

# Ranger Professionalization Toolbox Notes

◇ CONDUCT ◇

CONDITIONS ◇ COMPETENCIES



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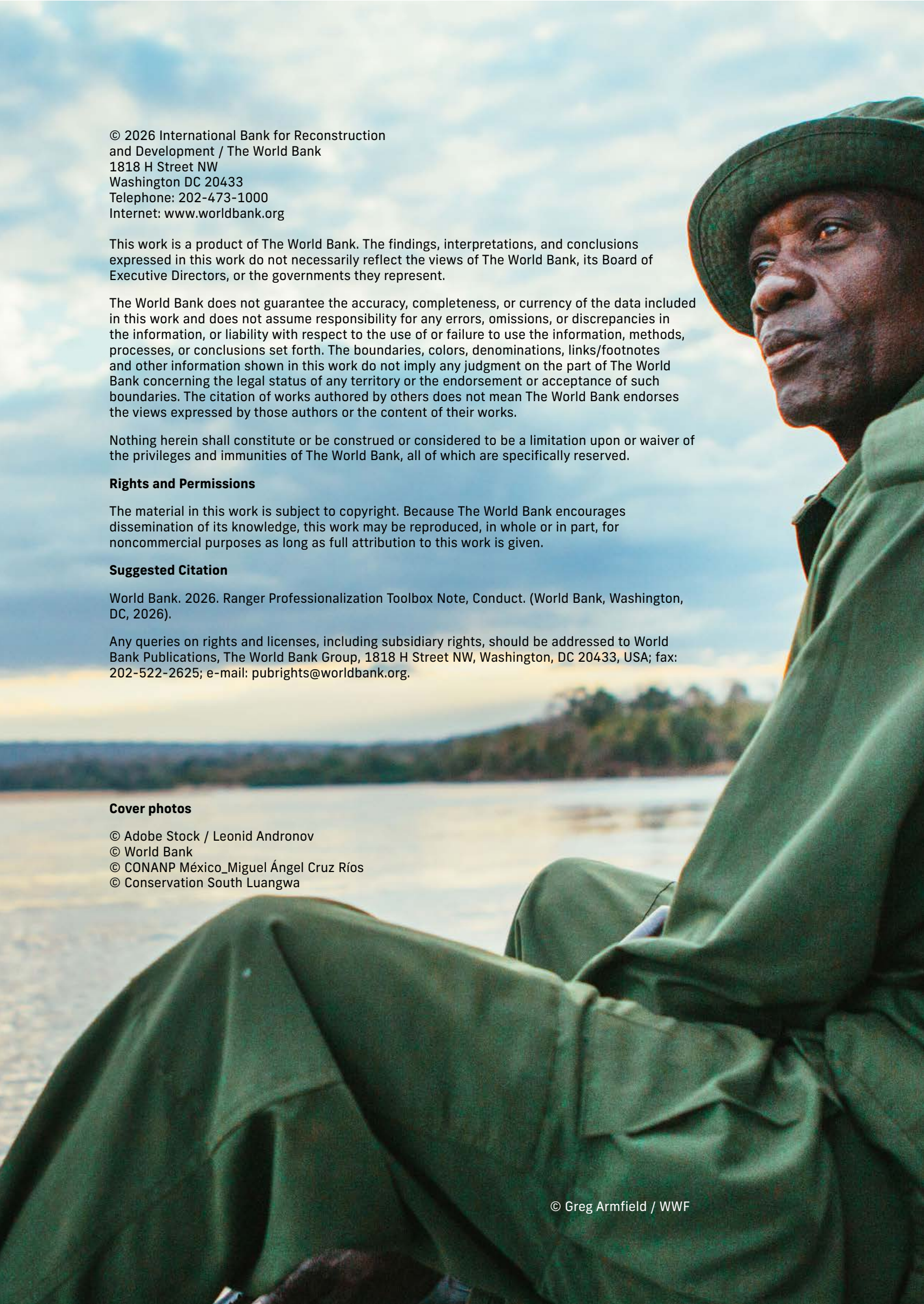


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A man wearing a green hat and a green jacket is sitting by a body of water, looking off to the side. The background shows a sunset or sunrise over a lake with trees in the distance.

