The Responsible Security Association

ICoCA

2025 ICOCA Responsible Security Awards

secretariat@icoca.ch

www.icoca.ch

Table of Contents

Introducing the ICoCA Responsible Security Awards 2025: Just Transition & Responsible Security

In July 2025, ICoCA called on its private security company (PSC) Members and Affiliates, civil society organisation (CSO) Members and Observers to share their best practices with the wider industry. Focused on *Strategic Goal 3: Just Transition* – as outlined in ICoCA's 2024–30 Strategic Plan – the call aimed to highlight initiatives that support a greener economy in fair and inclusive ways, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind. The response far exceeded our expectations.

At the intersection of private security, mining and energy operations, environmental and socially responsible stewardship, submissions demonstrated not only of the challenges posed by fragile and complex environments, but also a strong commitment to adopt innovative approaches that respect human rights, foster community engagement, promote sustainable practices and boost economic stability.

After careful review and deliberation, we are proud to present the winners of the first edition of the ICoCA Responsible Security Awards, produced with generous support from the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

- **PSC Member Award (Transitional & Certified) Winner**: **SGA Security Kenya** is recognised for its responsible decommissioning plan at the Base Titanium Mine in Kwale, Kenya. This plan addresses both the financial and emotional impacts that mine closure can have on the workforce. It prepares SGA Security Officers for "life after Base" and highlights the lifecycle of mining operations beyond their operational phase, along with their broader socioeconomic implications.
- **PSC Affiliate Award Winner**: **ARB SECURITY Ltd. in Albania** has implemented a Community-Based Security Model across all its energy infrastructure projects in Albania. By coupling operational security with community legitimacy – prioritising local recruitment and empowering guards as community liaisons – ARB's approach detects early tensions, prevents conflict escalation and strengthens trust between developers and communities.
- **CSO Award Winner**: **International Peace Information Service (IPIS)** has launched two community-based incident-monitoring systems. Operating in eastern DRC to report incidents in the artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sector, and in Tanzania to monitor both ASM and large-scale mining operations, the Kufatilia (in DRC) and Kufuatilia (in Tanzania) mechanisms enhance transparency, accountability and safety. They demonstrate how digital reporting tools, paired with strong civil society partnerships, can strengthen responsible mineral supply chains in diverse and often conflict-affected contexts.
- **Innovation Award Winner**: **IDG Security** brings a two-pronged approach to environmental and social responsibility. Through its E-Ledgers pilot, the company is among the first in the private security industry to assess its carbon footprint comprehensively. At the same time, the company's response to the Myanmar earthquake highlights its commitment to staff welfare, the continuity of essential operations and community resilience, showing that environmental innovation and social responsibility must advance together.

All our Award Winners demonstrate a commitment to human rights protection, community engagement and environmental stewardship. We hope the compilation of their best practices, shared in the following pages, can help inspire others across the industry.

Given the high quality of other submissions received, ICoCA will also be developing another series of mini case studies to be published over the coming months.

ICoCA encourages all stakeholders to stay engaged and contribute to future editions of the ICoCA Responsible Security Awards. Your insights, innovations and best practices are vital to advancing responsible security worldwide.

SGA SECURITY

ICOCA

PSC Member Award (Transitional & Certified) Winner

"Life after Base": SGA Kenya's Roadmap to Responsible Decommissioning in Kwale

Overview

Mining operations are multidimensional projects. In addition to generating resource wealth and driving environmental assessments, they are also key sources of employment for local communities, including jobs as private security guards, which are affected when mines close. Recognising the emotional and financial impact of such closures, SGA Security developed a *Base Titanium Demobilisation Plan for SGA Security Officers* to reduce the impact of the Kwale Mine closure on its workforce. These best practices reflect an extension of *ICoCA's Strategic Goal 3: Just Transition*, ensuring that no one is left behind during the shift towards a greener economy.

Just Transition: Beyond Mining Operations

Resource extraction can raise significant challenges for companies when engaging with communities where operations are located, be it concerns of environmental degradation or violent competition for control over access to natural resources. The correlation between rising mineral demand and geopolitical tensions is also increasing.[1, 2, 3] Because mineral resources are valuable, often contested and frequently located in areas where people already live and earn their livelihoods, and because mining operations involve high-value assets and equipment, the sector drives strong demand for private security services to secure sites and concessions.

In the contemporary landscape, a growing focus on a carbon-free economy has governments, mining companies and other stakeholders scrambling to secure critical, rare earth and transition minerals, including lithium, titanium and zirconium. [4] As indicated in *ICoCA's 2024-2030 Strategic Plan*, projects extracting these resources are often situated in fragile and complex environments, where critical mining projects risk displacing local communities and exacerbate social tensions. In this context, ICoCA's *Strategic Goal 3: Just Transition* recognises the role of private security at the interface between mining companies and local communities.[5] Beyond providing security services, private security companies are also expected to create employment opportunities, engage in environmental stewardship and support local livelihoods.

The focus on a carbon-free economy has, however, disproportionately focused attention on the earlier stages of the mining lifecycle. As a result, mine decommissioning agendas and their implications for private security have received relatively little attention. As more mines open, more will cease their operations due to ore depletion or relocation. It has become necessary for the industry to therefore develop best practices for the later phases of the mining lifecycle. SGA Security Kenya's gradual decommissioning of its security forces at the Kwale Mine, following the announcement of its closure, sets the tone for responsible practices in private security. [5]

Kwale County: Base Titanium, Mineral Sands and Green Energy

Base Titanium, an Australian mining company, has been operating in Kenya since 2013. Its flagship mining project, Kwale Mineral Sands Operation, was in Kwale County. Located 50 kms from Mombasa, the principal port facility for East Africa, Base's Kwale accounted for 65% of Kenya's mineral output value at its peak.[7] As a result, it formed a key component of the national government's Vision 2030 aiming to transform Kenya into a newly industrialising, middle-income country, providing good quality of life to its citizens.[8]

Base specialises in the extraction of mineral sands through hydraulic mining methods. Mineral sands are ancient beach or dunal deposits containing concentrations of titanium minerals, rutile, ilmenite and zircon. By blasting the mine face with high pressure water jets, an ore slurry is obtained. Extracted from the slurry, titanium has application in industrial and aerospace applications.

In addition to prioritising the direct recruitment of local people (71% of its 1,500 employees were from Kwale) and running community development programmes such as recycling initiatives and primary schools, Base's operations indirectly created around 2,800 jobs through its supply chain and consumer spending.[9] The recruitment of SGA Kenya's security workforce of around 250 deployed personnel for the project – cumulatively 450 over the years – 80% of whom were local hires, illustrates this wider community impact. Over half of the private security guard force have been made redundant. Base Titanium also recruited 42 local hires into social security roles, responsible for patrolling the concession's perimeter and acting as ambassadors for the company. As a result, mining operations like Kwale function as socio-technical ventures, with private security embedded into the social framework, playing a critical function in securing the social license to operate.

Following the depletion of resources at Kwale, however, Base Titanium is ceasing its activities in Kenya and implementing a Mine Closure Plan for the site. Recognising the impact that its withdrawal would have, Base's Mine Closure Plan incorporates measures such as financial planning for employees, providing opportunities for contractors on other projects and supporting livelihood diversification through crop trials and wetland creation. These efforts are combined with extensive stakeholder engagement to help soften the economic and social impact of job losses. Having received approval from the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), the plan focuses on decommissioning, rehabilitating and restoring mined out areas.

Outlining SGA's Responsibilities

A crucial part of decommissioning and rehabilitation is preparing employees for the transition.

Given Kwale's history of creating employment opportunities, both directly and indirectly, it is crucial that this objective is upheld throughout the process. Responsibility for this also extends to SGA Security and its workforce at the mine. After two consecutive contracts with Base Titanium, Kwale's closure required SGA to significantly downsize its team by more than half. Although SGA is involved in Base's reforestation efforts and other related activities, the security company will no longer require the same number of Security Officers. As a result, SGA management determined during their initial assessments that around 100 private Security Officers would need to be let go.

