

Safeguarding the Rights and Well-being of Rangers

PART 1 | Principles



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The International Ranger Federation (IRF) was founded on 31 July 1992 in Peak National Park in the UK. The IRF provides a global forum for rangers from around the world to share their successes and failures in protecting the world's natural heritage and to promote the exchange of information and technology from countries in which protected area management enjoys broad public and government support, to countries in which it is less supported. 165 ranger associations from national, state and territorial entities have affiliated with the IRF. For more information please visit www.internationalrangers.org.



URSA is a global coalition of conservation organisations building a network of well-supported, professional, and capable rangers, who can act effectively as custodians of the natural world. We advocate for the creation of inclusive and effective teams at the forefront of protecting nature, people, and the planet. Our priorities include representation, recognition, and resources for rangers around the world. For more information please visit ursa4rangers.org.



Asesoramiento Ambiental Estratégico (AAE) is a Uruguayan environmental consultancy firm established in 2012, providing advice to organisations, communities, governments and the private sector interested in improving their environmental performance while fulfilling their aspirations. AAE has a dedicated department working on social and environmental safeguards in conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation projects, tailoring teams as needed, e.g. to include legal, gender, IP and engagement experts. For more information please visit www.aae.com.uy.

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Estuary fish monitoring. © Peter Chadwick 2020

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Marine rangers undertaking a boat patrol, Mombasa Marine Protected Area, Kenya | Peter Chadwick

Kidai ranger station in the northern sector of Selous Game Reserve, Tanzania. © Greg Armfield / WWF

Gudjuda Ranger out on the water near Bowen, Australia. © Leonie Sii / WWF-Aus

Table of Contents

Acronyms	5
Key definitions	6
Introduction	8
Scope	8
What are the Principles for Safeguarding the Rights and Well-being of Rangers?	9
Structure of the principles.....	9
The Principles	11
Overarching principle: Applying a human rights-based approach.....	11
1. Ensuring rangers have a clear mandate and role.....	12
2. Acting within and respecting the Code of Conduct	12
3. Securing equality and non-discrimination	13
4. Ensuring due process and access to remedy (judicial and non-judicial).....	15
5. Enabling access to information and participation	15
6. Supporting ranger welfare through good employment conditions	15
7. Promoting integrity in the ranger workforce.....	16
8. Fostering transparent and effective collaboration.....	16
9. Building and consolidating mutual respect	18
10. Conferring and exercising responsible authority	18
Implementing the Principles	20
References	21

Acronyms

AAE	Asesoramiento Ambiental Estratégico
CoC	Global Ranger Code of Conduct
CI	Conservation International
FFI	Fauna and Flora International
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPLCs	Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities
IRF	International Ranger Federation
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and others
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PCAs	Protected and Conserved Areas
URSA	Universal Ranger Support Alliance
ZSL	Zoological Society of London

Key definitions

Indigenous Peoples as defined by IUCN follows the definition or “statement of coverage” contained in the International Labour Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169). Therefore, it includes: (1) peoples who identify themselves as “Indigenous”; (2) tribal peoples whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations; (3) traditional peoples not necessarily called Indigenous or tribal but who share the same characteristics of social, cultural and economic conditions that distinguish them from other sections of the national community, whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions, and whose livelihoods are closely connected to ecosystems and their goods and services (IUCN 2017).

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Local communities cover a vast array of individuals and groups ranging from living in and relying on a protected or conserved area for their livelihoods, to local people using the area for recreation (Stolton *et al.* 2022).

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Protected and Conserved Areas include protected areas, such as national parks and nature reserves, as well as areas conserved by Indigenous Peoples and local communities. They are established, governed or managed to maintain their significant values for society. While always having outcomes that include the persistence of ecosystems, species and genes both locally and in the wider landscape and seascape, they also have a diversity of ecosystem functions that are valuable for human livelihoods, health and well-being (Fischborn *et al.* 2021).

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Rangers as defined by the IRF are individuals or groups of individuals that play a critical role in conservation. Rangers are responsible for safeguarding nature, and cultural and historical heritage, and protecting the rights and well-being of present and future generations. As representatives of their authority, organisation or community, they work, often for extended periods, in protected and conserved areas and wider land and seascapes, whether state, regional, communal, Indigenous or private, in line with legal and institutional frameworks (IRF 2021).

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Safeguarding broadly means preventing harm to people – and the environment – in the delivery of development and humanitarian assistance (SRSB 2022). The term can also be extended to include to appropriately respond when harm does occur (UKCDR 2022). Thereby, safeguarding combines a proactive preventive and a mitigating approach. In the context of the present document, the term refers to preventing harm to vulnerable groups rangers come into contact with as well as rangers themselves.