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# CONDUCT



CONDITIONS ◇ COMPETENCIES

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                                 |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS                                                 | 2  |
| 1. THE BASICS                                                   | 3  |
| The Need                                                        | 3  |
| Solutions                                                       | 4  |
| 2. THE TOOLBOX                                                  | 5  |
| International Ranger Federation Code of Conduct                 | 5  |
| Human Rights Training Materials for Rangers                     | 6  |
| 3. IMPLEMENTATION                                               | 7  |
| Guidance for Adapting and Implementing a Ranger Code of Conduct | 7  |
| 4. APPLICATION EXAMPLES                                         | 9  |
| 5. RESOURCES                                                    | 12 |

## ABOUT THIS NOTE

This note is part of the Ranger Professionalization Toolbox Series on Conditions, Conduct, and Competencies. The toolbox notes are intended as a practical resource for those involved in managing, supporting, or investing in rangers. By providing a brief overview of available tools and illustrative case studies of their application, they aim to facilitate further adoption and replication of solutions to strengthen the ranger profession.

**Conduct focuses on the ethical standards, accountability, and behaviors that guide how rangers carry out their roles. This note outlines practical approaches to developing, adapting, and implementing codes of conduct, with a strong emphasis on human rights and community relations.**

Conduct depends on both Conditions and Competencies: Clear mandates, protections, and oversight systems are needed to support accountability, while training and skills are required to apply ethical standards in practice. This note should be used to strengthen institutional frameworks for responsible ranger behavior, alongside improvements in working conditions and capacity.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# 1.

## THE BASICS

For rangers to prevent and resolve conflict, uphold the law, act ethically, avoid misconduct, and earn community trust, they need clear leadership and mandates defining their authority and its limits. This should clarify expectations for ethical, accountable, and respectful behavior when carrying out their

duties. Codes of conduct guide accountable behavior and aid rangers, organizations, and supporters to make better decisions, improve professionalism of the ranger workforce, and strengthen the reputation and legitimacy of the ranger sector.

## THE NEED

1. Rangers often lack a clear understanding of their roles, responsibilities, and appropriate responses to challenging situations, which can lead to inappropriate behavior, reduced efficiency, inconsistent decision-making, and less effective delivery of duties.
2. Ranger managers, whether from governments, private institutions, Indigenous Peoples, or local communities, must ensure full accountability for rangers' actions in line with applicable national and international law.
3. Agreed and communicated roles, conduct, and accountability can improve community relations, particularly when community representatives have been involved in adapting codes of conduct.

4. While there have been consistent calls by rangers for codes of conduct to be implemented (including at the 9th and 10th World Ranger Congresses), current adoption remains low.

Figures from the first global [State of the Ranger Report \(2024\)](#) by the International Ranger Federation (IRF) suggest 46 percent of 1,200 rangers surveyed worldwide do not work to (or are not aware of) a code of conduct. Only half of the ranger employer organizations worldwide have codes of conduct, and less than 20 percent have assessed or developed these against the global standard: the IRF Code of Conduct.



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## SOLUTIONS

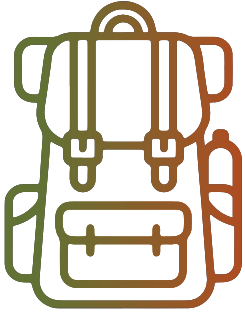
Institutionalized, professional codes of conduct establish clear ethical standards and accountability, which guide behavior, build trust, and ensure consistent, responsible practices across the ranger profession. Codes linked to disciplinary systems also provide agreed responses to violations and clarity on actions for rangers, communities, and managers alike.

