2017 Voluntary Principles Annual Report
Building sustainable business practices for peace

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Search for Common Ground
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1. Search’s Commitment to the VPs

Search for Common Ground (Search) is strongly committed to the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPs). The VPs are closely aligned with the organization’s mission of transforming conflict and promoting sustainable peace. In 2017, Search implemented the Voluntary Principles across numerous country programs. In this report, examples from Madagascar, Tanzania, and Guinea are used. The countries featured in this report are meant to showcase examples of our work on the VPs, however they do not represent the totality of the activities conducted by Search on the subject.

Search works to transform the way the world deals with conflict, away from adversarial approaches and toward cooperative solutions. We shift the everyday interactions between hostile groups of people, so they can work together to build up their community, choosing joint problem-solving over violent means. Within the VP framework, Search remains dedicated to multi-stakeholder engagement, human rights training, and dialogue facilitation to further the adoption and implementation of the Voluntary Principles.

1.1 Summary of Search’s commitment to the Voluntary Principles

Search applies a unique approach to the Voluntary Principles by working alongside communities and companies to mitigate conflicts at their source. This approach rests on four pillars:

1. Building a company-wide commitment to meaningful stakeholder engagement;
2. Informing and empowering local communities;
3. Creating effective mechanisms for dialogue, collaboration, and dispute resolution; and,
4. Building local government capacity to be more transparent, communicative, and effective at promoting sustainable community development.

To implement these pillars, Search designs comprehensive interventions that cover a range of activities. Programs target stakeholders using the following tools:

- **Assessments**: Search’s local and international experts employ a variety of assessment tools to analyse the root causes of conflict, including risks for company operations.

  The project “Mazava II: Supporting information flow and good governance around Ambatovy project sites” in Madagascar started with a conflict analysis and risk assessment, conducted in collaboration with local civil society groups, trained by Search’s global Institutional Learning Team. The assessment was conducted to evaluate the state of social cohesion in the targeted community, to identify the main risks of conflict and to ensure conflict sensitivity throughout the project implementation.

- **Training and Capacity Building**: Search programs engage multiple stakeholders through trainings aimed at strengthening the knowledge and skill sets needed to resolve conflicts constructively.

  In Madagascar, Search has engaged with the public security sector and with private security providers, organizing training for private security companies around the mining sites of Ambatovy in Toamasina, Moramanga and of Rio Tinto/ QMM in Fort-Dauphin.
In Tanzania, Search provided Trainings and Workshops to ACACIA Mining security managers to strengthen their understanding of the VPs and to increase their capacity and ability to apply the concepts to their everyday work. Search also conducted training workshops and presentation on VPs to Heads of Police and Public Security officials as well as training of Police Officers.

- **Community Outreach and Engagement Activities**: Search organizes sporting events, dialogues, mobile cinemas, town halls, and participatory theatre to engage with communities. These initiatives create a safe space to vent frustrations via nonviolent means, while creating opportunities for partnership and collaboration.

In Guinea, in the framework of the project “BOKE HERY: Renforcer le dialogue et réduire les conflits entre compagnies minières, autorités et communautés”, community awareness and outreach sessions were conducted in 2017. Search used community communication tools, including participatory theatre and radio listening sessions to develop community understanding of mining rights and duties and methods for collaborative conflict resolution.

- **Multi-Stakeholder Engagement and Coordination**: Search convenes stakeholders from the public, private, and non-governmental sectors to participate in dialogue processes. The goal is to improve collaboration and information-sharing amongst groups that might perceive one another as adversaries.

In Guinea, Search for Common Ground set up regular and functional coordination mechanisms in Conakry, Boké and Boffa in 2017, again within the project “BOKE HERY: Renforcer le dialogue et réduire les conflits entre compagnies minières, autorités et communautés”. These mechanisms serve as frameworks for consultation and coordination of the interventions of mining sector CSOs and communities on the one hand and on the other hand facilitate the collaboration and the harmonization of the interventions between the CSOs and the public services of the State. Regular monthly meetings are set up at each level of consultation.

- **Communication Protocol Development/National Level Consultation**: Frequently, the relationship between government, companies, and communities is wrought with poor communication that can exacerbate tensions and lead to conflict. Search helps companies develop pathways for grievance communication and frameworks for addressing issues raised. Moreover, Search engages with national and international governments through public-private partnerships aimed at securing buy-in for the Voluntary Principles.

