

When environmental activist [Ken Saro-Wiwa](#) was executed by the Nigerian Government in 1995, oil giant, Shell, made global headlines for alleged complicity in human rights violations. This case drew attention to the activities of multinational corporations (MNCs) operating abroad and gave rise to a vigorous debate on the human rights obligations of business. Twenty years on, it is now generally accepted that MNCs do have a responsibility to respect human rights, even if their host countries and security forces do not share the same commitment. This is reflected in the United Nations' first endorsement of a business and human rights initiative, the '[Protect, Respect and Remedy](#)' Framework and the widespread adoption of human rights policies by individual companies.

A prominent concern within the extractive industries is risks associated with the employment of public and private security guards at large resource sites. MNCs are apprehensive about being seen as complicit in human rights abuses through security payments and collaboration with security personnel. To help address these concerns, governments, extractive companies and non-government organisations have collaborated to develop the [Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights](#) (VPs), a set of principles that guide companies in how to maintain the safety of their operations alongside a commitment to international human rights standards. Importantly, the VPs recognise that companies can play a supportive role in security-sector reform, as reflected in the growing number of firms ([including Shell](#)) actively engaged in providing human rights training for security personnel. This In Brief discusses what is considered one of the first applications of the VPs: [BP's Integrated Community Based Security](#) (ICBS) strategy in West Papua. Specifically, it draws on interviews conducted as part of a major study on corporate social responsibility and natural resource conflict that describes how this model was formulated by BP Indonesia executives (McKenna in press).

Indonesia's handling of human rights has led it to be considered 'one of three countries (along with Colombia and Nigeria) in which human rights in the corporate sphere are most obviously endangered' (Ballard 2001:9). This is especially true in West

Papua where there are ongoing allegations of [torture](#), forced disappearances, [extra-judicial killings](#) and the application of [treason and blasphemy laws](#) to limit freedom of expression.

Human rights violations have been of particular concern in areas surrounding Freeport-McMoRan's [Grasberg mining complex](#). With a financial interest in maintaining a presence at Grasberg, the Indonesian military has been accused of orchestrating numerous [shooting incidents](#) in the area and then blaming the attacks on Papuan separatists. Those who link the shootings to the military believe they are an attempt by the military to demonstrate their importance to Freeport in order to secure ongoing security payments. These shootings, along with other violent incidents (Ballard 2001), have raised questions about whether it is possible for MNCs to invest in West Papua, while maintaining a commitment to human rights principles.

BP entered West Papua in 2005 as the operator of the [Tangguh Liquefied Natural Gas](#) (LNG) project. Based on the prior experience of Freeport, BP acknowledged that security would be the most difficult and sensitive issue the company would face in its Tangguh operations. As with Freeport, BP is required to subsidise public security expenses mandated by the government but, as an alternative to relying upon the Indonesian security forces, has implemented the ICBS strategy.

The development of ICBS came in response to recommendations by international human rights consultants that BP should limit the deployment of security personnel in the vicinity of the Tangguh project. Following local, regional and national consultations on how this might be achieved, a concept was identified in Indonesian defence doctrine referring to a model of community policing that had never been used to provide security at a major extractive site. When this was discovered,

BP organised a national conference of community security with the national security guardian board, with the generals who train the police on the philosophy of the country. They advised us to bring this to the national

security board for them to agree ... We said it is the same as community-based policing. (BP Indonesia employee, interview with author, Jakarta)

Three specific commitments BP has made with regard to ICBS include: (1) the use of an unarmed 'inner ring' of Papuans, many from the local area, for everyday security of the project, (2) a commitment to only call the police, not the military, and only if a security problem escalates, and (3) the provision of human rights training (including the VPs and United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force) for ICBS, police and military personnel who would be called in if a security incident were to intensify (TIAP 2014).

BP has received praise for its security approach in West Papua. Internationally, it is cited as [an example of 'innovation' in conflict-sensitive business practice](#). ICBS has also attracted recommendation within Indonesia, with claims from a panel established by BP 'to provide external advice to senior BP decision-makers regarding non-commercial aspects of the Tangguh LNG Project' (TIAP 2014:1) that 'security officials are encouraging other companies to adopt similar security models' (ibid.:21). On the other hand, the same source suggests 'there is little familiarity' with the ICBS system at the national level, but 'there is relief that it seems to be working effectively and that no security or human rights issues have developed at Tangguh' (ibid.:9). Adding further complexity is that little independent research on ICBS has been conducted.

While it is reported that 'no political violence, separatist inspired or otherwise' (TIAP 2014:19) has occurred at Tangguh, BP has faced similar problems to Freeport with regard to the Indonesian security forces' history of economic interests in natural resource projects. One of the biggest risks the company has faced in its implementation of ICBS is that Indonesian security forces might orchestrate attacks similar to the shooting incidents around Freeport. Indonesian military agents were suspected of provoking violence even before the construction of Tangguh in 'an unconventional bid for a lucrative "protection" contract' (Kirksey 2009:150–1). Kirksey and Grimston (20/7/2003) also claim that while BP has sought to cut the military out of a security deal, 'the company is using officers from the country's feared Mobile Police Brigade (Brimob) — which has

been [accused of numerous human rights abuses](#)'.

Further, even though ICBS has been well received by some Papuan non-government organisation workers and religious leaders, not all Papuans are convinced about community security. As one Papuan religious leader commented, 'I am still so pessimistic about this because they are contractors for the government. There must be government responsibility inside to protect—there must be army or policemen inside even if not in uniform' (interview with author, Jayapura).

BP's ICBS strategy in West Papua suggests that international business and human rights initiatives might open valuable opportunities for MNCs to contribute to security-sector reform in their areas of operation. Before promoting ICBS as a 'model program', however, it is crucial that more research be conducted into how successful this strategy actually is, how it works, how it relates to non-security-related human rights concerns (e.g. discrimination), and how BP's ability to implement ICBS might reflect on broader changes within the political economies of West Papua and Indonesia. If, in fact, BP is deemed to have successfully avoided human rights violations after 10 years of operations in West Papua, ICBS might offer important lessons on human rights protection at other extractive sites, both within Indonesia and internationally.

Author Notes

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