Ranger on her horse on the family farm, municipality of Calamar, Guaviare Department, Colombia. © Luis Barreto / WWF-UK

1. Introduction

Scope

Rangers are nature's first responders. Their roles are remarkably diverse and can include activities as different as welcoming visitors, defending flagship species from poachers, enforcing laws and regulations, monitoring biodiversity, building awareness and working with local communities. It is part of the job of rangers to uphold human rights, to build up and maintain trusting relationships with stakeholders and to treat everyone equitably and respectfully. Their jobs require numerous skills and in-depth knowledge of the environmental and socio-cultural context in which they work. At the same time, their jobs can be dangerous, they may be far away from their families for extended time periods, all too often they are under-equipped, poorly supported and under-valued. Many rangers (as individuals and collectively) are placed in positions of significant vulnerability and danger (see Box 1), are subject to mistreatment and injustice and lack the means to ensure their rights and well-being. This situation not only undermines their performance and effectiveness, it is also likely to increase the likelihood of serious errors of judgement and misconduct.

Box 1. Ranger deaths in the line of duty

Death in the line of duty is not rare within the ranger workforce. It is estimated that at least 1,535 rangers have lost their lives between 2006 and 2021, with Asia and Africa being the regions that experienced the highest number of ranger fatalities (80 percent of the overall total). Felonious homicides (poachers, militants/rebels, and organised crime groups) are the most common cause of death. Non-felonious causes include animal attacks, vehicle and aircraft accidents, firefighting, drowning, and illness. (Galliers *et al.* 2022)

The principles set out in this document and the accompanying guidance are the result of a review of existing information on rangers and safeguards, two scoping workshops and two additional workshops with representatives of organisations working with or supporting rangers, as well as from the ranger workforce itself, to present the draft outputs. The principles were derived from information and case studies presented by workshop participants and from available information that highlighted major shortcomings in safeguarding the rights and well-being of rangers and clearly pointed at gaps and needs in existing safeguards from a ranger perspective. Further consultations took place with social safeguards experts, rangers, community experts, Indigenous representatives and conservation organisations.

The main focus of the principles and guidance is safeguarding the rights and well-being of rangers themselves, which are widely neglected (e.g., Singh *et al.* 2020).

They should be considered as complementary to the requirement for adoption of broader social safeguarding policies and measures. Social safeguarding aims to avoid, reduce, or mitigate the risks and adverse impacts of projects and other interventions on people, with a particular emphasis on abuse, neglect and violation of rights. Safeguarding is usually achieved through the adoption of standards, policies, implementation mechanisms, and compliance systems that govern how activities are carried out as well as mechanisms for monitoring and reporting and for appropriate redress. Box 2 identifies the vulnerable groups that rangers are most likely to come into contact with.

Box 2. Potentially vulnerable individuals and groups with which rangers are likely to interact

- :: Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC), living in or near or making use of areas overseen by rangers.
- :: Children, as members of other groups, or specifically as participants in educational activities, junior ranger schemes, camps, etc.
- :: Tourists and visitors: Rangers may be responsible for leading interpretive, recreational and educational events and for supervising guided tours, public campgrounds, etc.
- :: Displaced people, refugees and other vulnerable groups passing through or seeking refuge in areas overseen by rangers.
- :: People subject to/caught up in law enforcement activities (searches, sweeps, raids, etc.).
- :: People who are detained for investigations and/or as suspects.
- :: Vulnerable families and dependents of detainees.

Misconduct by rangers towards communities or individuals has been an issue of considerable concern, which has damaged the reputation of the ranger workforce and undermined the overall approaches adopted by conservation projects and protected area authorities (e.g., Tauli-Corpuz 2020, Duffy *et al.* 2019). Misconduct should never occur, and as a strong international response to such known cases the International Ranger Federation (IRF) created a Code of Conduct (CoC) and associated guidance to be adapted, implemented and supported by ranger employers, ranger associations and conservation organisations (IRF 2021a and b). Further initiatives are planned for advising ranger employees, associations and supporters on comprehensive systems for social safeguarding.

What are the Principles for Safeguarding the Rights and Well-being of Rangers?

The principles provide a framework for and connect existing efforts to improve the working environment and conditions for rangers, while also filling identified gaps to ensure that rangers are (and feel) safe and supported. The principles contribute towards the aim to establish a **motivated ranger workforce** that applies a **human-rights based approach** to their work, based on **trusted relationships with vulnerable individuals and groups** they come into contact with. No one principle alone will achieve this aim, instead all of them are linked and each provides its own important contributions.

The principles are not a to-do list or a not-to-do list for rangers. While rangers, whether officially employed or working as volunteers, are the focus of the principles, the overall aim of the principles can only be achieved with support of all stakeholders, including governments, organisations employing or supporting rangers, the general public and local communities (see Figure 2). Ideally, the principles would be institutionalised by organisations supporting rangers, employing rangers or working with rangers in any other constellation. Most usefully, they would be tailored to different geographic circumstances before awareness is raised of their existence, or before they are integrated into existing organisational procedures and safeguards systems. Where this is achieved, it may even be regarded favourably by donors and funding agencies, who are increasingly requiring the adherence to and implementation of social and environmental safeguards in all their financial