In 2016, Search for Common Ground Madagascar organized Two Round Tables which brought together different stakeholders in the mining sectors, including the government members, the Chambre des Mines de Madagascar, mining and oil companies, public and private security forces, and Civil Society Organisations. The Round Table provided a platform for CSOs, media and political entities to discuss the practices of mining companies. During the Round Tables, the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum declared in front of the press that he would like to see the Voluntary Principles incorporated into the revised Mining Code.
1.2 Search’s Participation in the Structures of the Voluntary Principles

Search is a member of the Steering Committee of the Voluntary Principles, as well as of the Board of Directors of the Voluntary Principles Association. Representatives of Search have actively and regularly taken part in meetings of the Steering Committee and of the Board of Directors, including in the retreats of the Voluntary Principles. Search is an active member of the NGO Pillar of the VPs. Search has also contributed to the working groups on training by sharing our experience, and in the working group on communication.

Search in 2017 took part in increasing the transparency of the initiative by for instance publishing a blog post on our work in Tanzania (https://www.sfcg.org/hostility-hope-tanzania-gold-mines/) and by contributing to the Voluntary Principles Newsletter.

Search actively engages in dialogue with other participants of the VPs, including the companies we work with, other NGOs and governments.

Concerning Search’s participation in the VP procedures and verification process, the organization submitted its 2016 annual report to the Secretariat, and presented its annual progress in implementing the VPs at the Annual Plenary meeting of the Voluntary Principles in Ottawa. Search also took part in verification presentations as part of its commitment to the VPs.
2. **PROMOTION OF THE VPs**

In this section, we detail our efforts to raise awareness and promote understanding of the Voluntary Principles with both internal and external stakeholders, and our efforts to promote the adoption of the Voluntary Principles into relevant government or corporate policies, as well as international standards and/or guidelines. We draw on examples from our work in Tanzania and Guinea.

2.1 Tanzania

Since 2011, Search for Common Ground has engaged with ACACIA Mining through its VP Training to provide information to top and middle managers, as well as other decision-makers on risk assessment and human rights abuses, that have the potential to occur in the three mining sites where the organization is involved in, namely North Mara, Buzwagi and Bulyanhulu. This training workshop is tailored to people who are in positions where they are unlikely to know or be familiar with the Voluntary Principles.

Search Tanzania engaged ACACIA leadership in the North Mara Mine in a pre-training assessment and determined that although some managers and supervisors knew broadly about Voluntary Principles, a majority could benefit from a more in-depth focus on the safety and security of operations in their respective departments, as well as from a deeper understanding of human rights issues and risk management. The Search team walked the managers and decision-makers through the history of the VPs and their application, as well as through the tangible steps they could take to minimize the risks of human rights abuses in communities located near extraction sites in North Mara.

The framework of the Voluntary Principles was acknowledged by trained staff as very relevant to their work and daily activities. Most of the participants asked questions on everyday scenarios in their workplace, and many requested Search to consider conducting the trainings on a quarterly basis engaging new managers and the larger mine staff. In 2018, Search plans to scale up this VPs training, and expand its programming to reach police leadership in Buzwagi and Bulyanhulu, government leaders at the district and regional level including regional police commanders, and mine staff, in addition to the Tanzania police force.
2.2 Guinea

Through the project “BOKE HERY: Renforcer le dialogue et réduire les conflits entre compagnies minières, autorités et communautés”, Search works in coordination and collaboration with the Ministry of Mines and Geology, including its Community Relations and Local Content Service. The project also engages several mining companies directly: Guinea Bauxite Company (CBG), Global Aluminium Company (GAC), ALUFER, Responsible Mining Alliance (AMR), and recently, from the end of 2017, Société Minière de Boké (SMB). The companies contribute to the conflict assessments, participate in Conflict Transformation trainings and participate in the Tribunes d’Expression Populaire (please see Section 4 below for a detailed description).

The project engages all conflict stakeholders in the mining areas, to encourage communication, consultation and collaboration in the face of the challenges each faces. To put in place participatory and inclusive mechanisms that foster collaborative solutions and accountability, regular coordination mechanisms have been set up in Conakry, Boké and Boffa. These mechanisms serve as frameworks for consultation and coordination of the interventions of the mining sector, CSOs, and communities on the one hand and on the other hand facilitate the collaboration and the harmonization of the interventions between CSOs and public services of the State. Regular monthly meetings are set up at each level of consultation.

In October 2017, the CSO consultation framework in Boké brought together, for the first time since the crisis of September 2017, two blocks in conflict: the ‘Committee of reflection and follow-up of the claims of the populations of Boké’ born after the crisis April 2017, and the ‘Crisis Cell’ born on the occasion of the events of September 2017. This allowed the blocks to start a dialogue, avoid taboos and dismantle some rumours circulating on each group - a process essential to a better coordination of civil society, in which efforts can be combined towards a representative interface to the current conflict dynamics in the region.
3. COUNTRY IMPLEMENTATION

Search is working in sub-Saharan Africa to implement the Voluntary Principles, promote human rights, and improve company-community relations. Here we give an overview of the implemented in 2017.

