pillar

Government Members reported on a range of engagement and outreach activities in 2025, including diplomatic promotion of the VPSHR in host countries, support for In-Country Working Groups, and integration of VPSHR-aligned expectations into responsible business conduct frameworks, trade agreements, and public procurement criteria for security contractors.

Government Members continued to support the development and adoption of National Action Plans on security and human rights in several countries transitioning toward fuller VPI engagement.

Key Insights from the NGO Pillar

NGO Members played a central role in monitoring, capacity building, and multi-stakeholder facilitation in 2025, frequently serving as secretariats or co-chairs of national and regional In-Country Working Groups. NGOs reported convening working group meetings, facilitating consultations between government, companies, and civil society, and producing technical evidence, including sector mapping, baseline studies, and analyses of private security governance, to inform both corporate practice and public policy.

NGOs continued to document and monitor security-related incidents through community-based and trained-monitor networks. In several cases, they published regular public bulletins and reports on security and human rights developments in affected regions. Several NGO Members described facilitating direct dialogue between private security companies and civil society to discuss governance and regulatory challenges in the sector.

A dominant and recurring theme across NGO reports was worsening resource constraints. Multiple NGO Members reported that funding cuts, including the termination of major bilateral assistance programs, forced reductions in staffing and program scale and constrained outreach to affected communities.

Human Rights Defenders

This year's reporting template added an optional reporting section on the protection of human rights defenders, reflecting the use of the VPI's [Guidance on Respecting the Rights of Human Rights Defenders](#).

In one country, an NGO Member supported the establishment of a dedicated human rights defender's desk within a national human rights institution, formalized through a memorandum of understanding, to provide a permanent channel for documenting and responding to threats against defenders. NGO Members also delivered targeted training workshops specifically on the protection of environmental and community human rights defenders in extractive host communities.

Corporate Members increasingly reflected respect for the rights of human rights defenders in their published human rights policies, including explicit prohibitions on retaliation, intimidation, or attacks against individuals exercising these rights, and

recognition of the importance of engaging business partners on rights-respecting treatment of defenders. In one case, this included a public commitment to an industry-wide statement on civic freedoms and human rights defenders. Another company's third-party human rights assessment specifically flagged the need for greater cross-disciplinary awareness of risks to human rights defenders as an area for continued improvement.

Future Plans

Looking ahead, Members outlined plans to further strengthen VPSHR implementation in 2026 and beyond. These included:

Extending assessment and training coverage to new and previously unassessed sites: Several Members named specific sites for independent third-party assessment or first-time VPSHR training in 2026, rotating coverage to operations not previously reviewed, including newly acquired assets, sites emerging from care-and-maintenance status, and locations where an internal risk-assessment cycle was due. Individual Members also outlined concrete training-delivery investments, including recruiting a dedicated security analyst role, producing standardized video training content and reporting templates to replace ad hoc site-by-site materials, as well as developing a stand-alone VPSHR training module for security personnel distinct from general induction training.

Integrating VPSHR into newly acquired assets and joint ventures: Several Members reported 2025 acquisitions, demergers, or new joint-venture arrangements and identified integrating VPSHR expectations into these new operations as a priority. This included completing baseline risk or human rights impact assessments at projects not previously covered by VPSHR reporting, and working more closely with joint-venture partners, particularly at non-managed operations, where governance structures may limit a company's direct influence over security practices.

Addressing ASM through combined enforcement and formalization: A number of Members plan to mitigate the risk of ASM through enhanced perimeter technology and coordination with law enforcement. Members also explored formalization pathways for artisanal miners, alternative livelihood programming, and dedicated cross-functional task forces spanning legal, community relations, and security functions.

Annex 1: Innovative or Leading Practices

Verifying training effectiveness: Rather than treating completed training as the measure of success, a company introduced a quarterly practice of randomly testing a small sample of guards on specific VPSHR topics, with supervisors completing a structured assessment and using the results to decide what to cover in the next toolbox meeting. This shifted the underlying question from whether training was delivered to whether it was retained, and enabled findings to be fed back into future content design.

Embedding public security liaison roles directly within company teams: A company moved beyond periodic coordination meetings with public security by signing a MoU to formally assign police and military representatives to sit within its own community engagement team, with a specific mandate covering VPSHR and human rights matters.

Community representative networks paired with alternative livelihoods: One company appointed community representatives, one man and one woman per village, alongside the village leader, across all villages surrounding an operation. They were trained twice yearly on human rights and reporting channels and the program tracked specific alternative-livelihood outcomes. Dozens of community members were hired into security guard roles through the initiative, linking representative structures directly to a measurable employment pathway, rather than treating them purely as a consultation mechanism.

Non-lethal deterrence innovation: One company developed a custom, non-lethal smoke-based dispersal tool derived from natural materials (orange peel) to support area control during intrusions. This minimizes risk to life and was deployed alongside a broader shift toward drone-based monitoring, AI-enabled cameras, and tracking tags to reduce direct physical confrontation with intruders.

Annex 2: Emerging Topics and Observations

This section draws on comparison with the 2022, 2023, and 2024 Annual Reports Highlights to distinguish new developments in the 2025 reporting cycle from previous themes.

New this year:

VPSHR and ICoCA: While ICoCA has existed alongside the VPSHR for over a decade, 2025 marked a visible shift to active structural integration, including companies conducting systematic mapping of private security providers against ICoCA certification status, as well as introduction of contractual requirements tied to certification.

Use of Artificial Intelligence technology: In 2025, Members reported a marked and much broader increase in the use of AI technology.

Long-running themes reaching a new intensity:

Artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM): ASM was consistently cited across the Corporate, Government, and NGO Pillars. This year is distinguished, however, by the increase in severity of the risk. Members widely linked the renewed intensity to record or near-record gold prices and rising demand for critical minerals, coordinated intrusion tactics, and materially more severe outcomes, including fatalities among artisanal miners and security personnel.

Civil society funding: NGO Members have flagged inadequate financial resources as a constraint over the years. In 2025, however, NGO Members mentioned the discontinuation of assistance programs and workforce reductions on a scale not previously reported.

Corporate portfolio churn affecting implementation continuity: Integration of VPSHR considerations into merger and acquisition due diligence has been reported in previous years. In 2025, whilst VPSHR due diligence was extended into some new projects, several Members also reported demergers, which led, in some cases, to a narrowing of the scope of projects covered by VPSHR reporting.