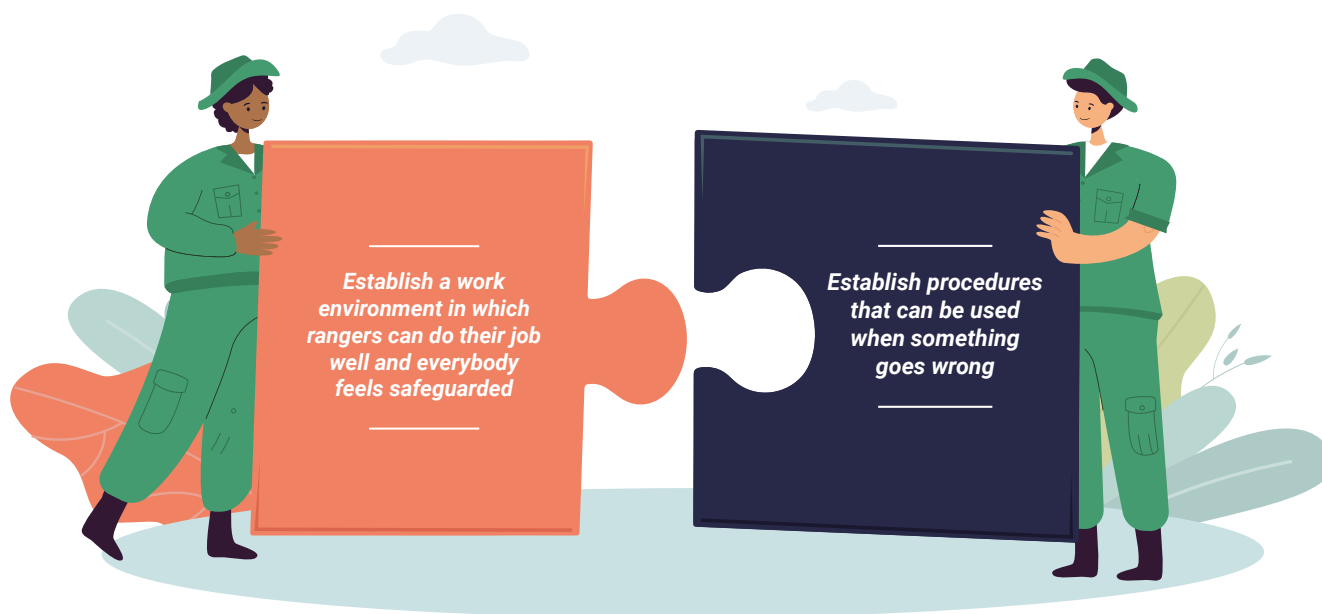
interventions (e.g. the World Bank, IDB, KfW, GCF, GEF, etc.). The accompanying guidance document is designed to facilitate the institutionalisation of the principles (Barrueco *et al.* 2022). It includes tools and templates for the development of a tailored safeguarding policy for rangers and an accompanying grievance redress mechanism. URSA partners and other institutions supporting government agencies or working with rangers, including volunteer and community rangers and casual labour/temporary staff¹, can play a crucial role in the adoption and implementation of the principles.

Structure of the Principles

The document sets out a list of principles to help establish 1) proactive measures to avoid, or where this is impossible, minimise, situations in which rangers or people they come into contact with may not be safeguarded, and 2) reactive mitigating measures to address situations in which rangers or people they come into contact with did not feel safeguarded (Figure 1). Establishing a work environment² in which rangers feel safe and valued, and can do their jobs well, can help avoid, or at least reduce situations that may result in conflict, tension and misunderstanding. Implementing the code of conduct and providing human rights, including gender training, can further help avoid misconduct. However, it is of equal importance to have a safety net in place for when avoidance fails; this requires establishing redress and remediation procedures.

Applying a human rights-based approach in the ranger workforce can be considered the overarching principle, under which all others are placed and with which all others are linked.

Figure 1. Two-pronged approach to building the Safeguarding Principles for Rangers



1 Casual labour/temporary staff (see: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/casual-labour/> <https://www.davidsonmorris.com/casual-worker/>) is sometimes used to fill employment gaps, which in this case would be rangers. However, they often work under different contractual conditions than rangers.

2 A work environment is the setting, social features and physical conditions in which you perform your job. These elements can impact feelings of wellbeing, workplace relationships, collaboration, efficiency and employee health. The significant aspects of a work environment are the company/organisation's culture, the physical environment and the employment conditions



Marine Rangers visiting a rural school, Quifuki Island, Mozambique

2. The Principles

Overarching Principle: Applying a human rights-based approach

Human rights are universal legal guarantees protecting individuals and groups against actions and omissions that interfere with fundamental freedoms, entitlements and human dignity. They are inalienable, interrelated, interdependent and indivisible (OHCHR 2012). They include civil and political rights (e.g., the right to participate in public affairs, freedom from torture and arbitrary detention), economic, social and cultural rights (e.g., the right to food, social security and education) and collective rights (e.g., the right to development, the rights of Indigenous Peoples) (OHCHR 1966a & b, UN 1948).

