



2019 UK Update Report on the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights for Businesses Operating in Complex or Fragile Environments

This update report details the work which the United Kingdom undertook in 2019 to advance the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPs). As a member of the Voluntary Principles Initiative (VPI) Government Pillar, the UK is required to produce an annual update report every year and a full report every three years on its work to implement the VPs, in line with its governance rules. The last full UK annual report, covering 2018, was published on 22 March 2019.

Commitment to the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights

The VPs 2019 Annual Plenary in March marked the end of the UK's Chair of the VPs. In his keynote speech, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, the UK Minister for the Commonwealth, the UN and South Asia, emphasized the value that the UK continues to place on the VPs. Lord Ahmad said:

“The Voluntary Principles Initiative has proved to be of real value – both to local communities and to the extractive industry. It matters now more than ever. That is why the UK remains such a strong supporter, and why we shall continue to promote its work and its standards.”

Implementation of the VPs

Since passing the Chair to the Swiss Government in March, the UK has continued to be an active government member of the VPs, including through the UK seat on the VPI Steering Committee.

The UK was pleased to support a refresh of the strategic vision, the aims for the VPs (2019-2022), and revised governance rules. The UK welcomed a formalisation of the work undertaken by the Geneva Centre for Security Governance (DCAF) to implement the VPs through a new three year Memorandum of Understanding, recognising the expertise that DCAF has to offer, particularly through support to in-country working groups.

The UK supported efforts to embed the new Secretariat, established under the UK Chair in January. The UK has been an active member of the Steering Committee sub group, established during 2019 to maximise the opportunities presented by the 20th anniversary of the VPs in 2020, and of the sub-group for the design of the new website, which went live in December. |

Throughout the year, the UK participated actively in monthly Steering Committee and Government Pillar meetings and attended Steering Committee Strategic Retreats held in June and November. The UK continued to meet regularly with UK members of the corporate, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and observer pillars for informal discussion including issues being considered by the Steering Committee.

Promotion and Implementation

In April, at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Forum on Responsible Mineral Supply Chains, the UK participated in a panel discussion around “Due Diligence on the Use of Security Forces”. The UK showcased the VPs as an important mechanism for supporting companies on tangible steps that they can take to minimise the risk of human rights abuses.

During an Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe panel discussion on “Regulating the Private Security Sector” in July, the UK highlighted the VPs as one of the international elements within a smart mix of self-regulation and certification that companies can apply to their operations and reduce the risk of human rights abuses.

The UK Parliament has also shown an interest in security and human rights. In September, the Foreign Affairs Committee published its report “Global Britain and South America.” The report included consideration of the impact of extractive companies in the region and recommended that all UK companies operating there should apply best practice in human rights by applying the VPs.¹

Throughout the year, the UK’s Diplomatic Missions overseas have supported implementation of the VPs:

- In **Cameroon**, the UK funded a review of the Ministry of Mines, Industries and Technological Development’s mining code. The results of the review and its recommendations will be presented to the Cameroon Government in early 2020. The British High Commission will continue to support the Government on the regulations on responsible mining and the systematic adoption of responsible practices to reduce conflict.
- In **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, the British Embassy has been an active member of the VPs National Working Group (WG). The UK, along with other VP Government Pillar members issued a joint statement following the tragic deaths of small-scale and artisanal miners digging on the Kamoto Copper Company mining concession.
- In **Guatemala**, the British Embassy created an informal WG group in 2018 with civil society, private sector and the Embassies of Switzerland, Canada and the United States of America, which the British and Swiss Embassies have co-Chaired throughout 2019. To support private security companies in efforts to implement the VPs, the WG analysed the private security law, the role of women within companies and created a guide for private companies to

¹ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmfaff/1617/1617.pdf>

consider when hiring a private security company. The WG also engaged with the newly elected government.

- In **Honduras**, the British Embassy partnered with Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) Advocacy for Business and Human Rights and Watchman to host a Forum on “Risk management associated to Human Rights and Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights”, in February. Participants discussed the importance of corporations and indigenous community relations, the role of the government in conflict resolution and challenges that can arise in social conflict².
- In **Madagascar**, the British Embassy partnered with Search for Common Ground (SFCG), on the second phase of their joint project “Promoting good governance and human rights in the extractive sector in Madagascar” which included a roundtable discussion in March. The roundtable generated increased interest in the VPs from the Government and mining companies. The event also increased engagement between extractive companies and SFCG on human rights issues and dialogue with local communities.
- In **Mozambique**, the British High Commission hosted a roundtable discussion on Business and Human Rights for UK affiliated companies working in the extractive sector. The roundtable served as an opportunity to exchange information on how companies can do more on the VPs, including boosting compliance. A UK company presented on their experience of safeguarding human rights and developing an operational grievance mechanism in Mozambique. The British High Commission will continue to work with partners to engage stakeholders on the VPs.
- In **Myanmar**, the British Embassy co-funded the VPs WG Secretariat, Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB) with the Embassies of Norway, Switzerland, Netherlands and Ireland to encourage responsible business activities. In January, the MCRB partnered with International Alert, Fund for Peace and DCAF-Geneva Centre for Security Governance (DCAF) to host a workshop to introduce Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to the VPs and discussed community-company relations and security issues related to mining operations. Throughout the year, the British Embassy continued working with the WG.
- In **Nigeria**, the British High Commission continued working with the WG. Through project funding the WG conducted a baseline and scoping study on VPs implementation in Nigeria. In December, the WG met government officials on the VPs and as a result, a government representative will participate in WG meetings. The Embassy will continue to work with stakeholders to support the implementation of the VPs.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/british-expert-highlights-the-important-relationship-between-businesses-and-human-rights-in-honduras> and <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2019/03/01/1745263/0/en/UK-HOLDS-FORUM-ON-HUMAN-RIGHTS-IN-HONDURAS.html>