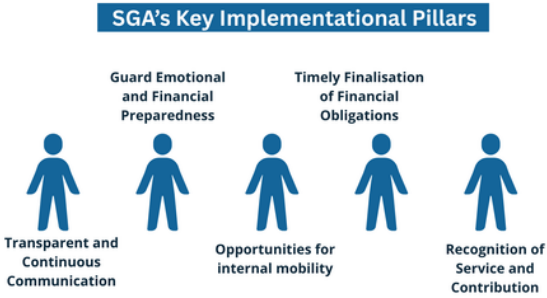
For private security companies facing similar circumstances, responsible practices mean addressing an important question, beyond the environmental assessments. What does life look like for private security guards after mining operations close? SGA understood the emotional and financial repercussions that would follow Kwale Mine's closure. As a result, the demobilisation plan that they prepared places strong emphasis on building emotional and financial resilience to counteract the impact of downsizing.

What then is SGA's vision for "Life after Base" for their Security Officers?

Life after Base: Base Titanium Demobilisation Plan for SGA Security Officers

The *Base Titanium Demobilisation Plan for SGA Security Officers* emphasises five key implementation pillars:

1. Transparent and continuous communication,
2. Guard emotional and financial preparedness,
3. Opportunities for internal mobility,
4. Timely finalisation of financial obligations and
5. Recognition of service and contribution.



Keeping these objectives in mind, the Base Titanium Demobilisation Plan for SGA Guards follows a four-phase timeline:

Phase 1

The first phase – running from October 1-31, 2024 – laid the foundation for communication efforts throughout the period of decommissioning.

By organising *timaam* parades in Kwale, SGA management intended to inform Security Officers about the timeline for the end of their contract as well communicate any accompanying entitlements. By recording attendance and sharing schedules well in advance, SGA aimed to achieve a 100% participation rate. The 6 parades organised allowed employees to clarify any questions they had about the demobilisation procedure. Additionally, SGA computed the final dues owed to each Officer based on their years of service, with each guard receiving a detailed breakdown in an individual meeting.

SGA distributed written notices in both print and digital formats, communicating the contract's end, detailed final dues and termination procedures once again.

To confirm receipt, SGA Security Officers were required to sign an acknowledgement. Implementing this phase consisting of communicative forums, verification mechanisms and clearly established deadlines was crucial to ensuring that setting the tone for the following phases.

Phase 2

In the second phase, SGA focused on providing emotional support and laying the foundations for financial planning. Given that several of its Security Officers had been with the company for many years, the termination of their contract was expected to disrupt the local social balance. To address this, SGA, in collaboration with Base Titanium, offered counselling services to all Officers, setting a goal for 50% of the workforce to attend at least one counselling session.

Running from 1-30 November 2024, this phase continued the organisation of *timaam* parades. By holding weekly sessions, collecting feedback and setting a target of 80% attendance, the intention was to maintain morale without overwhelming the Security Officers. To complement emotional preparedness, SGA also partnered with financial experts to conduct workshops focused on managing final dues and planning for the future. Management ensured that these workshops were scheduled during Security Officers' off hours to maximise participation. Beyond workshops, offering job continuity is another way in which SGA made Kwale's closure easier on its workforce. By leveraging its internal recruitment system, SGA identified and interviewed Officers interested in relocating to other SGA sites in Mombasa and Nairobi.

Phase 3

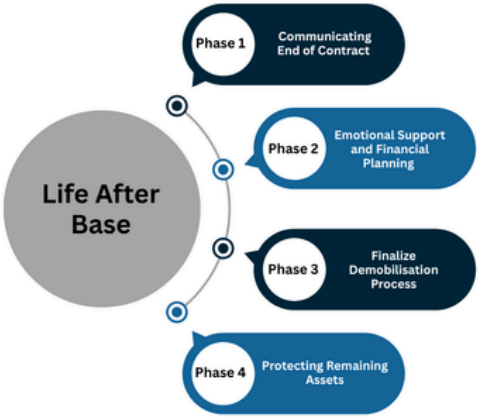
Running between 1-31 December 2024, the final phase of the demobilisation process brought together the initiatives from the previous phases to a responsible conclusion. Mining ceased completely at the site in December 2024.

In this phase, SGA offered specialised versions of the previously conducted counselling sessions and financial workshops, aimed at helping Security Officers prepare for job transitions as well as make informed regarding their final dues. The third phase also involved issuing 120 new contracts to Security Officers who had previously expressed interest in relocation. The entire workforce received their final payments, with confirmation of payment required to mark the successful completion of the demobilisation plan.

Phase 4

Although mining at the site ended in December 2024, Base Titanium still maintains operations that require security. This includes protecting the mine's remaining assets – such as the processing plant that has yet to be dismantled – safeguarding ongoing reforestation efforts and ensuring the safety of the local population as many parts of the site remain hazardous. Security is now provided by a downsized force of 80 SGA Security Officers responsible for access control and the protection of the site where around 500 employees are still working.

SGA's thoughtful demobilisation plan emphasises that mine closures are not unidimensional operations. Deeply connected to local communities – especially by providing employment opportunities in private security – demobilisation efforts must recognise the emotional and financial consequences of mine closure. As a result, in addition to carrying out critical activities such as environmental impact assessments and reforestation operations, stakeholders should implement carefully planned demobilisation schedules.



Recommendations

Drawing from SGA's best practices—with a particular focus on mining activities—ICoCA recommends that organisations undertake the following steps whenever required to downsize their operations:

1. **Collaborate with the contracting organization** to draw up a **responsible decommissioning schedule** to downsize the workforce.
2. **Communicate clearly and in advance** the end of the contract and any associated conditions to allow the guards to prepare for life after the assignment.
3. Recognize that the termination of long-term contracts has impact on mental and financial health and make necessary arrangements—by **providing counselling services, wealth management workshops or other support mechanisms.**
4. Combine overall objectives with **well-established deadlines** as well as **verification mechanisms** to ensure that the plan remains on track.
5. **Create opportunities for relocation** where possible, maintaining **job continuity** for the employee while retaining their long-term security expertise in the company.

Sources

[1] Abdurasulov, Abdujalil. "What Minerals Does Ukraine Have and What Are They Used For?," May 1, 2025. https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c20le8jn282o.

[2] Baldo, Suliman, and Ahmed Soliman. "Gold and the War in Sudan: 03 Gold Production and Trade During the War." *Chatham House*. March 26, 2025. https://www.chathamhouse.org/2025/03/gold-and-war-sudan/03-gold-production-and-trade-during-war.

[3] Delange, Alexeï, and Ken Matthysen. "Mining and Conflict in the Eastern DRC: An Interactive Story Map - IPIS," *IPIS.* August 21, 2024. https://ipisresearch.be/publication/mining-and-conflict-in-the-eastern-drc-an-interactive-story-map/.
Base Titanium. "Kwale Mining Operation - Base Titanium," November 18, 2020. https://basetitanium.com/kwale-operation/.

[4] Li, Serena. "The Critical Minerals Conundrum: What You Should Know." World Resources Institute, n.d. https://www.wri.org/insights/critical-minerals-explained.

[5] ICoCA - International Code of Conduct Association. 2024. "The Code - ICoCA - International Code of Conduct Association." September 3, 2024. https://icoca.ch/the-code/.

[6] Base Titanium. "Landing Page - Mine Closure - Base Titanium," September 9, 2025. https://basetitanium.com/landing-page-mine-closure/.

[7] Base Titanium. "Economic Contribution - Base Titanium," September 18, 2023. https://basetitanium.com/kwale-operation/economic-contribution/.

[8] "Kenya Vision 2030 | Kenya Vision 2030," n.d. https://vision2030.go.ke/.

[9] Base Titanium. "Economic Contribution - Base Titanium," September 18, 2023. https://basetitanium.com/kwale-operation/economic-contribution/.

ARB SECURITY

ICOCA

PSC Affiliate Award Winner

Bringing Community Engagement to Private Security and Energy Infrastructure: ARB SECURITY Ltd. in Albania – Community-Based Security Model

Overview

ARB Security has played a pioneering role in integrating community-based approaches into private security operations across Albania. Their approach demonstrates how employing and empowering local guards enhances trust, reduces tensions and enables the smooth execution of complex infrastructure projects. While the development of critical infrastructure projects in Albania has created both opportunities and challenges for the country's energy security and socioeconomic progress, such projects can create friction between local populations and developers. The construction and maintenance of critical infrastructure intersect directly with local communities whose interests, traditions and livelihoods are often affected. Historical land disputes, concerns over environmental degradation, expectations of local employment and scepticism toward foreign or external actors all shape the social environment in which these projects operate. In such contexts, conventional security approaches – focused primarily on physical deterrence, surveillance and access control – are often insufficient. ARB Security's community-based security (CBS) model couples operational security with community legitimacy by prioritising local recruitment and empowering guards to function as effective community liaisons on its clients' projects. In addition to enabling early identification of risks and maintaining communication channels, ARB Security's approach also creates tangible community benefits that contribute to further cementing the social license to operate, from regular road maintenance to the rehabilitation of schools. ARB Security's CBS model sets a benchmark that aligns with *ICoCA's Strategic Goal 3* by embedding responsible private security practices within just energy transition infrastructure projects.