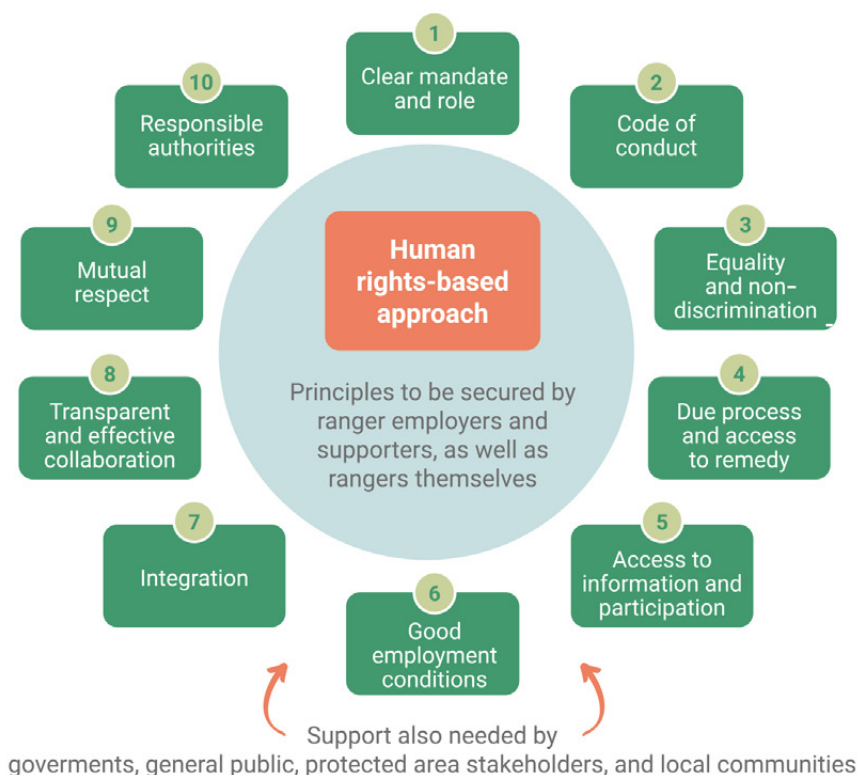
Applying a human rights-based approach in the ranger workforce means to work towards respecting, protecting and promoting the fulfilment of human rights of vulnerable individuals and groups that rangers come into contact with, and of rangers themselves. It implies embodying cross-cutting human rights principles, such as non-discrimination and equality, due process and access to remedy, and access to information and participation. Striving to meet additional criteria can further support this, including providing clarity on ranger mandates and roles, implementing the CoC, fostering integrity and mutual respect, etc., as described in the following.

Did you know?

All humans have the right to health. This extends not only to appropriate health care, but also to the underlying determinants of physical and mental health, such as food and water.

Many rangers do not have this. They work under poor and sometimes even dangerous conditions without proper health and life insurance: long working hours with limited access to potable water, sanitation and nutritious food as well as limited personal time with family are only some examples, but they can all affect their physical and mental health.

Figure 2. The Safeguarding Principles for Rangers, with a human rights-based approach at the centre.



PRINCIPLE 1

Ensuring rangers have a clear mandate and role

A mandate is the “authority to act in a particular way given to a government or a person, especially as a result of a vote or ruling”³. It is often derived from the applicable legal framework. Role is a description of the activities someone is expected to do in their jobs, “the position or purpose that someone or something has in a situation, organisation, society, or relationship”⁴.

A clear mandate and thorough understanding of their role is crucial for rangers, as it can have direct implications on their safety and that of people they come into contact with. Rangers can find themselves in situations where the lives of others or their own lives are at risk. They need perfect clarity on how to respond in emergency situations, what to take responsibility for and when to call in additional help (e.g., of the health sector, police, military, fire fighters). Ranger duties may get modified according to changing pressures on biodiversity and social context, and therefore their mandate and role need regular revision and updating. In fact, a transition is observed in ranger responsibilities that have gone from enforcing wildlife, hunting, and game laws to also engaging in general law enforcement, such as drug enforcement (Ledford *et al.* 2021). Lack of clarity on mandate and role as well as lack of adequate training in such cases can have severe consequences. This applies to all rangers, including those not employed by a government agency, which could be community rangers, and to volunteers and casual labour/temporary staff.

It is therefore essential to:

- Provide a clear **mandate**, derived from the applicable **legal framework**⁵ and approved by the respective employer. Where rangers are armed, this mandate needs to clarify under which circumstances arms may be used. It also needs to clarify what law enforcement activities are authorised, e.g., detention or search of private premises, and when and how support of other institutions (e.g., police, army or navy) for such operations should be sought. Ensuring good leadership and communication can further enhance the ability to implement a clear mandate.
- Ensure rangers are aware of what is included in their **role** (e.g., the protection of human rights) and what is not (e.g., acting as the local medical practitioner in remote areas) in order to avoid that they are made responsible for something they should not get asked to take on.
- Be aware that the legal mandate under which rangers operate may not be understood or in some cases accepted by those with whom rangers come into contact.

The **lack of a legal framework for the fulfilment of their functions** can result in rangers not being able to carry out their duties effectively. Acting against the mandate may have legal

consequences, e.g., result in civil and criminal proceedings and/or penalties. In such cases, usually there are no established institutional legal procedures and there is no specialised legal advice and/or assistance (provided and paid for by the employer or government, related to Principle 4).

The **lack of awareness and acceptance of the mandate of the role of rangers** can result in significant conflict and harm to both rangers and local stakeholders. Ideally, stakeholders should be consulted over the scope of ranger roles and at minimum made fully aware of what rangers can and cannot do.