BOKE HERY: Renforcer le dialogue et réduire les conflits entre compagnies minières, autorités et communautés (GUINEA)

**Project category: Rule of Law, Stakeholders Engagement, Risk Assessment**

Search for Common Ground Guinea is implementing a 21-month project with GIZ, funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The project intervenes in the mining areas of the prefectures of Boké and Boffa, located on the coast of Guinea. The region has the largest reserves of bauxite, estimated at 25 billion tons, and it is facing a cumulative impact of cluster mining companies that explore or exploit the mineral, both at the environmental and social/cultural level. Local governments often feel left out with little information about mining activities and their rights vis à vis the exploitation. The expectations of the populations are high in terms of job creation and local development that do not always materialize. At the same time, the immigration of non-native populations to the area looking for employment in the mining sites is strong, and amplifies the impact on the host communities. This causes frustrations and tensions between local communities and mining companies. To face these challenges, the BOKE HERY project aims to increase the understanding of the communities impacted by mining operations as to their rights and duties in relation to the exploitation sites and assist them in the implementation of these rights and in the mobilization around it.

Over the period from January to December 2017, Search carried out several interventions enhancing people’s understanding of their rights and responsibilities in mining areas. 20 community awareness and outreach sessions were conducted: Search uses its community communication tools, including participatory theatre and radio listening sessions to develop community understanding of mining rights and duties as well as methods for collaborative conflict resolution. The sessions are an opportunity for key stakeholders to develop their skills together, initiate dialogue on each other’s challenges and opportunities related to the mining sector, and experiment collaborative conflict transformation approaches. To support and expand the communication campaign on the rights and duties of the population, as well as on collaborative methods of conflict resolution several media production formats were used for this project. These includes TV and radio media productions, ranging from spots to magazines and/or radio soap operas. Through these different formats, Search communicates on the issues of a mining project (convention), its benefits and its negative impacts.
As part of the project, a conflict scan was carried out. The results show that the main conflicts linked to mining are employability of youth in the communities, dissatisfaction around the provision of social services (water and electricity), and community relocation. The consequences of these conflicts include the destruction of public buildings and mining company goods, arrest and detention of youth from the communities, and even death. The only formal conflict resolution mechanisms at local level between the communities and mining companies are the Dialogue Committees in mining localities. A second conflict scan was conducted in October-November 2017 in Boké and Boffa.

Search will continue to roll out project activities in 2018, which will be informed by the findings of the Conflict Scans and by the recommendations formulated through review of activities undertaken.

Mazava II: Supporting information flow and good governance around Ambatovy project sites (MADAGASCAR)

Project category: Stakeholders Engagement, Risk Assessment

As the 2018 presidential elections in Madagascar approach, new tensions are rising around Ambatovy’s mines. Rumours, political manipulation, and distorted perceptions could trigger violent incidents. To consolidate the results achieved so far and avoid clashes linked to the elections, Search’s local team and Ambatovy decided to launch a second, 3-year-long phase of Project Mazava in March 2017, building on previous successes of the project. The goal of Mazava II is to increase trust and collaboration among local actors, promoting local development in an expanded target zone along the mine’s pipeline. The project aims to strengthen the culture of multi-stakeholder dialogue, collaboration, transparency and participation in the management of resources from the mining sector, and organize mass media and information campaigns to promote better understanding and mutual trust between actors and prevent the risks associated with the spread of rumours during elections.

Search’s intervention focuses on three areas. Firstly, a training is offered to Ambatovy staff, local government authorities, traditional leaders, and other groups on conflict transformation, nonviolent communication, and rumour management. During this phase, communication campaigns and participatory theatre programs are rolled out. The second pillar of the project focuses on building a culture of participation, collaboration, and transparency around the management of natural resources. Search organizes town hall meetings and public debates to discuss the issues faced by communities and find shared solutions.

The third part of Mazava II focuses on mass media campaigns to increase trust and prevent rumours during election season. Search is going to renew its highly successful radio soap opera Miandrandra Maraina (“In Search of Dawn” in Malagasy) for a second and third season; produce participatory talk shows in collaboration with local radio stations; and create listening points and listening groups at the community level, to enable deep discussions on the topics brought up by our media programs.