Codes of conduct should reflect applicable law and align with good international practice, including in

relation to human rights. Socialization and training programs should be delivered to ensure rangers fully understand what this means. Community relations can further be supported by exchange and replication of good practices that rangers and managers can take to foster respectful, collaborative relationships with Indigenous Peoples and local communities.



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## 2.

# THE TOOLBOX

- ▶ **INTERNATIONAL RANGER FEDERATION CODE OF CONDUCT**
- ▶ **HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING MATERIALS FOR RANGERS**
- ▶ **GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE ON BUILDING TRUST BETWEEN RANGERS AND COMMUNITIES**

## INTERNATIONAL RANGER FEDERATION CODE OF CONDUCT



© International Ranger Federation

The IRF Code of Conduct was developed with and for the ranger community. The consultation process involved over 1,800 people, 87 percent of whom were rangers from over 60 countries. With guidance from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, it provides a policy template with associated guidance for users, such as protected area agencies, ranger associations, and ranger employers, to adapt (with rangers themselves), adopt, and implement.

The Code of Conduct is an aspirational document based around a pledge by rangers on seven issues:

1. **Professionalism:** Rangers performing their duties and following the rules set with competence and diligence
2. **Integrity and transparency:** Upholding honesty and ethical behavior in all actions, avoiding conflicts of interest, and maintaining transparency
3. **Legality:** Understanding and upholding the law, within established procedures and responsibilities
4. **Confidentiality:** Regarding sensitive information
5. **Safety:** Ensuring rangers' mental and physical fitness to undertake duties safely
6. **Violations:** Agreeing to report, challenge, or act if colleagues or others within the same organization contradict the conduct
7. **Law enforcement:** Ensuring UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights standards for law enforcement and national laws are followed.

# HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING MATERIALS FOR RANGERS

The IRF Code of Conduct is underpinned by a human rights approach. Ensuring rangers fully understand what this means requires socialization and training, particularly in areas where there has been a history of human rights abuses. Human rights are described in the [UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) as well as in various international instruments, declarations, and guidelines. This forms the basis for international human rights law.

Two dedicated training manuals on human rights for rangers are available as resources for trainers:

1. The [Human Rights Training for Rangers](#) manual developed by the Wildlife Conservation Society is tailored to protected area rangers. It was developed through extensive consultations with rangers, governmental bodies, training institutions, and representatives from Indigenous Peoples and local communities in

Central Africa. The manual includes guidance for trainers and ranger supervisors on human rights and international humanitarian law, rules and principles for ranger operations, and training modules to support implementation of the manual.

2. The [Ranger Training: Human Rights in Conservation. A Training Design and Facilitation Manual](#) developed by Fauna & Flora is a resource for trainers to design and deliver basic, low-cost, in-person training for frontline rangers on the relevance of human rights in their work. It is designed to be adaptable to frontline rangers in any context globally. The manual comes with a [resource package](#) for running training courses.

Rangers also have human rights and key protections themselves while delivering their duties. These are described in the associated note on [Conditions](#).



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## GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE ON BUILDING TRUST BETWEEN RANGERS AND COMMUNITIES

Trust between rangers and local communities and Indigenous Peoples enhances cooperation, reduces conflict, improves information sharing and compliance with conservation rules, and increases effectiveness of protected and conserved area management. Positive relationships support intelligence on threats, community-led stewardship, and shared solutions to human-wildlife conflict, strengthening both conservation outcomes and ranger safety.

[Building Trust Between Rangers and Communities](#) is an International Union for the Conservation of Nature

(IUCN) World Commission on Protected Areas Good Practice Guide focused on practical actions that rangers and managers can take to foster respectful, collaborative relationships with Indigenous Peoples and local communities. It draws on global ranger experience and case studies to outline good practices for listening, dialogue, shared activities, and mutual respect. The guide helps employers strengthen ranger capacity in community engagement—a key element of effective protected and conserved area governance and ranger conduct.