PRINCIPLE 2

Acting within and respecting the Code of Conduct

The IRF Code of Conduct (CoC) is an aspirational document (IRF 2021a and 2021b) designed to encourage rangers to commit to it and strive to uphold its values. The CoC encourages a disciplined and empowered workforce that maintains high standards of practice and ethics, helping to professionalise the ranger workforce, and building and strengthening the reputation and understanding of the sector. It also helps guide rangers, ranger employers and conservation organisations supporting rangers to **make better work decisions** and promotes the implementation of globally accepted best practices. By doing so, it can contribute to the **prevention of rangers violating laws and regulations**.

Responsibility for successfully implementing the CoC should not fall solely on rangers. Organisations or agencies employing rangers need to set the standards, adapt them to the local reality and ensure that rangers understand the benefits of adopting the CoC. They also need to provide adequate employment conditions, institutional support and strong leadership.

The Ranger Code of Conduct (CoC) deals with the following topics:

Professionalism

Human Rights and Dignity

Integrity and Transparency

Legality

Confidentiality

Safety

Response to Violations of the CoC

For rangers involved in law enforcement, additional topics are:

Use of Force

Protection of Persons

Firearms

3 Cambridge Dictionary, accessed at <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/mandate>, on 16 March 2022.

4 Cambridge Dictionary, accessed at <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/role>, on 22 April 2022.

5 In most countries there is a lack of such a legal framework, thus rangers do not have legal protection when doing operations.

Other stakeholders, such as conservation NGOs, can also play a key role in creating awareness and capacity building.

A clear mandate and role can make it easier for rangers to adhere to the CoC. Moreover, for a ranger CoC to be effective, governments and ranger employers also have to improve ranger welfare and working conditions, foster recognition and appreciation for the ranger sector and create public awareness about the important role rangers play in protecting culture and nature (IRF 2021b).

PRINCIPLE 3 Securing equality and non-discrimination

Discrimination and unequal treatment are not uncommon within the ranger workforce (see Figure 3). However, rangers, as much as anyone else, are “entitled to human rights without discrimination of any kind, including by race, colour, sex, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, disability, property, birth or other status” (IUCN 2016).

Gender equality and non-discrimination need to improve both within the ranger workforce and between rangers and people outside the workforce, with the term “gender” understood as covering all possible gender identities and sexual orientations, i.e., usually referred to as the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-gender, queer/questioning, and others (LGBTQ+) community. Sexual harassment, bullying, exposure to violent behaviour from within the workforce and from other individuals and/or groups, lack of support from employers or authorities, and lack of basic entitlements such as insurance and paid leave due

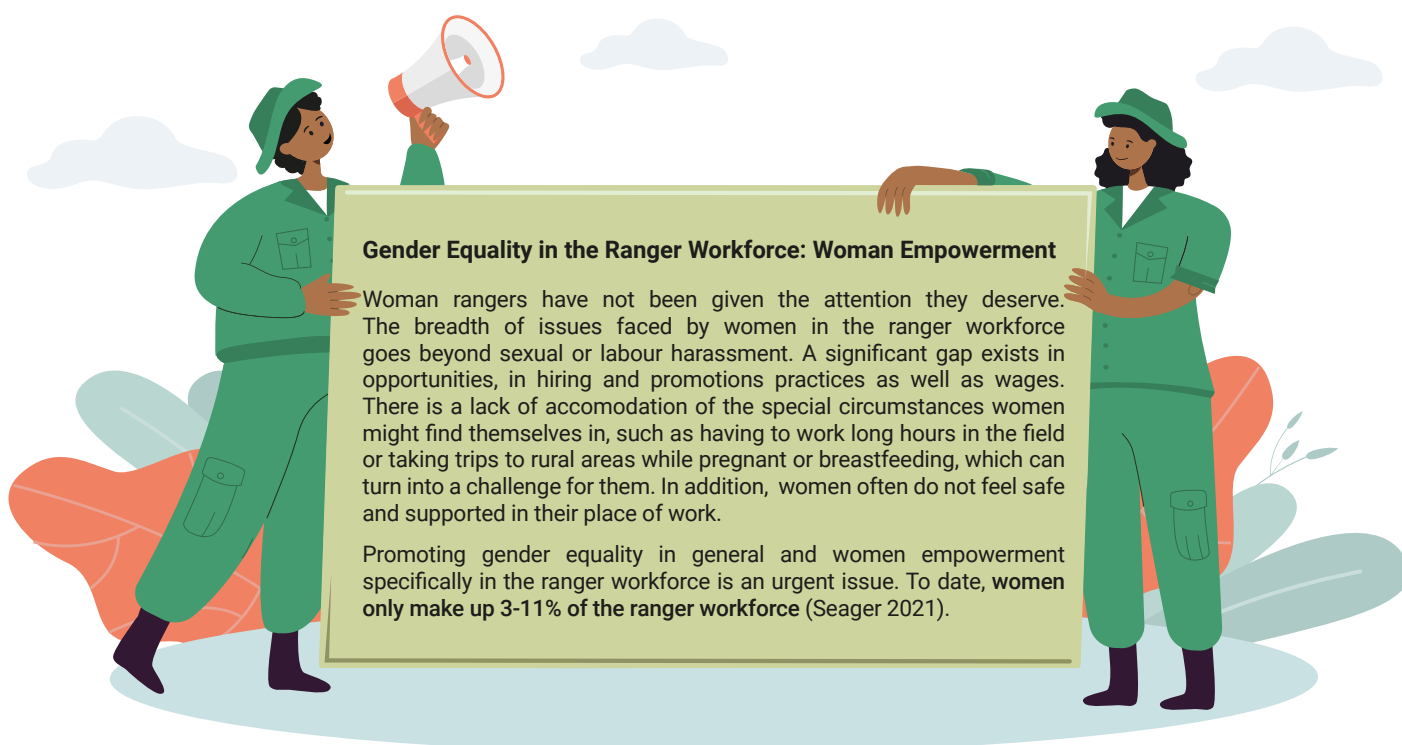
to parenting, sickness or injury undermine efforts to secure equality and non-discrimination in the ranger workforce.