Energy Security and Socioeconomics in Albania

Albania's energy sector has long been a priority for national development and for strengthening European energy security. Its diverse geography – ranging from mountainous interiors to coastal plains – combined with a complex historical trajectory from Ottoman rule to communist isolation and, ultimately, a democratic transition in the early 1990s, creates a challenging operating environment. Ecologically sensitive areas and rural communities often tend to have strong attachments to land and traditional livelihoods. Thus, despite the strategic benefits that hydropower leveraging local river systems, photovoltaic plant-powered sustainable electricity, other energy and tourism infrastructure projects promise, they do not have guaranteed social legitimacy. onventional security approaches – focused primarily on physical deterrence, surveillance and access control – surrounding these projects are therefore often insufficient. They may address immediate risks to assets but fail to account for the broader socio-political dynamics, potentially exacerbating tensions, triggering protests or even causing project delays.

Private security providers in Albania have recognised that effective security in such environments requires a holistic approach that balances operational protection with social legitimacy. Rather than relying solely on fortified perimeters, surveillance cameras or reactive interventions, ARB Security has developed a community-based security (CBS) model, which integrates security operations with proactive engagement with local stakeholders. This approach emphasises that local communities are not merely passive elements of the environment to be managed or controlled but are active participants whose cooperation is essential for operational continuity, risk reduction and the long-term sustainability of infrastructure projects.

Created with mapchart.net

A Catalyst Case for the Community Based Security Model

ARB Security's case study encompasses five separate case-studies of large infrastructure projects the company has been contracted to secure across the country. ARB Security have learned lessons from each of these experiences, refining and tailoring their model to each circumstance. However, the CBS model has its roots in the company's protection of one of the country's most emblematic and strategically vital energy institutions, Albanian Refining and Marketing Oil (ARMO), which had previously been managed by the Albanian state police.

During the initial phases of engaging with ARMO – which overlapped with the company's privatisation – guards were deployed from Tirana, causing scepticism among local communities. This deepened socioeconomic upheavals already caused by ARMO's transition. As long-serving employees faced layoffs without sufficient compensation packages, the energy industry created fertile conditions for social unrest, protests and labour strikes. Local residents sometimes viewed these "outsider guards" more as representatives of corporate authority than neutral protectors. As a result, guards occasionally faced verbal challenges, questions about their role and minor obstructions to their work.

In these circumstances, any missteps by the outsider guards could aggravate tensions. Understanding that this threatened the dual task of protecting assets while respecting local sentiments, ARB Security gradually shifted to recruiting personnel from local communities. Through proactive engagement, transparent communication and de-escalation protocols, guards managed protests without confrontation, protecting both people and assets. While ARB has not faced similar protesting environments in its three other major energy projects, the CBS approach continues to underscore the importance of ethical protest management.

This is not the only defining feature of the CBS model. In addition to local recruitment, drawing at least 90% of the workforce during the construction phase from communities along the project route, and protest management, ARB also appointed Community Liaison Officers (CLOs), a duty carried out by the supervisors of each project or facility. Often, collaborating with municipal authorities, CLOs function as grievance mechanism channels for the local communities to utilise. While these guards do not lodge official grievances, compensation explanation or formal meetings regarding land or property, their contribution lies in preventing situations that might otherwise escalate to formal venues.

The integration of the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPSHR) and ARB Security's joining ICoCA in 2020 and incorporating ICoCA guidance and training provided the guiderails for ARB's entry as a private security company into the extractives sector. Initially, community trust in security personnel was low, reflecting the perception that guards, especially outsiders, primarily served investors' interests. In the first ARMO project survey of 2009, only 22% expressed trust. Over subsequent projects, trust gradually increased, reaching 61% by the end of 2019 and currently exceeding 80%, up to 88% in some areas. Surveys indicate that trust is lower during early construction phases but rises significantly as projects progress, particularly in operational phases.

The Evolving Community-Based Security Model: More than Physical Protection

Drawing from its experience with ARMO, ARB developed the CBS model illustrated through four more client case studies, including a 200km+ energy infrastructure project representing one of the most strategically important cross-border energy corridors in Southeast Europe; a hydro-electric dam; a solar park; and a coastal tourism development.

The CBS model blends a conventional security hierarchy with community engagement responsibilities embedded across all roles. For instance, patrol teams actively interact with the community in addition to providing physical security. Guards are trained and measured on their community engagement responsibilities, which are encoded into ARB's Standard Operating Principles (SOPs). Expanding on the duties of patrols, for example, guards are expected to greet local shopkeepers, farmers and residents. This approach is aimed at fostering personal relationships, allowing the local community to view guards as trusted points of contact. Similarly, ARB Security guards are trained to observe attitudes, behaviours and social cues that indicate stress, confusion or dissatisfaction within the community. Observations are documented, allowing project managers to receive reliable insights and respond proactively while safeguarding the trust between guards and residents. This continual risk-assessment through proactive identification of tensions enables preventive measures to be put in place in a timely manner.

Due to the proven effectiveness of these channels, guards can provide informal explanations of project safety to residents, reducing risky behaviour near critical infrastructure. In the hydroelectricity project, local guards were able to detect an irrigation-related dispute growing between farmers and site engineers. Despite not being mandated to mediate, the early detection and stabilising presence allowed for the dispute to be settled through informal communication.

The cases demonstrate that operational security and community engagement are inseparable. Security personnel act not only as protectors of infrastructure but also as trusted social intermediaries – observing, communicating and responding proactively.

Core Principles of the CBS

- **Community Integration**: Security guards are part of the community's social fabric. They understand the culture, norms and daily concerns of local residents. Being community members themselves, they have shared interests and a vested interest in the well-being of the population, which makes them credible and trusted intermediaries.
- **Proactive Conflict Prevention**: CBS focuses on identifying and addressing concerns before they develop into formal complaints or protests. Guards monitor community sentiment informally, listen to questions and respond to concerns in real time. This approach reduces operational disruptions and demonstrates respect for the community's needs and rights.
- **Cultural and Social Engagement**: Effective engagement requires that guards are sensitive to historical, social and property-related issues within the community. This ensures that communication is understood clearly and perceived as trustworthy by residents.
- **Rigorous VPSHR and Code Implementation**: Even though engagement is informal, community security guards are rigorously trained in the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPSHR) and the Code. This ensures that all interactions are grounded in human rights, respect for property and ethical standards, balancing operational security with the interests and rights of the community.

Social and Operational Benefits

- **Conflict Reduction**: Informal engagement by local guards allows for early resolution of tensions, preventing minor issues from escalating into formal complaints, protests or legal disputes.
- **Improved Communication**: Guards act as intermediaries between project teams and residents, translating technical or procedural information into culturally and socially accessible language. Continuous informal communication reduces misunderstandings and promotes transparency.
- **Trust and Legitimacy Building**: Involving local community members as guards helps establish credibility, as they are known and respected figures within the community. This increases cooperation and facilitates the implementation of operational requirements.
- **Operational Continuity**: By addressing concerns locally and informally, CBS supports uninterrupted project operations, with guards acting as early warning systems for potential tensions.
- **Ethical and Sustainable Security**: CBS combines informal social engagement with strict adherence to VPSHR and the Code, ensuring interactions are transparent, accountable and rights-based.

