



Security and Human Rights Toolkit



PROJECT FACTSHEET

Building Resilience and Supporting Conflict Prevention in Ghana's Extractive Sector:

A joint project to improve implementation of the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPs)



GHANA VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLES
ON SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS



Geneva Centre
for Security Sector
Governance

About this factsheet

This factsheet is the summary of a project implemented by DCAF, The Fund for Peace and The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) on improving community engagement and implementation of the Voluntary Principles by extractive companies in Ghana, (October 2025–March 2026). The project was made possible by the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and supported by the Peace and Human Rights Division of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

About the project partners

DCAF – the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance works globally to promote good security sector governance through security sector reform. DCAF's Business and Security Division works with companies, governments and communities to promote security, sustainable development and respect for human rights. Since 2012, DCAF has been engaged in partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to promote responsible business conduct in complex and conflict-affected environments. In these contexts, businesses face heightened risks of involvement in serious human rights abuses and IHL violations. The DCAF-ICRC partnership raises awareness of these risks and promotes strategies to mitigate them. It provides a comprehensive range of resources and tools on responsible security management and human rights due diligence – a process wherein companies identify and address their adverse impacts on the rights and dignity of local populations. Visit our Knowledge Hub: www.securityhumanrightshub.org

The Fund for Peace (FFP) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in 1957 and registered in both the United States and Nigeria. FFP works with a wide range of clients and partners, including governments, multilateral organizations, the private sector, development finance institutions, foundations, and civil society organizations. FFP's mission is to improve, transform, and save lives by preventing and mitigating violent conflict through collaboration with local partners and by strengthening economic, social, and political cohesion through engagement with key stakeholders. With a longstanding focus on the nexus of human security and economic development, FFP develops practical, data-driven tools and approaches to diagnose risk, strengthen resilience, support conflict prevention, and advance human rights. For over a decade, FFP has been a pioneer in the research, design, and implementation of conflict assessment, early warning, and prevention systems throughout West Africa. Across its work, FFP places strong emphasis on capacity building and sustained partnerships, supporting local, national, and regional stakeholders through methodologies, analysis, predictive analytics, and applied programming, tailored to each context and designed for practical use.

The **West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)** is a leading non-governmental organisation established in 1999 in response to the civil wars, political instabilities, and humanitarian crises that plagued West Africa in the 1990s. WANEP is recognised for its significant role as a regional civil society organisation in the areas of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. WANEP has national offices in all Member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with over 750 member organisations across West Africa. It focuses on collaborative peacebuilding efforts, engaging both state and non-state actors. It also establishes platforms for dialogue, experience sharing, and learning aimed at ensuring sustainable peace and development. The organisation holds a permanent Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ECOWAS, making it the first civil society organisation to attain such status in the implementation of a regional early warning and response system, referred to as ECOWARN. WANEP also has an MoU with the African Union to support its Peace and Security Department in implementing the AU Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), including the gender mainstreaming of the architecture. In 2002, WANEP established the West Africa Peacebuilding Institute (WAPI) as its official training and capacity-building platform to develop competent peacebuilding practitioners. WAPI is now implemented at the national level across the continent. WANEP also provides support to the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in implementing the civil society components of its early warning mechanism (MARAC).

Photo credits

- cover page: Statue of a gold miner in Obuasi, Ghana. Photo credit: Richard Ellimah, Centre for Social Impact Studies Ghana
- page 5: Brahabebome to Boete road, located in the key gold-mining district of Obuasi in Ghana. Photo credit: Richard Ellimah, Centre for Social Impact Studies Ghana
- page 7: Statue of a gold miner in the town of Obuasi at the heart of Ghana's gold mining industry. Photo credit: Richard Ellimah, Centre for Social Impact Studies Ghana
- page 11: Obuasi central mosque area. Photo credit: Richard Ellimah, Centre for Social Impact Studies Ghana

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Context

While the extractive industry sector remains a significant driver of Ghana's economic development, it is frequently marred by friction between companies and host communities. These tensions are often exacerbated by the deployment of both state security forces and private contractors to industrial concessions, leading to documented instances of excessive use of force and restricted freedom of movement for residents.

When large-scale mining (LSM) industries fail to establish responsible security arrangements through meaningful community engagement, in-depth host government engagement, conflict risk analysis, and transparent grievance mechanisms, securitized responses such as the deployment of public security or use of force are often the only tools used to manage social discontent. This not only risks violent escalation but also undermines the long-term legitimacy of the industry, stable supply chains, and general economic development, highlighting the critical need for a governance model that accords security and human rights the same priority as mineral production.

The presence of artisanal and small-scale mining in Ghana complicates the security environment. ASM workers frequently trespass onto large-scale mining sites. LSM companies are unable to manage their interactions with ASM for a host of reasons ranging from insufficient community engagement, poor understanding of ASM stakeholder needs, and external reasons like legacy issues and lack of adequate ASM governance frameworks.

