

# Companies and the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights

The Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights are a set of principles designed to guide companies in maintaining the safety and security of their operations within an operating framework that encourages respect for human rights. The duty to protect human rights rests with governments, but other actors in society, including business, have a responsibility to respect human rights. Extractives companies therefore have a unique opportunity in the countries in which they operate to encourage high standards of conduct by security forces, and to have a positive impact on local governance, peace and stability.

## Benefits of joining the Voluntary Principles:

### Operational guidance, risk reduction and reputational enhancement

- The Voluntary Principles provide a framework for companies to: conduct an assessment of human rights risks associated with security, including an assessment of whether company actions might heighten or mitigate risk; engage appropriately with public and private security providers; institute human rights screenings for private security forces and encourage the screening of public security forces; take steps to promote the observance of best practices relevant to human rights and security; and develop company systems for reporting and investigating allegations of human rights abuses.
- Implementation of the Voluntary Principles reduces the potential for reputational concerns and addresses human rights risks to communities in the pursuit of legitimate security objectives, thus contributing to greater stability of operating environments, potentially reducing exposure to litigation, enhancing the company's reputation, making it an employer of choice and promoting company culture and values.
- The Voluntary Principles can help minimise security related impacts on local communities, thus helping to maintain the corporate social license to operate.

### Improved collaboration and problem solving with government and civil society

Through formal participation in the Voluntary Principles process, governments, NGOs and companies develop working relationships through which they can collaborate to:

- Share information and participate in dialogue regarding challenges in Voluntary Principles implementation.
- Engage in mutual learning and joint problem solving with a group that is well versed in security and human rights issues.
- Create joint approaches and partnerships to address the challenges of security and human rights at the international, national and project level.
- Jointly promote human rights in order to provide lasting positive impact on security and human rights issues.
- Develop publicly available tools that will help define best practice for security and human rights.

## Company roles under the Voluntary Principles include:

- Implementing the Voluntary Principles.
- Participating in dialogue on the Voluntary Principles and sharing information with, and responding to relevant questions from, Voluntary Principles Participants, subject to confidentiality constraints.
- Building public awareness of the Voluntary Principles and recruiting new participants.
- Identifying opportunities for, and supporting implementation of, the Voluntary Principles at the national level.
- Reporting annually on activities that support Voluntary Principles implementation.
- Formally participating in the governance of the Voluntary Principles.