- In **Peru**, the British Embassy continued business and human rights (BHR) work through active engagement with the Government, project funding and through the WG on BHR, which leads work in-country to implement the VPs. The Peruvian lead on the BHR National Action Plan participated in the London VPs Annual Plenary in March and met UK officials to share UK experience and best practice in implementing the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGP) and the development of its national-level initiatives. The visit helped consolidate the WG as a key body to support the Government of Peru's efforts. The majority of the recommendations discussed during the UK visit have been included for implementation in Peru's National Action Plan.

Project funding

In 2019, the UK contributed £166,757 to the Security and Human Rights Implementation Mechanism (SHRIM) to projects focused on implementation of the VPs and an International Code of Conduct Association for Private Security Providers (ICOCA) joint project with DCAF. This brings the total UK contribution to the SHRIM to £746,757 since its creation in 2016. In 2019, UK funding supported:

- **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC):** The SHRIM supported two regional WGs in DRC, Bukavu (South Kivu) and in Lubumbashi (Haut Katanga) through their local Non-Government Organisation (NGOs) partners. The South Kivu WG conducted a sensitisation mission within Walungu in response to human rights and security risks from armed elements in and around the mining sites in Kalehe and Walungu. This helped to raise awareness, including with security forces, about the VPs, with a focus on the importance of respecting the human rights of local mining communities. In August, the Haut Katanga WG was created to bring together stakeholders to address security and human rights incidents in the Haut Katanga and Lualaba provinces. Both WGs are key elements of interaction between different mining stakeholders to resolve human rights issues associated with mining.
- **Kenya:** Training of 80 police instructors with the skills and knowledge to deliver the VPs course independently to their counterparts was completed in four counties. The first group of instructors began the process of providing independent training to the Critical Infrastructure Protection Unit officers, who support large-scale infrastructure projects throughout the country. This has led to reports from some extractive sites of police units demonstrating improved practices in the management of conflict situation with communities.
- **Madagascar:** DCAF, partnered with a local expert, developed a baseline study on the challenges, good practices in the regulation of Private Security Companies and conducted field missions to two regions to interview companies and civil society organizations. Following this, a national implementation workshop will be held in Antananarivo in early 2020.

Public and Private Security

The UK is clear that the VPs provide a framework for businesses to co-operate with the implementation of security by public and private security providers. The UK encourages extractive companies working with public security to use the VPs as a method to reduce and ultimately eliminate human rights incidents. The remains committed to working with the Private Security sector to raise standards which Private Security Companies (PSCs) operate.

Throughout 2019, the UK continued to engage with the International Code of Conduct Association for Private Security Providers (ICOCA) through the UK's role as a Board Director and member of ICOCA. The UK voted on ICOCA's participatory structure to increase the diversity of its membership to bring in a broad range of members from all parts of the globe.

UK-funded projects included:

- A joint ICOCA- DCAF project in DRC. The project supported strengthening the role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to monitor, identify and address human rights violations by private security companies.
- ICOCA Field Assessments and Outreach Missions to Iraq, Kenya, Tanzania, South Sudan, Guatemala and Honduras to promote the raising of standards, improve performance and raising awareness of key stakeholder's in-country on their shared responsibility in ensuring responsible private security.
- ICOCA Guidelines on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, published in April. The guidelines are a tool to help companies reduce the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse and how to effectively address incidents and allegations³.

At the ICOCA Annual General Assembly, in November, the UK participated in a panel discussion on "Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: From Policy to Practice" on the internal working environment and the policies which must be in place to both prevent and address sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

Throughout the year, the UK has continued to work closely with the Security in Complex Environments Group (SCEG), a Special Interest Group for UK-based Private and Maritime Security Companies. This has included UK participation in SCEG Executive Committee and wider member meetings and special events such as the conference SCEG co-hosted with the US based International Stability Operations Association (ISOA), and the Maritime Security Symposium in September.

In May, the FCO hosted a meeting between Executive Committee members of SCEG, ICOCA and ISOA to support increased cooperation between these bodies and to explore areas of mutual interest and cooperation, in relation to our collective work to raise standards in the Private Security sector.

³ https://www.icoca.ch/sites/default/files/uploads/ICoCA_PSEA_Guidelines_A4_web_1.pdf