Recommendations

Drawing from ARB Security's core principles informing the community-based security model, ICoCA recommends other actors to undertake the following steps:

1. **Increase local engagement** by hiring local personnel who understand local cultural norms, social networks and potential sources of tension, from surrounding communities. CBS principles should be embedded from the earliest stages of project development.
2. **Provide comprehensive training for security personnel**, including on proactive conflict prevention. Equip them to monitor community sentiment, identify grievances early and engage in dialogue with stakeholders before disputes escalate into confrontations or operational disruptions.
3. **Develop informal and trustworthy communication mechanisms**, such as local liaisons, community meetings and informal grievance reporting structures – enable early identification of potential tensions and reduce the likelihood of escalation. Security personnel themselves a key communication channel, functioning both as protectors of infrastructure and as intermediaries between project management and residents, thereby **bridging operational needs with social expectations**.
4. Provide **clear, well-defined roles for security guards** as supportive, neutral, non-confrontational, providing information, offering procedural guidance and providing light mediation by reporting community concerns without becoming directly involved in community decision-making – **neutrality is key**.
5. **Conduct regular and systematic assessments** of social, operational and environmental risks throughout the project lifecycle. Early identification of potential sources of conflict allows security teams and project managers to implement preventive measures before issues escalate.
6. I**ncorporate early warning mechanisms** through documentation of community sentiment, enabling early intervention to mitigate risks as they appear.
7. **Ongoing Improvement of Operational Practices**. Lessons from each project should be systematically documented and integrated into continuous improvement cycles.
8. Conduct security operations in **strict compliance with national legislation, international norms and codes of conduct** including the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Companies and the VPSHR.

IPIS

ICOCA

CSO Award Winner

IPIS Case Study: Community-Led Accountability in the Mining Sector

Overview

This case study examines the implementation of *Kufatilia* in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and *Kufuatilia* in Tanzania—two related but distinct community-based incident monitoring systems developed by the International Peace Information Service (IPIS) to improve transparency, accountability and safety in the mining sector. While Kufatilia was first launched to support incident reporting and supply-chain due diligence in the DRC's artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sector, Kufuatilia was later designed in Tanzania as an adapted model that responds to a different regulatory environment and stronger large-scale mining (LSM) presence. Together, the two systems illustrate how digital reporting tools and local civil society partnerships can strengthen responsible mineral supply chains in diverse, and often conflict-affected, contexts. This study reviews the contextual differences, implementation approaches and observed impacts across both countries.

Context

Across Africa's Great Lakes region, mineral extraction is closely tied to governance challenges, insecurity and human rights concerns. International frameworks such as the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas emphasise that companies have an ongoing responsibility to identify and address risks of harm within their supply chains.[2] However, practical implementation often remains limited. A 2020 assessment by the Responsible Mining Foundation found that A 2020 assessment by the Responsible Mining Foundation found that "only about one-third of the [surveyed] mine sites showed evidence of operational-level grievance mechanisms for communities and workers".[3]

In these contexts, community-based and digital reporting systems have emerged as critical tools for bridging the gap between affected populations, companies and authorities. Systems like Kufatilia build on these principles, providing accessible channels for documenting incidents and strengthening dialogue in areas where state oversight is weak.

DRC: Artisanal Mining, Conflict and Governance Gaps

The Democratic Republic of the Congo holds vast natural wealth, including an estimated 750 tonnes of proven gold reserves and 700 million carats in diamond reserves.[4] In eastern DRC alone, a 2020 IPIS study identified nearly 3,000 artisanal mine sites employing over 400,000 miners.[5] However, artisanal and small-scale mining operates largely informally and without clear regulation, resulting in poor working conditions, exploitation and the persistence of conflict-linked supply chains. Gold, in particular, is the most extracted and trafficked mineral due to its high value-to-weight ratio, facilitating smuggling and fuelling regional insecurity. This deprives the DRC government of critical revenue and often leads to the financing of armed groups and local militias. Weak state presence in many mining areas has further complicated governance and enforcement. The absence of formal safety and reporting mechanisms has had severe consequences, with the Delve Database estimating that up to 2,000 ASM miners die annually in the DRC due to unsafe conditions.[6] In this context, civil society organisations play a key role in monitoring human rights and mediating between communities, authorities and private actors.

Tanzania: LSM & ASM Dynamics, Regulatory Reforms and Challenges

While large-scale mining has brought infrastructure investment and formal employment, it has also created social and governance challenges. Communities raise concerns about environmental degradation, displacement,[7] violence and limited benefit-sharing, while tensions emerge where ASM overlaps with industrial concessions. Persistent issues such as police corruption, inadequate grievance mechanisms and an overreliance on local authorities for dispute resolution further undermine community trust. These local structures, often under-resourced or perceived as partial, struggle to address complaints effectively. Furthermore, the involvement of the private security sector in protecting LSM operations adds a layer of complexity to the relationships between communities, companies and local authorities. Security personnel are implicated in community disputes and allegations of excessive force or intimidation, yet such incidents often go undocumented or unresolved.

Government reforms, including the 2017 amendments to the Mining Act and the creation of mineral trading centres, have sought to improve transparency and formalisation. However, the gap between national policy and local practice remains wide. In this context, community-based reporting systems play a vital role in offering residents an alternative channel for raising concerns, strengthening accountability and fostering dialogue between citizens, companies and authorities.

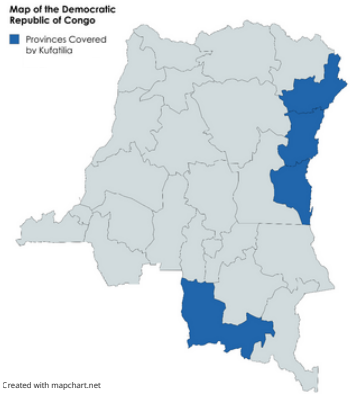
Credit: Shutterstock

The Kufatilia Systems

Kufatilia (DRC) and *Kufuatilia* (Tanzania) refer to two community-based monitoring systems developed by IPIS with support from the European Partnership for Responsible Minerals (EPRM). Although the names differ slightly, reflecting variations between Congolese and Tanzanian Swahili, both are derived from the verb "to track". The first system, Kufatilia, was implemented in the DRC to enable community-driven incident reporting in ASM areas. A separate, adapted system—Kufuatilia—was later developed for Tanzania to respond to that country's distinct governance frameworks and the monitoring needs of both ASM communities and regions influenced by LSM.

DRC: The Kufatilia Reporting System

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kufatilia operates as a free, anonymous SMS and WhatsApp-based system that allows community members in mining areas to report incidents directly to partner CSOs. By sending the keyword "Kufatilia" to one of the three designated phone numbers, the informant receives an automated questionnaire that they complete through sequential SMS or WhatsApp messages [Figure 1]. Reports are subsequently verified and followed up by local CSOs, who may investigate, mediate with local authorities or aid depending on the nature of the case [Figure 2]. Incidents are categorised into the following: child labour, violence, mining accident, corruption or fraud, theft, roadblocks, conflict with a mining company, environmental problem and other [Figure 2]. Currently, 19 CSOs are partnered with Kufatilia across the Ituri, Lualaba, North-Kivu and South-Kivu provinces of the DRC.



To promote transparency and accountability, IPIS also maintains a public online dashboard that displays each verified incident and its follow-up status, accessible via this link.

IPIS is now strengthening Kufatilia through a formal CSO network and an internal follow-up platform that improve coordination and oversight of reported incidents. The platform enables partners to pool and track data, as well as identify recurring issues requiring collective advocacy. These developments mark a shift from a reporting tool to a collaborative system for response and prevention in the DRC ASM sector.