Large-scale mining companies must also navigate their need for asset protection and operational continuity by coordinating with governments and public security on their roles in regulation, oversight, and law enforcement. Meanwhile, government security measures that address ASM often create a “security-heavy” atmosphere where civilian oversight is weak, leaving local populations vulnerable to harassment or arbitrary detention.

ASM also has wider implications into other sectors like cocoa; land sale coercion and environmental contamination from ASM chemicals leads to loss of livelihoods for farming communities, further feeding insecurity and instability and exacerbating conflict dynamics in Ghana.¹

¹ ASM refers to a diverse range of mining activities that employ basic tools for extraction and processing, with a tendency towards high labour intensity. Although traditionally viewed as low-tech and informal, the sector is rapidly evolving – whether in terms of technology, capital, and production volumes or in terms of the surfaces and depths mined. In many regions, ASM represents the largest source of non-farm rural income. Some ASM is linked to criminal activities. However, governance challenges around the mining industry, and a lack of support, capital, and capacity building lead stakeholders to portray ASM communities as illegal per se because of lack of access to mining zones, and formalization, or the use of illegal techniques and processing methods. ASM is therefore often misunderstood and underrepresented in sustainable development debates and policies, with public perceptions tending to focus on its negative impacts. Sources: World Bank Group, “Artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM)”, 2024; and European Partnership for Responsible Minerals, “White Paper: Fostering Responsible ASM for Reliable Mineral Supply Chains,” 2025.



Operationalizing business, security and human rights standards in Ghana

To address these challenges, Ghanaian stakeholders are highly engaged in standards and accountability mechanisms on business, security and human rights. In 2025, the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, the Office Attorney General, and the Ministry of Justice launched the Ghana National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (NAP-BHR), following an intensive consultation and development process supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This comprehensive framework guides the State's duty to respect human rights and businesses' duty to operate responsibly, respect and uphold human rights, and guarantee access to remedy of victims. Crucially, the NAP-BHR places emphasis on extractives and conflict prevention and references the [Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights \(VPs\)](#).

Ghana joined the Voluntary Principles Initiative (VPI) as an Engaged Government Member in 2014, becoming the first African government participant in the Initiative. It has developed a baseline study on human rights in the extractive sector and a public security training curriculum on the VPs. The Ghana VPI In-Country Working Group (ICWG) has been active since 2017 and meets quarterly in Accra to discuss key security and human rights issues in the Ghana natural resource sector, support the Ghanaian Government's efforts to implement the VPs and related programs and policy, and share lessons learned and success stories on implementation. As part of the group's implementation agenda, four key priority areas include public security training, private security licensing reform, security & human rights application in ASM (known in Ghana by the term "galamsey"), and coordination between oil/gas sector actors and coastal communities.

The ICWG is currently co-chaired by the Ghana Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR), The Fund For Peace (FFP), and the West Africa Network For Peacebuilding – Ghana (WANEP-Ghana).

Snapshot of Activities of the Ghana VPs Working Group:

Since its inception, the Working Group has conducted numerous trainings on the VPs for public security officials. In 2025, the Working Group provided VPs training to the [Blue Water River Guards Program](#).

This initiative, spearheaded through the Ghana Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, aims to equip officers with skills and knowledge to safeguard rivers and water bodies affected by ASM. At its core, the Blue Water Guards initiative aims to establish a sustainable, community-led surveillance system dedicated to the ongoing protection and restoration of water bodies affected by ASM.

