

Project Highlight:

The Voluntary Principles and OECD Due Diligence Guidance: Security and Human Rights as the Foundation for Responsible Supply Chains

A joined-up approach to security and human rights in the extractives sector

Security and human rights challenges in conflict-affected areas impact business operations throughout the entire supply chain. Frameworks such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the new European Union Conflict Minerals Regulation, require businesses to improve their practices in such contexts. In addition, consumers are insistent on the need for companies to respect human rights. Two complementary initiatives can help ensure that security and human rights is at the heart of responsible supply chains: the [Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights](#) and the [OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Mineral Supply Chains](#).

The Voluntary Principles set standards for companies to adopt human rights compliant security measures around their business operations. The OECD Guidance clarifies steps that companies can take to better understand their supply chains and ensure that they identify and mitigate the risks related to human rights, security, corruption and money laundering. Both initiatives promote multistakeholder dialogue and consultation to realise their objectives. To date, however, they have largely been implemented independently of each other.

As part of their shared commitment to promoting responsible business conduct, the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Responsible Business Conduct Unit commissioned a [study](#) to explore the complementarities between the Voluntary Principles and the OECD Guidance. Based on policy analysis and insights from the ground, the study is of relevance to companies, governments, civil society organisations, and technical and financial partners. Recommendations seek to mitigate security and human rights challenges throughout the entire supply chain through reinforcing synergies in the implementation of these two initiatives.

Main findings

- Both the Voluntary Principles and OECD Guidance can increase their impact through better exploiting the linkages between the two initiatives.
- The Voluntary Principles can have greater impact by extending security and human rights standards beyond large-scale mining (LSM) to artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) operations.
- The OECD Guidance can be strengthened by involving more LSM actors engaged in the VPs in efforts to ensure responsible supply chain standards.

Study recommendations

- Develop a joint roadmap endorsed by both initiatives to address security and human rights due diligence requirements along supply chains. Responding to the landscape of increased regulation, the roadmap will support companies in more effectively addressing security and human rights risks in supply chain due diligence.
- Address security and human rights challenges through applying the Voluntary Principles in ASM contexts. Experience of LSM actors in managing security and human rights challenges can generate significant benefits through informing how ASM addresses similar risks.
- Link implementation of the Voluntary Principles and OECD Guidance on the ground, maximizing engagement across government, companies, and civil society. Joint support for in-country processes will more effectively address the full range of security, human rights, risk assessment and mitigation measures.

From recommendations to action

DCAF, ICRC and the OECD will continuously engage stakeholders to identify concrete commitment and actions to improve the implementation of the VPs and the OECD guidance, building on the study's recommendations. This will enhance the respect for security and human rights standards in extractive contexts and bolster security as the foundation for responsible supply chains.

- In April 2021, DCAF, the ICRC and the OECD have organized an outreach event to present the findings of the study: [Beyond the perimeter: situating and responding to security contracting risks in and around mine sites](#), as a side event to [the OECD 14th Forum on Responsible Mineral Supply Chains](#).
- In September 2021, DCAF and its partner the Alliance for Responsible Mining (ARM) launched a [guidance tool to support security and human rights risk management by artisanal and small-scale miners \(ASM\)](#). Developed for the pilot case of Antioquia, Colombia, the guidance supports miners to integrate the VPs in their existing OECD-compliant due diligence efforts.
- As part of their outreach efforts, the OECD, DCAF and the ICRC have published a [joint blog: Stronger Together: Improving Security and Human Rights in Mineral Supply Chains](#). The blog explores how building on the complementarities of the VPs and the OECD Due Dilligence Guidance can ensure that security and human rights are at the heart of responsible supply chains.

DCAF, ICRC, and the OECD look forward to collaborating with a range of stakeholders in implementing the study's recommendations. To contribute to this dialogue, please contact us at: bsdivision@dcaf.ch.

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