Kufatilia Sample Incident (DRC)

Figure 1 - Informant Facing (WhatsApp)

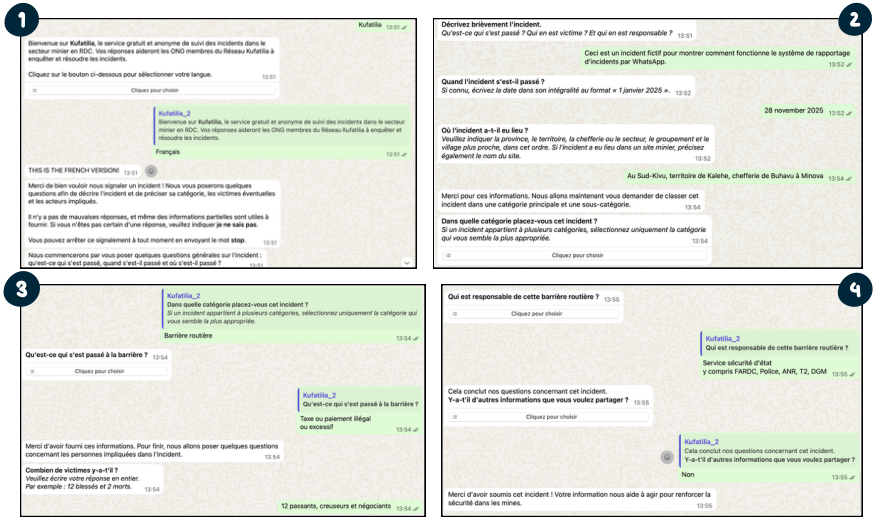
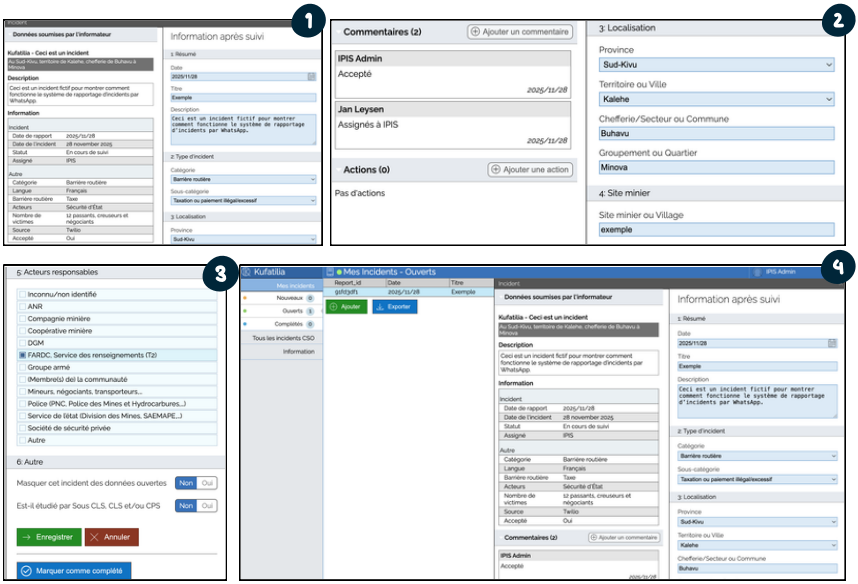


Figure 2 - CSO Facing

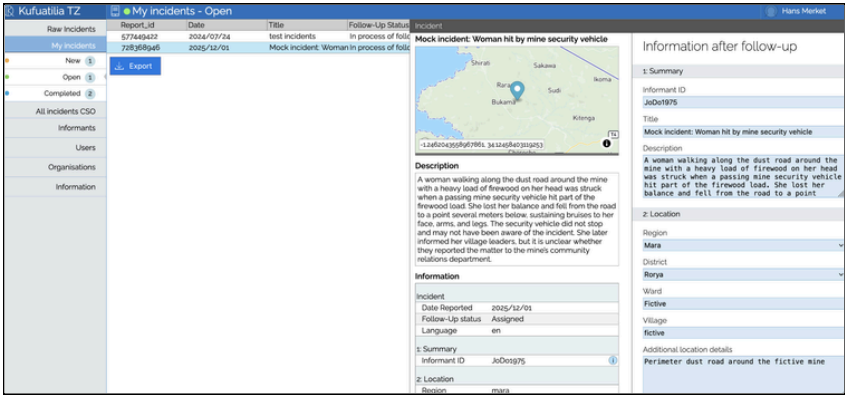


Tanzania: The Kufuatilia Monitoring System

In 2024, IPIS expanded Kufatilia to Tanzania's Shinyanga region, adapting the model to address challenges around LSM operations. Unlike in the DRC, where anyone can send a report via SMS or WhatsApp, incident documentation in Tanzania is carried out by trained monitors from local CSOs. This approach reflects a more controlled reporting environment shaped by regulatory and security considerations.

By relying on trained monitors, IPIS has been able to standardise data collection and ensure higher-quality documentation of incidents, improving the reliability and comparability of reports. As of 2025, incidents are followed up by 4 partner CSOs in the Shinyanga and Mara regions of Tanzania.

Kufuatilia Sample Incident (Tanzania)



Map of Tanzania & Key Differences between Systems

Impact & Next Steps

Kufatilia's Impact in the DRC

Since its launch in 2018, Kufatilia has documented more than 6,000 incidents across eastern DRC. Between October 2023 and October 2025 alone, 1,953 incidents were recorded, with 963 (~50%) marked as "resolved" [Figure 3]. While definitions of resolution differ among civil society partners, the system has improved the visibility of local conflicts and helped channel cases to relevant authorities, companies or humanitarian actors.

The platform has built trust amongst individual miners and their communities who often fear retaliation or lack confidence in formal institutions. An external evaluation conducted in March of 2024 found that an Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) Lieutenant known to be in collaboration with Nvatura and M23 armed groups was reported through Kufatilia and subsequently arrested. In the same report, CSO partners revealed that military personnel no longer dared to go on mining sites for fear of being reported through Kufatilia.

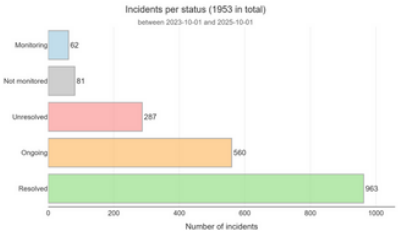


Figure 3 - Courtesy of the IPIS Kufatilia Public Dashboard

Kufatilia has also strengthened coordination among local CSOs, enabling joint advocacy around issues such as illegal taxation, security abuses and mine safety. The system's data has also informed targeted investigations into recurring risks in the artisanal mining sector. One example is a study conducted by Action for Peace and Development (APDE), a Kufatilia partner CSO, in collaboration with IPIS, examining why so many incidents were being reported in Misisi, a key artisanal gold-mining area in South Kivu. The report, "Misisi: Why So Many Incidents in the Gold Supply Chain?",[8] drew on community incident reports and field research to highlight systemic issues such as unsafe mining conditions, mercury pollution, illegal taxation and the presence of armed groups.

Based on these findings, APDE and IPIS issued recommendations calling for the restoration of state authority, improved technical support for miners, safer environmental practices and youth employment initiatives to reduce the risk of recruitment into armed groups. This case demonstrates how the reporting mechanism can support evidence-based advocacy, helping local organisations and authorities identify structural governance challenges that extend beyond isolated incidents.

Despite these gains, IPIS continues to face several challenges in the DRC. Limited budgets and funding constraints complicate engagement with Congolese partners and local or provincial multi-stakeholder committees. Moreover, operating in conflict-affected provinces such as North and South Kivu presents persistent logistical and security difficulties that hinder the consistent functioning of Kufatilia. Nonetheless, the system remains an essential tool for community oversight and accountability within the artisanal mining sector.

Kufuatilia's Impact in Tanzania

Kufatilia's 2024 expansion into Tanzania saw the evolution of Kufatilia from informal ASM settings to LSM contexts. By training incident reporters from local CSOs in Shinyanga and neighbouring regions, IPIS has prioritised data quality and security.

Though still in its second year, the Tanzanian implementation has already encouraged stronger partnerships between community-based organisations and large mining companies. IPIS programme staff note that partner CSOs have begun supporting local residents who submitted grievances through company complaint systems and during compensation processes related to land acquisition or damage caused by mining activities. This improved monitoring of impacts and grievances has, in turn, contributed to greater awareness among mining companies of the risks and community concerns associated with their operations.

Kufuatilia also addresses challenges in the private security sector, an area of growing concern in large-scale mining contexts where accountability mechanisms remain limited. According to local partners, the platform has strengthened both responsiveness and credibility in community advocacy. As Jonathan Kifunda of Thubutu Africa Initiatives (TAI) observed, "Kufuatilia has brought us closer to the communities we support. The system fosters a sense of ownership, empowering people to take action for justice within their own communities".[9]

Like its counterpart in the DRC, IPIS has faced challenges in the implementation and operation of Kufuatilia in Tanzania. Mainly, the system has dealt with difficulty in maintaining engagement with monitors and ensuring incident reports include all relevant information for follow-up. These roadblocks speak to the persistence of IPIS in maintaining operations under challenging conditions and its ongoing efforts to strengthen the quality and consistency of its data.