The project started with a conflict analysis and risk assessment, conducted in collaboration with local civil society groups, trained by Search’s global Institutional Learning Team. The study will be followed by biannual scans to monitor conflict indicators. This conflict risk assessment was conducted to analyse the broader context in which the project would start; to identify the main risks to social cohesion in the community; and to draw recommendations for maintenance of a conflict-sensitive approach throughout the project implementation. Restitutions meetings in different communities were conducted and enabled to adjust the findings of the research based on the feedback collected from the participants.
The study found that economic power inequality is the main dividing line among community members. The research has shown that land conflicts, domestic conflicts related to intergenerational problems, and power discrimination are the most recurrent sources of conflicts identified by the community members surveyed. As for the actors of these rivalries, these can usually be identified as traditional authorities; the providers of the mining company Ambatovy; and the people affected by the project.

As of September 2017, important capacity building results were achieved by the project participants, and the first media activities were implemented. The Moniteur Consultants identified for the training activities benefited from a reinforcement of their capacity on conflict analysis and rumour management around Ambatovy mining sites: pre-test and post-test results showed a 42% increase in knowledge for these participants. In addition, theatre groups with whom Search will collaborate received training in participatory theatre techniques, aimed at creating a safe space to vent frustrations via nonviolent means, while creating opportunities for partnership and collaboration.

Periodic meetings with Ambatovy officials were organized to share project progress, the results of the risk and conflict assessment and to get their recommendations on the different thematic proposals and work plan for the next months. Search will continue to roll out project activities in 2018, which will be informed by the findings of the conflict assessment and by the recommendations formulated through review of activities undertaken.

**Advancing Sustainable Peace and Security in Tanzania**

**Project category: Security Sector Engagement**

Advancing Sustainable Peace and Security in Tanzania is a 20-month project (May 2016 to December 2017) implemented with the support of ACACIA Mining. Designed to promote positive long-term relationships between the community, government and security officials, and ACACIA staff, this project focused around three mining sites, namely: Bulyanhulu, Buzwagi and North Mara Gold Mines. The core objectives of this project are to strengthen the capacity of key stakeholders to address tensions related to mineral extraction, and to provide platforms for dialogue and information sharing around mining issues.

The target beneficiaries are the communities residing around the three mining sites in Northern Tanzania (including women, youth, traditional and government community leaders), security sector officers in the Tanzania National Police deployed in the region, and ACACIA staff. The intended results of the project are threefold:

1. Increased understanding of community issues, interests and needs by key stakeholders (communities and government) and ACACIA staff;
2. Increased awareness and understanding of the Voluntary Principles among key stakeholders, especially the Tanzania Police Force; and
3. Increased dialogue and information sharing between key stakeholders within the communities, ACACIA and the wider community on mineral issues and shared interests.

Activities under this project included a Community Perception Survey to assess perceptions around ACACIA’s work and included questions aimed at uncovering existing grievances and key triggers of past violence, while also identifying existing mechanisms for decision making and conflict resolution. Police Trainings on the VPs were organized through training workshops designed for new security personnel stationed at and around mining sites.
District Level Multi-Stakeholders Meetings and Town Hall Meetings took also place. These dialogue platforms collectively aim to increase information sharing between key stakeholders on mineral extraction issues. Participatory Theatre Performances sessions were conducted in communities around the Bulyanhulu and North Mara mine sites to convey sensitive information in an entertaining and educative way.

Search conducted a Learning Assessment between November 10th - 20th, 2017, encompassing all the surrounding villages and mine sites of North Mara, Bulyanhulu and Buzwagi. This study capitalized on Search’s experience in the targeted mining areas and its unique access to local stakeholders to provide strong reflection on the effectiveness of the project implementation, its impact on the target communities and the prospects for sustained progress. The Learning Assessment took a critical view of the project’s activities to assess their relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability with an aim toward improving Search Tanzania’s Sustainable Business Practices programming going forward.

Major achievements of the project included the training of over 500 police officers in all the three mine sites in Voluntary Principles, Security and Human Rights. On February 12, 2017, Search presented the results of its work at the ACACIA Development Partners Forum at Bulyanhulu Gold Mine. This Forum saw the launch of ACACIA’s new 5-Year Sustainable Communities Strategy as part of their commitment to enhance relationships with key stakeholders, empower people and contribute to business growth in the communities.

Additionally, Search gained recognition in Tarime District Government, Mara Region, by becoming part of the International and Local NGO Network for its work in transforming conflict and bringing peace to the mining communities of North Mara. We also collected success stories detailing the change in attitude and behaviour of police officers who participated in Search’s VPs trainings. Inspector Revocatus K. Munyaigara, was one of the operational leaders during the invasion of the North Mara Mine in June 2017. His compelling story and others will be published on Search’s website, and can be found here.