The workforce may also include members of different cultures and ethnicities, including members of local minority groups working with colleagues and leaders predominantly from other groups. Discrimination against these individuals is not only intrinsically unjust, it also undermines essential efforts to build trusting relations with local communities. Indigenous and local community rangers should be given equal opportunities for recruitment, training, benefits and advancement.

From the perspective of sectoral equity, rangers deserve recognition alongside other essential and frontline workers with high-risk occupations (e.g., police, firefighters, etc.) (Singh et al. 2020), which entails that they should be provided with equal benefits.

Promoting equality, equity, and non-discrimination within the ranger workforce is a task for both employers and rangers, which means not only having protocols and procedures in place to avoid discrimination and promote equality and equity, but also providing systematic training and education on the topic to all employees, and supporting rangers where discrimination, misconduct and abuse happens. Efforts are currently underway to develop policies on equality, equity and rights in the ranger sector as well as materials and guidance to support and promote their implementation (URSA 2021). These efforts will not be restricted to women and men in the ranger workforce but will respond to the broad spectrum of challenges restricting people’s rights to become or be recognised as valuable members of the ranger workforce.

Figure 3. The importance of women empowerment in the ranger workforce





PRINCIPLE 4

Ensuring due process and access to remedy (judicial and non-judicial)

Rangers have the same right to be granted due process when faced with accusations and to be able to have access to remedy as anyone else. However, this right is often not respected. Rangers sometimes experience accusations of misbehaviour or negligence and often have no means to defend themselves. Grievance and Redress Mechanisms (GRMs) can be critical in the process of obtaining due process and eventually remedy; moreover, remedy must result in an outcome whereby the individual or group harmed is restored to their position prior to the harm. This should apply to people rangers come into contact with as much as to rangers themselves. Adequate legal assistance is needed to ensure a fair process that leads to fines and/or penalties proportionate to the wrongdoing where accusations are proven true, but also clears rangers of unsubstantiated accusations with no further negative consequences for them.

The right to due process can be secured by setting up systems that safeguard rangers and provide means of support in the case of accusation and unfair treatment, and by upholding the law and the principles of fair treatment and non-discrimination. Meeting international best practice standards for such mechanisms should be strived for, including ensuring they are transparent, accessible, understandable, fair, and effective (see respective section on GRMs in the guidance document).

PRINCIPLE 5

Enabling access to information and participation

Feeling informed and heard can help build trust within the sector, and equally between rangers and people they come into contact with. Access to understandable, adequate and timely information is thus of utmost importance. Information on their rights, access to legal support and the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) in case they witness misconduct or are not treated fairly, or medical emergency support in case of injury, are all types of information rangers should be made aware of and have access to whenever needed. Where situations change (e.g., legal obligations or mandate), this not only needs to be communicated clearly but may also require additional tailored training.

Beyond the mere sharing of information, inviting rangers to participate in decision-making processes affecting their working conditions, role and mandate, can have very positive effects for the relationship between employers and rangers and create a feeling of loyalty, ownership and content. Moreover, the participation of rangers in such meetings can substantially benefit Protected and Conserved Area (PCA) management, as rangers have the best understanding of existing challenges at local level. They are also well placed to identify solutions to such challenges and to judge their feasibility. In many cases, rangers are not involved in management decisions but have to implement decisions and actions that they do not agree with or do not think appropriate or fair.

Did you know?

Many rangers are “volunteer rangers” who may not be aware of safeguards systems in place, such as the existence of the present Safeguarding Principles or the Ranger Code of Conduct. It is of utmost importance that they have access to this information too, at best before they take up their duties so they can familiarize themselves with it and are aware of what is expected from them and what to do if something goes wrong.

PRINCIPLE 6

Supporting ranger welfare through good employment conditions

Ensuring rangers have good working conditions (including appropriate working hours and fair wages; access to basic necessities such as clean drinking water, sanitation etc.; annual and parental leave; equity in the workplace; provision of proper equipment; training; and insurance) is essential to secure the welfare of the workforce.

However, these conditions are frequently not met in the ranger workforce (See Box 3).

