



Myanmar In-Country Working Group of the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights

Established in 2000, the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPSHR) are a set of principles designed to guide companies in maintaining safety and security of their operations within an operating framework that encourages respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Particularly, the Voluntary Principles guide companies in conducting a comprehensive human rights risk assessment in their engagement with public and private security providers to ensure human rights are respected in the protection of company facilities and premises. The VPSHR are used by many of the world's leading oil, gas, and mining companies, as well as an increasing number of companies in other sectors such as infrastructure and energy. International lenders and finance institutions encourage or even require that companies adopt the practices outlined in the VPSHR. The VPSHR helps companies identify human rights risks and take meaningful steps to address those risks in a manner that helps ensure respect for human rights in their operations.

Myanmar is one of three pilot countries (in addition to Nigeria and Ghana) selected in 2016 for the roll-out of the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPSHR) at local level by establishing In-Country Implementation Working Groups (previously called Pilot Groups).

In-Country VPI members in Myanmar

- **Corporate:** Chevron, Shell, Total, Woodside Energy, PanAust
- **Government (Embassies):** Australia, Canada, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, United Kingdom, USA
- **Civil Society:** CDA Collaborative Learning Project, Human Rights Watch, International Alert, Pact, Search for Common Ground
- **Observers** to the VPSHR with a presence in Myanmar include the IFC and the ICRC, and Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB) as a founder of the Yangon-based Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business.

VPI members with an in-country presence, commissioned a scoping study to ascertain the potential value-added of the VPSHR in Myanmar and what a Working Group could do. The scoping study was funded by Peace Nexus and carried out in February-March 2018 by Asia Conflict and Security (ACAS) Consulting Ltd. The report is available at <http://www.myanmar-responsible-business.org/dialogues/voluntary-principles/steering-committee.html>.

The scoping study found that the VPSHR and a Working Group in Myanmar will add value. To do so optimally, a Working Group should draw in national and regional companies from key sectors with significant onshore footprints. Three core activities for a Working Group in Myanmar are identified:

1. Share lessons learnt and good practice;
2. Support Myanmar and regional companies to use the VPSHR in their operations; and
3. Help define shared responses by companies to local level challenges on VPSHR-related issues.



The report concluded with several recommendations to the VPSHR group of members in Myanmar:

1. Establish a Working Group in Myanmar, to be led by a Steering Committee initially consisting of interested in-country VPI members, and co-chaired by the UK Embassy and TOTAL. This should establish the necessary governance and process, inter alia considering the pros and cons of expansion of the Steering Committee membership to interested non-VPI members, in view of concerns about dilution/reputation risks.
2. Define a light schedule and agenda of initiatives until the end of 2019, drawing on lessons from Peru and Ghana. Use this schedule to incrementally, learn, and hone in on value added areas, avoiding a 'talking shop', and foster a sense of collective ownership
3. Invite national and regional companies from key sectors and with significant onshore footprints to participate in relevant activities, but do not formally associate non-VPSHR companies as Members or require financial contributions e.g. to a Secretariat.
4. Request the MCRB to serve as an Interim Coordinator for the Working Group until the end of 2019. Consider in H2 2019 if a Secretariat is required and if so, how it should be established and funded.

The inaugural Steering Committee meeting of the [Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights \(VPSHR\) Myanmar In-Country Working Group](#) was held at MCRB on 18 May 2018, co-chaired by the UK Embassy and TOTAL, and attended by 16 VPI members and observers including government, company and NGO representatives.

The Committee discussed issues raised in the [Scoping Report](#), which they approved. The Committee finalised a list of proposed activities for 2018. This includes introductory seminars on the VPSHR for:

1. Other O&G and Mining companies operating in the country who are not VPSHR members,
2. Security companies
3. Civil Society Organisations
4. Government officials (both for oil and gas, and mining) in Naypyidaw

For more information, please see:

<http://www.myanmar-responsiblebusiness.org/dialogues/voluntary-principles/>

<http://www.voluntaryprinciples.org/>