Next Steps

In the DRC, IPIS aims to strengthen the existing CSO network and build closer collaborations with government agencies, companies and other partners to improve coordination and incident resolution. In Tanzania, the focus will be on supporting partners to independently analyse incidents and develop strategic responses, ensuring that local actors can use data for advocacy and dialogue. Across both countries, the systems are envisioned not only as reporting mechanisms but also as platforms for building long-term local capacity, shifting the emphasis from incident response to prevention and broader systemic change.

Conclusion

Kufatilia demonstrates how locally grounded, digital monitoring systems can bridge the gap between communities and governance structures in resource-rich but fragile environments. Its evolution from an SMS and WhatsApp-based tool in the DRC to a structured CSO-led mechanism in Tanzania underscores the importance of adaptability, trust-building and partnership in scaling responsible mining practices.

As IPIS continues to refine and expand the two systems, Kufatilia stands as a promising model for rights-based, community-driven accountability in the extractive minerals sector—one that aligns with global due diligence standards while responding to the lived realities of miners and their communities.

Recommendations

For organisations and donors supporting responsible mining initiatives, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Invest in local CSO capacity: Sustainable incident monitoring depends on trained and trusted community partners. Support should prioritise skills development, digital literacy and financial independence of CSOs.
2. Support the development of shared standards for incident resolution: Encourage and fund collaborative efforts among implementing partners to define clear resolution criteria and metrics. This will strengthen data comparability and credibility across programmes.
3. Enhance synergies with government agencies and regional bodies: Building bridges between the two systems and governmental actors will enhance accountability, policy alignment and lesson learning without compromising community trust.
4. Adapt technology to local governance realities: Contextual flexibility, such as SMS and WhatsApp in DRC vs. CSO-led reporting in Tanzania, should remain a core design principle.

Sources

[1] International Peace Information Service (IPIS). (n.d.). Kufatilia: Incident reporting and monitoring. https://ipisresearch.be/project/kufatilia-incident-reporting-and-monitoring/

[2] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2016). Due diligence guidance for responsible supply chains of minerals from conflict-affected and high-risk areas (3rd ed.). OECD Publishing. https://mneguidelines.oecd.org/OECD-Due-Diligence-Guidance-Minerals-Edition3.pdf

[3] Responsible Mining Foundation. (2020). Harmful impacts report. Responsible Mining Foundation. https://www.responsibleminingfoundation.org/app/uploads/RMF_Harmful_Impacts_Report_EN.pdf

[4] United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. (n.d.). Democratic Republic of Congo — ASM profile [Web page]. https://knowledge.uneca.org/ASM/drc

[5] International Peace Information Service (IPIS). (2020). Delve country profile: Democratic Republic of Congo. Delve Database. https://www.delvedatabase.org/uploads/resources/Delve-Country-Profile-DRC.pdf

[6] Delve. (2022). How unsafe is ASM? Counting and contextualizing fatality frequency rates. Delve Database. https://www.delvedatabase.org/resources/how-unsafe-is-asm-counting-and-contextualizing-fatality-frequency-rates

[7] Paget, D. (2019, September 19). As Tanzania confronts its industrial miners, what do locals think? African Arguments. https://africanarguments.org/2019/09/as-tanzania-confronts-its-industrial-miners-what-do-locals-think/

[8] Action pour la paix et le développement (APDE). (2019, October). Misisi, pourquoi tant d'incidents dans la chaîne d'approvisionnement de l'or? [Misisi, why so many incidents in the gold supply chain?]. International Peace Information Service. https://ipisresearch.be/publication/voix-du-congo-misisi-pourquoi-tant-dincidents-dans-la-chaine-dapprovisionnement-de-lor/

[9] International Peace Information Service. (2025, July 1). CSOs gather in Dar es Salaam to strategize on engagement with extractive sector companies. IPIS. https://ipisresearch.be/csos-gather-in-dar-es-salaam-to-strategize-on-engagement-with-extractive-sector-companies/

IDG SECURITY

ICOCA

Innovation Award Winner

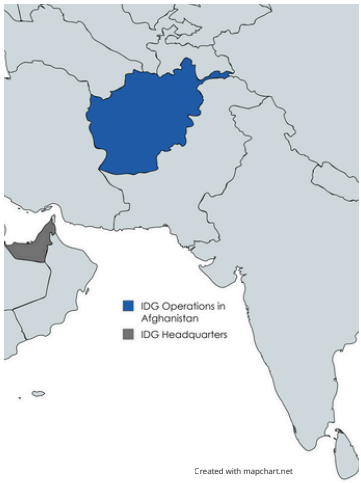
Tracking Private Security's Carbon Footprint: IDG Security and E-Ledgers

Overview

IDG Security successfully piloted the E-Ledgers Carbon Accounting framework in its security operations in Afghanistan, one of the world's most challenging operational environments. This initiative demonstrates IDG's commitment to treating environmental responsibility as a core operational imperative, moving beyond statements of intent to establish a concrete and actionable framework. It also represents a step forward in carbon emissions due diligence for the private security industry. By applying the precision of financial accounting to environmental management, IDG generated a first-pass estimate of emissions with unprecedented accuracy. The pilot suggests that rigorous, bottom-up carbon accounting is feasible and beneficial for similar private security companies (PSCs) operating in remote or unstable environments.

Context

Climate change has become a critical factor shaping the operational landscape in Afghanistan. Although the country contributes minimally to global greenhouse gas emissions, it faces severe consequences of climate disruption, including drought, water scarcity and the loss of agricultural livelihoods. These environmental pressures exacerbate poverty, displacement and local insecurity.



Between 2021 and 2024, nearly three million people in Afghanistan were displaced by natural-hazard events such as droughts, floods, heavy snow and avalanches, and in 2024 alone more than 500,000 internally displaced people were recorded.[1] The country experiences overlapping extreme events, with drought-affected areas, flash floods and heavy snowfall increasingly interacting, undermining resilience and presenting recurrent risks to communities.[2] These hazards disproportionately affect the most vulnerable populations, with livelihoods reliant on rain-fed agriculture or pastoralism often collapsing during drought, while floods and snowstorms destroy crops, livestock and shelter.

For IDG Security, these environmental pressures directly impact personnel, clients and the communities in which it operates. Recognising this, the company has reframed environmental responsibility as an operational necessity rather than a peripheral concern.

The Importance of Carbon Accounting

Carbon accounting, defined as the process of quantifying and reporting greenhouse gas emissions, has become a central pillar of responsible business practice across industries. Once considered a voluntary exercise, it is increasingly moving toward a regulatory requirement as governments introduce mandatory disclosure frameworks.[3]

In 2024, the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Foundation and its International Sustainability Standards Board introduced new global benchmarks for corporate transparency: the S1 Sustainability-related Disclosure and S2 Climate-related Disclosure standards. These standards aim to create a consistent framework for how organisations measure and communicate their climate impacts. Many countries are now preparing to embed these principles into national reporting systems.[4] For the private security sector, this shift reinforces the need for robust carbon accounting systems that can deliver reliable, auditable data to clients and regulators alike.

E-Ledgers Carbon Accounting

E-Ledgers, developed through a partnership between Professors Robert Kaplan and Karthik Ramanna and the E-Ledgers programme, represents a major methodological shift in how organisations measure and manage their carbon emissions. The system applies the logic of cost-based financial accounting to environmental impacts, enabling companies to track emissions with a degree of precision traditionally used in monetary transactions.[5]

Conventional reporting frameworks, such as those based on the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, rely heavily on broad averages, sector-level emission factors and estimated upstream impacts. As highlighted in a 2024 Harvard Business Review (HBR) article on the Afghanistan pilot, these limitations often lead to inconsistent reporting and an inability to verify supply-chain emissions with any real confidence.[6] In complex operations, this lack of traceability can obscure the true sources of carbon impact and undermine efforts to manage emissions effectively.

E-Ledgers addresses these shortcomings by requiring companies to measure emissions at the point of origin and then allocate them throughout the value chain. By combining direct emissions data with supplier-reported figures, the method captures the embedded carbon in every input and assigns it proportionally to the products or services generated. This produces auditable, real-time data that mirrors the accuracy and traceability of financial ledgers.[7]

This approach is especially valuable for organisations operating in environments where traditional assumptions about emissions sources do not hold. The HBR article notes that rigorous accounting often reveals unexpected drivers of a company's footprint, such as food systems, life-support logistics or other non-fuel-related operations, areas that standard estimation models tend to overlook.[8] The framework therefore shifts carbon accounting from a compliance-oriented exercise to a tool that can meaningfully inform operational decision-making.