Box 3. Facts about the lack of ranger welfare provisions

According to Belecky *et al.* (2019 and 2021), out of 6,241 rangers that participated in a survey from 28 countries, less than half said to have access to paid sick leave (46.6%) and to “always” or “often” have access to communications devices (42.3%), roughly one-third (33.7%) said they had life insurance, 13.5% said they “always” have to sleep in the open (i.e., do not have a tent or shelter of any kind), 7.4% said they “rarely” or “never” have access to clean drinking water, just 24.4% had received first aid training within the year prior to completing the survey, and only 48.3% answered affirmatively when asked if the medical treatment provided was adequate when needed. In a separate study pertaining to the topic of ranger insurance coverage (Long *et al.* 2016), out of 40 countries surveyed, it was found that 18% of those countries did not provide rangers with health insurance.

Feeling safe and valued and being provided with all that is necessary for the job is not only important for the wellbeing and security of rangers but will also help avoid situations of deviant behaviour, as the conditions that rangers find themselves in can encourage such behaviour (for example, working alone in a remote area with little support and oversight).

Efforts are currently underway to develop Global Minimum Standards for Ranger Welfare (URSA 2021).

Box 4. URSA Welfare Standards and Universal Ranger Competencies

URSA Welfare Standards

In order to contribute to securing good employment conditions and welfare for rangers, URSA is developing generic employment and welfare standards for rangers in consultation with health and safety experts and international labour bodies. These include:

- :: Resources for safe, effective work, such as in terms of infrastructure, personal equipment, food and water, personal safety, sanitation and hygiene, adequate personnel numbers, and security of equipment and infrastructure.
- :: Employment security, including matters regarding job contracts, employment review and renewal, work period, right to leave, roles and responsibilities, salaries, career progression, and benefits.
- :: Capacity, information and transparency, which covers job training, information, employer transparency and communication, organisational environment, learning resources and opportunities, communication infrastructure, systemic capacity for work, management training, and personal skills training.
- :: Rights and protection, setting up the terms for complaints and GRM, right to labor and legal representation, job security, harassment and bullying, discrimination, workplace violence, occupational health and safety programmes, and right to proper training.

Universal Ranger Competencies

URSA is working on a concise, agreed summary of what a competent ranger needs to be able to do through the development of Universal Ranger Competencies. This is intended to support the campaign for professionalisation of rangers, setting a broad 'benchmark' for ranger competence and professionalism that can be clearly communicated, understood and respected. The result can be used in a range of ways:

- :: To communicate the professionalism required of a modern ranger;
- :: To provide a basis for training and learning programmes;
- :: To promote establishment of national and organisational recognition and standards of professionalism for rangers;
- :: To provide a baseline for 'state of the ranger' assessments and for other reports; and,
- :: To provide a benchmark of other standards and competences.

PRINCIPLE 7

Promoting integrity in the ranger workforce

Integrity is "the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles"⁶. It is a desirable characteristic of any employee, and while part of it may come with personality, it can also be actively promoted. Superiors leading by example play a critical role here. The conditions that rangers sometimes find themselves in can make it difficult to uphold integrity. For example, if they are under ongoing financial stress due to late or low salary payments, they might resort to illegal or illicit activities. Cases are known where superiors even encouraged corruption (Belecky *et al.* 2021). By doing so, they actively discourage integrity in the ranger workforce.

Ways to promote integrity in the ranger workforce include:

- Ranger superiors and organisations employing rangers should lead by example, demonstrate respect for all members of the workforce, and show appreciation, strong moral principles, understanding, and support. This is also highlighted in the CoC, where the need for leadership, sound management and good governance is stressed.
- Having a robust recruitment and selection process in place to ensure that rangers enter the profession with the right values and level of integrity. It is also a way to ensure the rangers are fully aware of their mandate and role, right from the outset.
- Establishing an oversight body and a reporting mechanism for rangers, as well as implementing background checks and well-being plans for rangers.
- Providing access to an independent, fair and safe whistleblowing mechanism.

PRINCIPLE 8

Fostering transparent and effective collaboration

Safeguarding is also about different people, groups and communities working together to cover all the angles in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect, misconduct and abuse by rangers or towards rangers. In order to achieve this, transparent and effective collaboration is essential.

Where relationships are strained, solutions require an understanding of the needs of the community and its capacity and willingness to partner in conservation efforts. For rangers, this means receiving effective support and training that enables them to have better and more efficient and fruitful interactions with communities.

⁶ Cambridge Dictionary, accessed at <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/integrity>, on 16 March 2022.



Box 5. Rangers' relationship with the local community

Building and maintaining trust between communities and rangers can be a complex process where many factors are at play. Implementing a human-rights approach to conservation is key, efficient monitoring and transparent reporting are important to allow for adaptive management, and grievance and redress procedures can help establish truth and/or reconciliation through access to justice and remedy.

Ranger-community trust can be maintained and further improved by securing similar life opportunities for all; ensuring important information is made available to both rangers and communities; establishing participatory dialogue processes to break down stereotypes and misconceptions about "others"; having robust and inclusive consultation processes; employing local rangers from a broad spectrum of the community, as well as gender and ethnically diverse, wherever possible; sharing good practices on working with communities, etc. (Stolton *et al.* 2022).