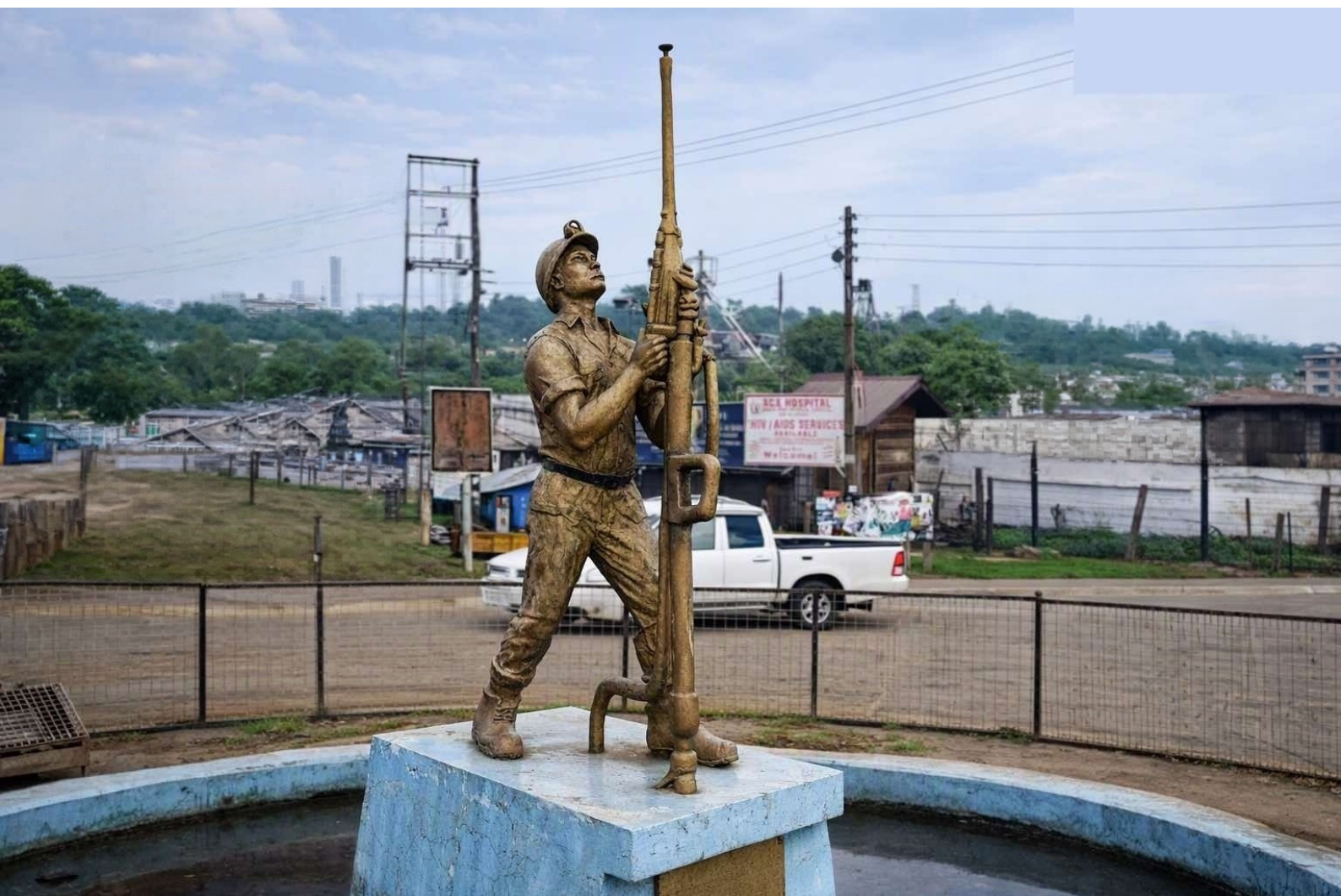
The first phase of the program in 2025 entailed the training of 400 young men and women at the Ghana Navy Riverine Command under the auspices of the Minerals Commission. To complement this training, the Ghana In-Country Working Group also conducted a regional training program for 21 water wardens/guards using the VPs.

Multi-stakeholder in-country working groups drive the implementation of international standards in responsible business conduct by creating a shared governance space that bridges the gap between policy and site-level practice. By bringing together diverse actors—including governments, companies, civil society, and local communities—these groups ensure that standards are not just top-down mandates but are technically feasible, locally relevant, and socially legitimate.

They drive implementation through three primary functions:

- Knowledge, tools and peer-learning: ICWGs act as “peer-learning hubs” where stakeholders share good practices and access practical tools and real-life examples of heightened human rights due diligence and conflict prevention.
- Enhanced accountability and monitoring: By including civil society and community representatives, these groups provide independent oversight, ensuring that standards are actually applied at the mine site.
- Building trust and legitimacy: Government representatives, Embassies, companies and civil society representatives of local communities all have a seat at the table. The collaborative nature of ICWGs reduces friction between stakeholders as all actors are working towards resolution of challenges. ICWGs also ensure dialogue is based on facts rather than rumors.

[From Commitment to Impact: A Guide for Local Working Groups on Business, Security and Human Rights \(DCAF and The Fund For Peace FFP\)](#)



The Project

In January 2025, two severe and violent clashes occurred between artisanal and small-scale miners and public security forces in the Ashanti and Ahafo South regions. These incidents were triggered by trespassing and theft at mine sites, to which security forces responded with disproportionate escalation.

According to VPs ICWG member discussions, the underlying drivers of these incidents included insufficient company-community and ASM consultations, lack of dialogue mechanisms between ASM and public security, inadequate training among Ghana's public security forces, and a failure to enforce standard rules on the use of force. The incidents demonstrated that addressing these deep-seated issues requires an urgent reinforcement of conflict prevention strategies and renewed stakeholder engagement.

“The shootings generated anger and jolted the nation to the deeper consequences of ASM.”