For IDG Security, the relevance of E-Ledgers lay in its ability to produce reliable, bottom-up data even in the most challenging contexts. The system's emphasis on supply-chain traceability, internal operational discipline and verifiable allocation rules aligned directly with IDG's objective to establish an environmental accounting model that could withstand scrutiny from clients, auditors and regulators.[9]

IDG's Afghanistan Pilot

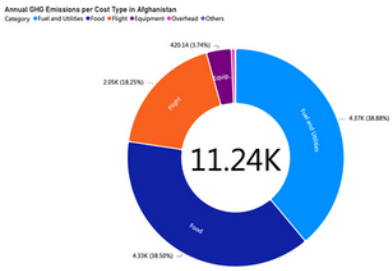
IDG is among the first private security companies to pilot the E-Ledgers carbon accounting framework, conducting the initiative in Afghanistan, an environment with significant operational and logistical challenges. The pilot focused on measuring the carbon footprint of delivering security services to 35 UN sites across the country, providing a clear and measurable operational output.

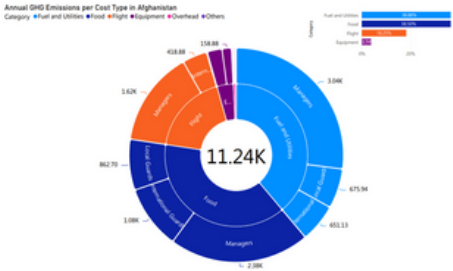
To ensure accurate, bottom-up emissions accounting, the team examined every component involved in delivering these services. This included personnel recruitment and training, transportation and equipment provisioning, food supply and life-support systems, and corporate overheads such as IDG's headquarters in Dubai. Procurement staff were trained to collect detailed supplier-level information, including the origin of food products, the use of fertilisers or pesticides, transportation modes and distances and delivery frequency, which is often difficult to capture in high-risk, remote environments.

The assessment also considered differences between personnel groups, including Western ex-servicemen, Nepalese Gurkhas and local Afghan staff, reflecting variations in diet, accommodation, energy use and logistical support requirements. Western personnel had higher emissions associated with food and energy use, while local Afghan staff proved to be the most emissions-efficient on a per-service basis. The level of detail in this approach allows E-Ledgers to identify emissions sources that might otherwise be overlooked in complex service operations.

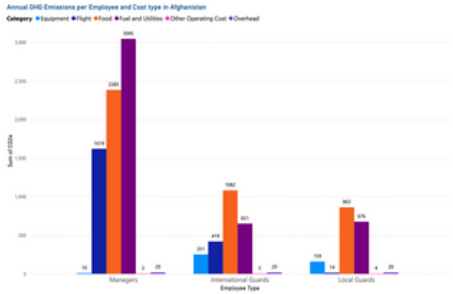
Evidence of Impact

The E-Ledgers pilot revealed that food-related emissions were the single largest contributor to IDG's carbon footprint, accounting for 38.5% of total emissions. This proportion exceeded emissions from transportation, fuel consumption and air travel for senior managers. The high level of food-related emissions reflected both the company's provision of full life support for many on-site personnel and inefficiencies in local supply chains, including transportation, storage and handling of food.[10]

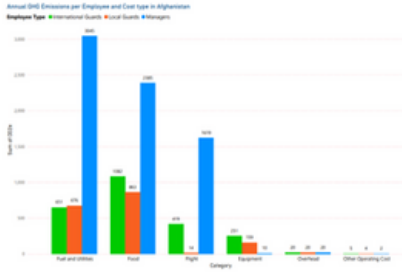




The E-Ledgers methodology made it possible to quantify emissions for each component of service delivery, from equipment use and training to headquarters overhead. This transparency allowed IDG to see where emissions were concentrated and identify actionable opportunities for reduction, turning abstract environmental metrics into operationally useful information.



The results highlighted the need to balance sustainability objectives with critical operational requirements. While the data identified opportunities for emissions reduction, decisions regarding staff nutrition, safety and morale could not be compromised without jeopardising mission-critical performance in a high-stress environment. Rigorous accounting supports operational decision-making by revealing trade-offs and informing strategies that reduce emissions without undermining essentials.



Next Steps

Following the initial pilot, IDG plans to refine its data-gathering processes to improve accuracy and efficiency. The company will also seek external verification of its emissions results to enhance credibility and transparency. Over time, this process is expected to enable IDG to implement targeted interventions, optimise supply chains and promote evidence-based sustainability practices across its operations. This model, if adopted more widely, could set a new standard for private security companies operating in high-risk environments, demonstrating that environmental responsibility and operational effectiveness are compatible goals.

Conclusion

By embedding rigorous carbon accounting into its operational framework, IDG Security demonstrates that environmental responsibility can be systematically pursued alongside operational imperatives. The company is setting a standard for private security organisations operating in challenging environments, showing that actionable and verifiable carbon emissions data can be integrated into complex service operations. A clear example of this is IDG's decision to include monthly CO_2 totals on invoices to its UN clients, making emissions reporting a routine and transparent part of service delivery. Its experience demonstrates that robust sustainability management is achievable when organisations are committed, innovative and prepared to measure and manage their environmental impact systematically.

Adopting the E-Ledgers approach allows companies to see their environmental footprint as a quantifiable metric rather than a vague cost. This transforms the abstract concept of climate impact into auditable and actionable data that informs strategic decisions on resource allocation and risk management, supporting both operational and sustainability objectives. IDG Security's example highlights how a private security company can lead the way in combining operational excellence with environmental accountability, providing a model for the wider industry to follow.

Recommendations

IDG's experience offers valuable guidance for other private security companies:

1. **Feasibility for similar PSCs**: IDG's experience suggests that the E-Ledgers methodology is practicable for other private security companies operating in comparable high-risk environments.
2. **Leverage internal expertise**: Companies can use existing operational and accounting capabilities internally to achieve broad engagement and avoid costly reliance on external consultants.
3. **Challenge assumptions**: Rigorous, bottom-up data collection is vital as it challenges prior assumptions and uncovers unexpected emissions sources, such as supply chain inefficiencies, that might otherwise remain hidden.
4. **Promote transparency**: Full transparency is essential. Sharing audited carbon accounts with clients allows them to make procurement decisions based on verifiable data, fostering trust and encouraging responsible supplier selection.
5. **Supplier collaboration**: Accuracy improves when organisations collaborate with suppliers, and encouraging them to adopt the same methodology creates a cascading effect of accountability across the supply chain.

Sources

[1] International Organization for Migration. (2025, July). *Data Update: Climate — Afghanistan*. In *DTM Insight July 2025 Edition*. https://dtm.iom.int/dtm-insights/july-2025-edition/data-update-climate-afghanistan

[2] Ibid.

[3] Amel-Zadeh, A., & Tang, Q. (2025). *Managing the shift from voluntary to mandatory climate disclosure: The role of carbon accounting. The British Accounting Review*, 57(2), Article 101594. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bar.2025.101594

[4] Ibid.

[5] Kaplan, R. & Ramanna, K. "Accounting for Climate Change." *Harvard Business Review*, Nov–Dec 2021. https://hbr.org/2021/11/accounting-for-climate-change

[6] Ramanna, K. "What Companies Can Learn from a Carbon Accounting Pilot in Afghanistan." *Harvard Business Review*, October 7, 2024. https://hbr.org/2024/10/what-companies-can-learn-from-a-carbon-accounting-pilot-in-afghanistan

[7] Kaplan, R. & Ramanna, K. "Accounting for Climate Change." *Harvard Business Review*, Nov–Dec 2021. https://hbr.org/2021/11/accounting-for-climate-change

[8] Ramanna, K. "What Companies Can Learn from a Carbon Accounting Pilot in Afghanistan." *Harvard Business Review*, October 7, 2024. https://hbr.org/2024/10/what-companies-can-learn-from-a-carbon-accounting-pilot-in-afghanistan

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

Crisis Response in Myanmar: IDG Security

Overview

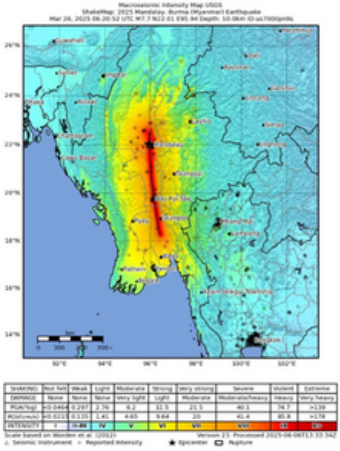
The 2025 Myanmar earthquake presented one of the most complex operating environments IDG Security has faced in recent years. Amidst large-scale devastation, political instability and severe constraints on mobility and communication, the company was required to protect its staff welfare, maintain essential operations and respond compassionately to the urgent needs of affected communities.

