Survey Responses on Research on Human Rights Defenders

1. Please provide one or two concrete examples that demonstrate how your initiative has supported, encouraged, or influenced member companies to implement the VP's Guidance on Respecting the Rights of Human Rights Defenders.

The VPI encourages VPI members and anyone implementing the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPSHR) to integrate policies and procedures designed to protect human rights defenders into their company management systems, including their risk assessments, risk mitigation measures, remedies and stakeholder engagement, and has implemented various activities to encourage members and non-members to do so.

The VPI has integrated the protection of Human Rights Defenders into workshops and panel discussions developed for our members. As part of the program of the 2023 Annual Plenary — the main in-person member gathering event of the Initiative— the VPI offered its members a half-day training workshop on the Guidance on Respecting the Rights of Human Rights Defenders. The workshop material has since been published on the VPI Resources library, which is publicly available. Additionally, a session on the HRDs Guidance and its complementary report "Understanding the Unique Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Africa", developed by VPI NGO Member LITE-Africa, was held in the main plenary a couple of days later, featuring the authors of both documents.

On a separate occasion, the VPI hosted a public webinar where the authors of the Guidance and the Report presented their key findings and highlights.

Starting this year, VPI Members are also encouraged to report on their initiatives, policies, procedures, programs, and activities related to the protection of human rights defenders as set in the HRDs Guidance as part of their requirement to annually report on their efforts to implement the VPSHR (the guidelines for corporate, NGO, and government reporting are available on the VPI website). A section on Human Rights Defenders is expected to be featured in the upcoming 2025 Annual Reports Highlights, which provides an overview of Members' implementation efforts during the 2025 calendar year.

2. What steps does your initiative take to ensure that Human Rights Defenders, affected communities, and Indigenous Peoples are aware of the guidance and expectations set out in the Guidance on Respecting the Rights of Human Rights Defenders? Please provide an example of how these commitments have been communicated in practice.

The Guidance on Respecting the Rights of Human Rights Defenders is publicly available through the Resource Library on the VPI website. To increase accessibility, a Spanish version of the document was developed and translations to additional languages are expected. Since launch, the VPI has continuously promoted the Guidance during presentations at international fora and events, including by distributing printed copies when possible. At the country level, the

VPI has been raising awareness of the HRDs Guidance with a variety of stakeholders, including at meetings of its multistakeholder In-Country Working Groups (ICWGs) and other events.

VPI NGO Members and the ICWGs also have an important role in helping disseminate the HRD Guidance to rights-affected stakeholders. NGO Members have delivered, for example, targeted training workshops using the HRD Guidance, specifically on the protection of environmental and community human rights defenders in extractive host communities.

3. What steps does your initiative take to ensure that member companies understand the expectations and commitments outlined in the Guidance on Respecting the Rights of Human Rights Defenders?

Complementary to the information provided in response to question number one, even before the HRD Guidance was officially launched, the VPI held a dedicated training workshop on the Guidance at its 2023 Annual Plenary. The Plenary is the main annual event of VPI members, and the 2023 edition included more than twenty corporations, seven governments, fourteen NGOs, and nine Observer institutions from around the world.

After the launch of the Guidance, protection of Human Rights Defenders and the related Guidance continued to be a relevant theme featured at public and internal dedicated sessions, including the public webinar held on December 15, 2023, and panel and workshop sessions held at the 2024 and 2025 Annual Plenaries.

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4. What mechanisms does VPI have in place for Human Rights Defenders or affected community members to safely raise concerns, without fear of retaliation, regarding the conduct of your members? How are such concerns received, assessed, and addressed, including any processes for engaging with the relevant member(s)?

A recent policy change in the VPI indicates that all VPI corporate and NGO members are required to make available a complaints process or operational-level grievance mechanism to rightsholders. These mechanisms should be based on United Nations Guiding Principle 31 to promote the effectiveness of their non-judicial grievance mechanism or complaints process. Government Members of the VPI shall communicate the availability of any non-judicial mechanisms for channeling complaints about members operating or domiciled in their jurisdictions, including mediation through the OECD National Contact Points, and/or other accessible grievance mechanisms which align with the requirements set out in the UNGPs Pillar Three. All members should communicate the availability of their own complaints or grievance mechanisms to rightsholders, and, if applicable, those offered by other actors including industry associations and multistakeholder initiatives.

Some In-Country Working Groups have also reported that the groups provide a platform for civil society organizations to raise concerns and contribute perspectives on security and human rights issues affecting their communities.