- Civil society member of the Working Group

In follow-up, Ghana's President, John Dramani Mahama issued a statement condemning the killings and directed the relevant security agencies to conduct thorough investigations.

Former Minister of Defence, Dr Edward Omane Boamah, confirmed at a media briefing in July 2025 that investigations had been concluded and a report was submitted to the government. The report has not yet been released to stakeholders.

To support the VPs ICWG in addressing this context, from November 2025- March 2026, thanks to funding from the United Kingdom Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office and with support from the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, DCAF, The Fund For Peace (FFP), and the West Africa Network for Peace Building (WANEP) jointly implemented a project to strengthen the Working Group's role in conflict prevention, ASM, and community engagement around mining sites, by supporting the contextualisation of tools and best practices.

[The State Resilience Index](#) supports stakeholders to measure a country's resilience - its ability to anticipate, manage, and recover from crises across seven key pillars, including social cohesion and civic space. [The SRI/Subnational Resilience Index Handbook](#) can be [accessed here](#).

[The Conflict Prevention Tool](#) helps companies to proactively identify, analyze, and mitigate conflict-related risks at 3 levels: country-level, mine site-level and the internal corporate culture level. [The Ghana-specific questionnaire](#) can be [accessed here](#).

In Ghana, the partners combined the tools into one complementary framework. The State Resilience Index helped shift the discussion from vulnerability alone toward identifying capacities and entry points for strengthening resilience, while the Conflict Prevention Tool helped develop nuanced questions to promote integrating a conflict prevention mindset across all company functions.

Project Activities

- **Expanded inclusivity of the Ghana VPs ICWG to more effectively represent communities affected by mining:** FFP and WANEP conducted targeted outreach to grassroots and civil society organizations (CSOs) particularly in Ashanti and Ahafo South, resulting in four new members joining the ICWG—including the group's first dedicated women's rights organization. The focus on expanding membership sought to enable stronger engagement among companies and community members, by including new CSO perspectives and raising awareness of the ICWG in the Ahafo South and Ashanti regions.
- **Capacity-building and tools contextualization to promote know-how of conflict prevention methodologies among government actors, security institutions, communities and companies:** Through workshops and consultations, the partners adapted the **State Resilience Index** and **Conflict Prevention Tool** to the Ghanaian context. This led to the creation of a sub-national resilience index handbook for the Obuasi and Ashanti regions and a customized conflict prevention questionnaire. The tools provide targeted support for large-scale mining companies to work on the two levels of resilience and risk:
 1. They help companies identify positive 'resilience' factors in Ghana, which may provide leverage and enable companies to maximize societal or development strengths. Equally important, the SRI can also highlight weaknesses in inclusion, economic opportunities, or environmental challenges in mining-affected areas—factors that make communities more likely to engage in illegal mining. For example: if inclusion and economic resilience scores are low, this might point to limited livelihood alternatives. The company could then consider investing in local procurement, skills training, and small-enterprise development to reduce economic dependence on illegal mining.
 2. They provide an in-depth conflict risk questionnaire to target blind spots and help companies 'think outside the box' regarding company-community conflict risk factors. The questionnaire prompts companies to ask themselves the right questions about possible risks, then look for data and information to guide better policies and processes. key feature of the Tool is in integrating a conflict prevention mindset across all company functions.

Key outcomes and next steps

Conflict prevention tools are most useful when they are locally grounded and clearly linked to lived realities in mining-affected communities. The project developed contextualized tools with the direct input of the companies and representatives from affected communities. The tools will enable companies to better identify, prevent and respond to risks. As a next step, the project participants consistently stressed that the tools, with their concepts of resilience, risk, social cohesion, and accountability, must be translated into local languages, further examples must be provided, and the guidance should be promoted at the regional, district, and community level in Ghana.

The project also underscored the value of the ICWG as a neutral, multi-stakeholder convening space. The process enabled more candid and constructive dialogue among civil society, companies, public security actors, and government representatives, and helped position the tools not as adversarial accountability instruments, but as shared resources for improving dialogue, due diligence, and prevention.

The addition of four new CSOs to the WG has broadened the intersectionality of perspectives (by the inclusion of Women in Mining) and furthermore, ensured that civil society representing the two affected regions are more strongly reflected.

The project established a strong foundation for strengthening conflict prevention and resilience-building across mining-affected communities in Ghana through leveraging the ICWG. The project partners are currently exploring how to operationalize the adapted Conflict Prevention Tool and the adapted SRI/Subnational Resilience Index Handbook so they can be used not only to identify risks and resilience factors, but also to guide decision-making, shape preventive action, and measure change over time. For all this to be sustainable, the ICWG requires further support: continued coordination, stronger engagement and ownership from all stakeholders, and renewed financial support.





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