This case study examines IDG Security's approach during the crisis, highlighting how the company upheld its commitment to responsible security through human rights due diligence, community engagement, sustainable practice and support for economic stability. It showcases the practical application of IDG's values in an environment marked by uncertainty and demonstrates how responsible security can reinforce resilience for employees, clients and communities alike.

Context

Myanmar Crisis

On 28 March 2025, a catastrophic magnitude 7.7 earthquake struck Myanmar's Sagaing region near Mandalay, reaching Mercalli Intensity X – a level of force capable of destroying even well-constructed buildings. One month later, the United Nations reported 3,700 fatalities, 5,100 people injured and a further 115 still missing. An estimated 6.3 million people were expected to require assistance.[1] Homes, monasteries, schools and critical infrastructure collapsed across the region, displacing many thousands.



The scale of destruction was compounded by Myanmar's ongoing civil conflict. Many affected areas were already subject to instability, limited state services and restricted access for humanitarian organisations. Entire communities were left without shelter, clean water or essential supplies, and relief efforts faced persistent obstacles from damaged roads, disrupted communications and active conflict zones.

IDG Myanmar, headquartered in Yangon, was operating across various regions at the time of the earthquake. The company's immediate concern was the safety of its personnel, many of whom lived in affected areas. Fortunately, no employees lost their lives, however several colleagues and their families saw their homes destroyed or significantly damaged, and many were left without access to basic necessities. IDG faced a dual challenge: ensuring the security of sites and clients at a time of heightened risk and responding rapidly to the urgent welfare needs of its own staff and the communities they were part of.

Best Practices

Human Rights Initiatives

Internally, IDG's longstanding focus on employee welfare played a central role. The company maintains policies that support staff dignity and wellbeing, including equitable pay, cultural celebration bonuses, discretionary support for life events, comprehensive insurance, paid maternity and adoption leave, and compassionate leave. These measures underpin a workplace culture built on fairness, respect and solidarity. This foundation is strengthened through IDG's participation in programmes that promote mental health, financial literacy and team cohesion, alongside initiatives such as SafeHaven and regular sports events.

During the aftermath of the earthquake, these commitments translated into practical support. IDG provided emergency relief to affected personnel and families, including dry rations, clean water, essential medicines and financial assistance through the Chairman's Fund. Welfare representatives maintained regular contact with colleagues who had lost homes or were caring for injured family members. The company ensured that staff were never left without support during one of the most turbulent periods in Myanmar's recent history.

A key strength of IDG's response was the Gurkha-inspired ethos of camaraderie and unity that characterises the organisation. This sense of mutual responsibility strengthened internal resilience and enabled teams to navigate the crisis with empathy and discipline. Externally, it enhanced trust among clients and communities, reinforcing IDG's reputation as a responsible security provider committed to principled conduct even under extreme pressure.

Community Engagement

IDG's approach to community engagement during the crisis focused on practical support, close coordination with local partners and a commitment to meeting needs identified by those most affected. Senior managers visited disaster-hit areas including Mandalay and Tada-U to review damage, speak directly with affected employees and understand community priorities. These consultations helped identify where assistance could be provided most effectively.

IDG also contributed to broader local relief activities by collaborating with community organisations and local leaders. This included distributing supplies, offering logistical support and participating in local coordination efforts aimed at stabilising affected neighbourhoods. The company's willingness to work alongside local partners strengthened existing relationships and demonstrated a genuine commitment to shared recovery.

Sustainability

During the Myanmar earthquake response, maintaining strict sustainability protocols was not always feasible due to the urgent humanitarian needs and logistical constraints. Nonetheless, IDG took steps to ensure that relief efforts were carried out responsibly wherever possible. This included sourcing supplies from responsible vendors, prioritising local procurement and maintaining waste management practices even when circumstances were challenging.

IDG's broader sustainability commitments, which emphasise transparency, responsible sourcing and environmental stewardship, guided the company's approach. While the primary focus was on protecting lives and supporting communities, IDG sought to ensure that its actions did not exacerbate environmental pressures in an already fragile landscape.

Economic Stability

In a country already facing economic hardship, the earthquake further disrupted livelihoods and strained local systems. IDG Security's continued operations provided an element of stability at a time when many businesses were forced to suspend activity.

The company maintained regular employment and ensured timely pay for all staff despite significant operational challenges. This consistency offered critical support to employees and their families, enabling them to manage immediate needs and maintain a degree of financial stability amidst wider economic disruption.
IDG also contributed to the local economy by sourcing relief materials and services from local vendors where possible. While modest in the context of national recovery efforts, these actions reinforced the company's commitment to responsible business practice and supported economic continuity within its operational footprint.

Evidence of Impact

IDG's response generated clear operational, humanitarian and community-level outcomes. Deploying teams to the affected region enabled rapid, first-hand assessment of damage and cut through early miscommunication, allowing managers to confirm the status of employees, reassure clients and identify immediate risks to sites. At one location that had been completely destroyed, a team of IDG guards evacuated the client while maintaining security coverage to protect remaining assets.

Across operational areas, IDG's coordination of the purchase and distribution of medical supplies and other essentials ensured that client sites could remain functional for at least seven days without external support. Based on assessments of the damage to employees' homes, financial assistance through the Chairman's Fund was provided directly to affected guards to support urgent repairs and ensure their living conditions were safe.

IDG further mitigated post-earthquake risks by issuing clear guidance for staff and clients on aftershocks, unsafe structures, sanitation, disease exposure and emergency procedures. This information, combined with in-person checks and consistent communication, helped stabilise operations and supported both employees and clients during the most critical phase of the disaster.

Conclusion

IDG Security's response to the 2025 Myanmar earthquake demonstrated the practical value of responsible security in a highly complex and volatile operating environment. The organisation's human rights commitments were evident in the immediate support provided to employees and their families, while its community engagement was swift, respectful and grounded in local priorities at a time of fragile public confidence. IDG also helped sustain economic stability through continued employment and local procurement, and remained attentive to its environmental responsibilities even under severe operational pressure.

IDG's actions in Myanmar also reflect a broader organisational pattern. Across the countries in which it operates, the company has consistently extended similar support—providing monthly care hampers to staff during COVID-19, assisting communities affected by the Afghanistan earthquake and deploying teams to remote sites to deliver financial aid to impacted civilians, whether employees or local residents.

Overall, the case proves that responsible security is not only feasible but essential in crisis-affected environments. IDG's actions demonstrated how a values-driven approach can strengthen resilience for employees, clients and communities amidst extreme crises.

Recommendations

IDG's response to the 2025 Myanmar earthquake offers several lessons for private security companies operating in crisis-affected or unstable environments:

1. **Strengthen staff welfare systems:** PSCs should have clear welfare policies, emergency assistance procedures and communication channels in place before crises occur.
2. **Maintain human rights standards in emergencies:** Crisis conditions must not weaken due diligence. All actions should minimise risks to staff, communities and vulnerable groups.
3. **Engage communities directly:** Consult local leaders and affected employees to ensure support aligns with real needs and does not unintentionally disrupt recovery.
4. **Support local economies:** Where feasible, maintain employment and source goods and services locally to provide stability during disruption.
5. **Improve crisis preparedness in unstable operating contexts:** Reliable communication, staff accountability measures and clear reporting lines help maintain safety and continuity.
6. **Capture lessons learned:** PSCs should document crisis experiences and feed them into improved policies and training.

Sources

[1] United Nations in Myanmar. (2025, April). Myanmar earthquake: One-month impact report (March–April 2025). https://myanmar.un.org/en/293599-myanmar-earthquake-one-month-impact-report-march-april-2025