The CoC makes references to the need for sound and positive relationships between rangers and IPLCs as well and calls for "building trust through clear dialogue and transparent, appropriate action" (IRF 2021a, page 7).

PRINCIPLE 9

Building and consolidating mutual respect

Respect is the foundation of human and ethical behaviour. It involves a fundamental belief in everyone's right to exist, to be heard, and to have the same opportunities. Among the many benefits of respect are improved well-being, a more positive and focused working atmosphere, trusted and open communication and collaboration between rangers and other stakeholders, increased loyalty and ethical strength.

Rangers are expected to demonstrate respect in many ways, i.e., towards the law, the CoC and the views and interests of IPLCs and other vulnerable groups; however, they themselves are not always treated with respect. They may be subject to verbal and even physical abuse from both colleagues, local community members, and visitors. A lack of respect can hinder or damage relationships within the ranger workforce and between rangers and vulnerable individuals and groups. Disrespectful behaviour towards rangers can lead to a lack of motivation, quitting, or eventually acting themselves in a disrespectful way.

A culture of mutual respect should be fostered between rangers and community members, visitors, and other stakeholders. However, achieving this respect can depend on a range of factors related to awareness, consent, and the balance of power between rangers and others.

Where the mandates, role, and authority of rangers are generally understood and accepted, there should be a general

expectation of mutual respect. For example, at an established recreation site, there should be a general expectation that rangers have important functions and necessary authority. Where protected area regulations and zones and limits of authority have been transparently negotiated and agreed with communities, there should be a strong presumption that all parties should by default act respectfully. Similarly, other actors should be clearly informed that lack of respect towards employees (including rangers), laws and rules within a designated area, will not be tolerated and can have consequences, including a request to leave the site.

However, there may be cases where the mandate and authority (and even presence) of rangers are not recognised and/or are considered unjust. This may occur where a protected area or management zone has been unilaterally imposed on a local community, where regulations have been established without consultation, where communities consider that they are being forced to bear the costs of conservation, or where there has been a history of unjust treatment. These factors are often beyond the powers of rangers to address, but they may create a fundamental lack of respect which rangers need to be able to cope with.

Ways of creating a culture of mutual respect with stakeholders include:

- **Good governance:** ensuring that those affected by decisions have input to them and are aware of them.
- **Awareness:** educating rangers about people's differences, particularly when working with IPLCs where rangers are not from the community or are volunteers or casual labour/temporary staff.
- **Acknowledgement:** demonstrating awareness of and sensitivity to the factors that undermine respect.
- **Being a role model of respect:** Showing willingness to listen and learn from others. Exercising tolerance and patience under provocation, especially where underlying tensions exist in relationships.
- **Trust building:** The good practice examples to help build ranger and community trust included in Stolton *et al.* (2022) are very relevant in this context.
- **Raise awareness among vulnerable groups, police officers and governments** about the job of rangers and its importance to ensure they are also treated fairly.

PRINCIPLE 10

Conferring and exercising responsible authority

Authority is the "power to make decisions for other people or to tell them what they must do", "the power to control or demand obedience from others"⁷. Responsibility can simply be "a duty to take care of something", yet it relates also to "good judgement and the ability to act correctly and make decisions on your own"⁸. The two terms should always go hand in hand. Any person with authority should exercise it in a responsible

7 Cambridge Dictionary, accessed at <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/es/diccionario/ingles/authority>, on 02 April 2022

8 Cambridge Dictionary, accessed at <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/es/diccionario/ingles/responsibility> on 02 April 2022

manner, considering the concerns and needs of any person they interact with. Moreover, decisions about the adequate level of authority assigned to people must also be taken responsibly.

If a ranger is given responsibility of keeping the local communities living within or around a protected area, or other potentially vulnerable groups, safe from wildlife intrusions and illegal poachers, yet s/he is not authorised to detain and/or arrest poachers or act in case a large mammal is getting into the community area, it will be difficult or impossible to accomplish the desired goal. On the other hand, if too much authority

is delegated to a ranger, especially where the person is not prepared to take it on for personal reasons or due to lack of necessary training and existing knowledge of the cultural and legal context in which it is to be applied, then this can cause issues (including mental health issues) or get misused. Ensuring rangers are given the right amount of authority for their level of experience and capacity and that they are acting responsibly and within the scope of their authority is a key step to secure leadership, professionalism, the mental health of employees, and trusting relationships with the local communities and other vulnerable individuals and groups.



Rangers in the surroundings of Porto Velho, Rondônia State, North of Brazil. © Marizilda Cruppe

3. Implementing the Principles

The above principles have been developed to address existing gaps in human rights and other social considerations in the ranger workforce and serve as basic criteria for the safeguarding of rangers and other actors with whom they interact. However, their value and potential beneficial impact depend on their proper implementation by the relevant authorities. Part 2 of this document, as well as the accompanying spreadsheet⁹, offer guidance and tools that have been developed alongside this document to support an appropriate application of the principles at different institutional levels. For more information, please refer to **Safeguarding the Rights and Well-being of Rangers. Part 2: Guidance and Tools**.

9. This spreadsheet can be found at <https://www.ursa4rangers.org/ursa4rangers-resources/>

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