Analyse Institutionnelle et Contextuelle des Structures Paysannes dans la Filière Vanille (MADAGASCAR)

Project category: Risk Assessment

In Madagascar, the study “Institutional and Contextual Analysis of Farmers’ Social Structures in the Vanilla Sector” was carried out in the framework of the first year of implementation of the project “Upscaling Sustainability Initiatives towards Improved Livelihoods in Vanilla Farming Communities of Sava Region”, funded by the strategic alliance of GIZ, Symrise and Unilever. The assessment aimed to better understand the current obstacles to a well-
functioning small producers’ system through the analysis of their positions, interests and needs; and to identify the dynamics of social relations and conflicts between vanilla producers and other chain actors in the Sava region.

The study findings showed the complexity of the vanilla value chain in Madagascar, with several intermediaries in the process and various ministries being involved in the decisions taken for this sector. Since independence, farmers were encouraged by exporting companies to group themselves through the development of cooperatives and other types of social structures. The study identified the current obstacles to positive development and functioning of these groups, especially the farmers’ lack of knowledge of laws and of ownership; external actors are often the ones driving initiatives. Still, the data has shown the potential strengths of the cooperative system, which need reinforcement to work as expected.

The study recommends harmonizing the decisions coming from different ministries, and to train the farmers on the relevant laws. Quantitative and qualitative data identified main conflicts as ones related to access to economic resources, especially visible through theft of vanilla roots; ones related to the vanilla market and financial transactions; land conflicts related to the duality of laws (customary and written) and eventually the tensions related to discrimination and power abuses - especially through the judiciary system and the security forces. To mitigate these conflicts, the study recommends creating spaces for dialogue between the different value chain actors.
4. LESSONS LEARNED

Search has learned important lessons in its implementation of the Voluntary Principles. Search employs a non-adversarial approach to conflict, working to clearly communicate its independent role to communities and local partners, and building on longstanding relationships and local staff. Maintaining impartiality in company-funded initiatives is therefore key to identify areas of collaboration and to serve as a trusted mediator between communities, police, government, and industry.

Throughout the implementation of the “BOKE HERY” project in Guinea, Search realized that to guarantee conclusive results around awareness and civic education of local communities in Boké, the Government must carry out actions that would indicate its intention to honour its commitments. Communities are relatively unaware of their rights and especially their rights vis-à-vis mining companies. There is a real crisis of trust between the main actors involved. This is why gradually adapting the content of the activities to the results of Conflict Scans and to the reality of each locality affected is key. Another lesson learned is to strengthen collaborative efforts with state authorities at both the central and local level: this will build trust between these authorities and their mining populations and help consolidate the impact of activities at the local level.

As a general lesson, is that the role of national and local governments in the implementation of the VPs must be elevated for the continued success of the principles. Many issues faced by rural communities stem from a lack of government buy-in and support. To help manage and set the proper expectations, the VPs and its members must better engage governments at all levels.

The project “Mazava II” in Madagascar highlighted the importance of facilitation of information access by the community, through a well-established communication strategy (displays, radios, listening points). An educated public will be less exposed to misunderstanding and conflict, and more likely to check the information it has. To increase the resilience of the community, it is necessary to start from the stage of understanding of the information, which is followed by the acceptance of the message; a change of attitude; and the validation of the message. If the community is provided with the information needed to gain knowledge about the mining system, and to identify the roles and responsibilities of the political actors in the system, including their mandate, the community will be less sensitive to manipulative discourse.

One of the biggest challenges found working in rural areas is creating an efficient and effective communication system which allows not only for proper dissemination of information, but also adheres to each community’s unique culture. Entering these relationships must not be rushed; consultations should involve many actors to ensure that true representatives are being engaged. In general, it is necessary to have field staff who are seen as trustworthy and impartial members of the community. Search recommends extensive training on local customs and Do No Harm before communication strategies are implemented.

In Tanzania, the Learning Assessment produced in the framework of the “Advancing Sustainable Peace and Security” program showed the need for promoting further inclusion and participation to foster a culture of transparency and information sharing. While village leaders can be important partners in brokering communications with the whole community, Search should focus on working with them to develop a robust communication strategy that also actively involves non-elected leaders, such as religious, women or youth leaders, and other respected members of the community who cover a broad demographic spectrum.

Community-wide change requires the inclusion of all members of community, including marginalized groups such as
as women and youth. The use of both traditional mainstream media and social media can be an important tool for increasing a project’s visibility and ensuring that all pertinent actors are aware of the different fora for dialogue taking place. Producing content in local languages is also extremely important when seeking participation of marginalized groups.