### 3. IMPLEMENTATION

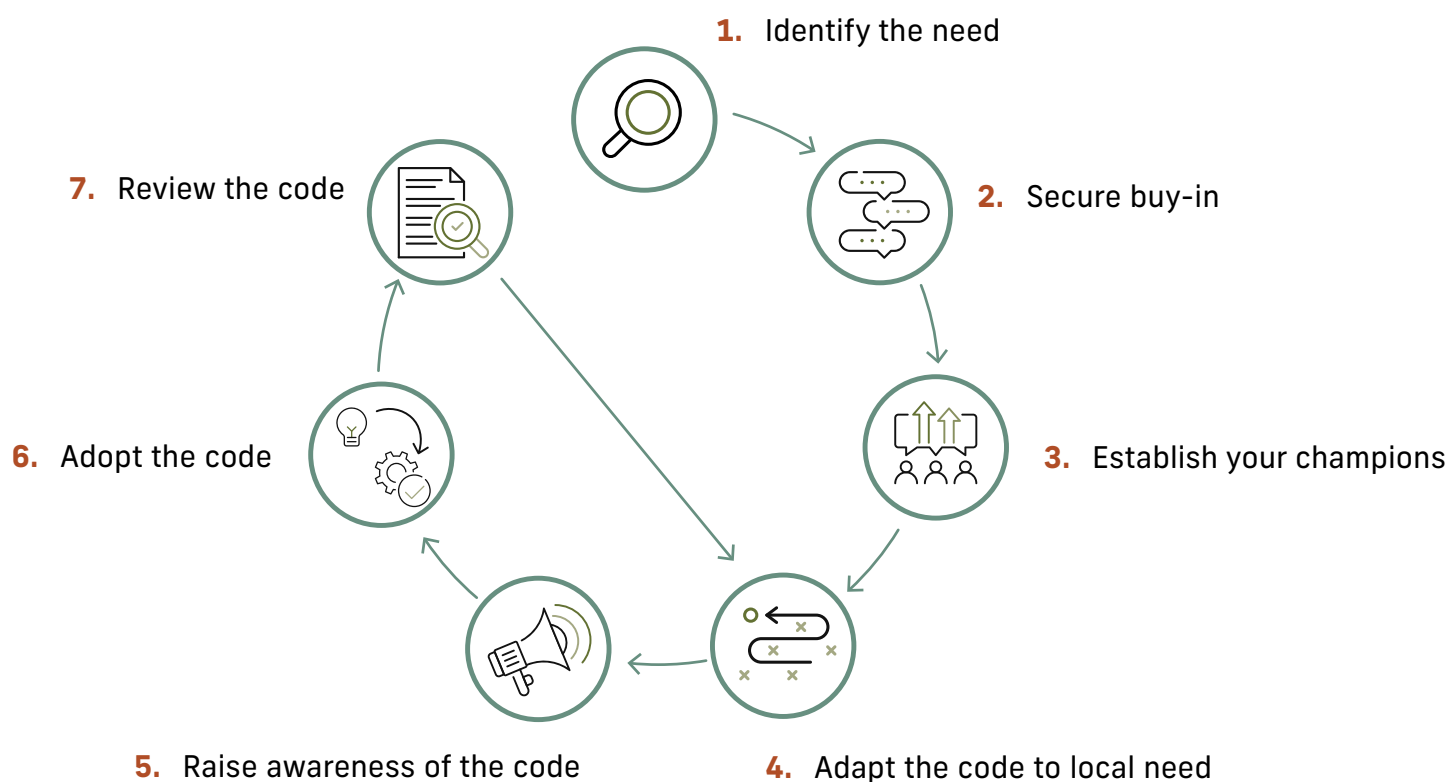


## GUIDANCE FOR ADAPTING AND IMPLEMENTING A RANGER CODE OF CONDUCT

Ranger managers should treat the IRF Code of Conduct as both a policy framework and a practical guide for professionalizing ranger work. Formal adoption, clear mandates, training, oversight, and community engagement together make the code effective in protecting wildlife, supporting rangers, and strengthening trust with communities.

The IRF Ranger Code of Conduct: Guidelines for [Adoption](#) outlines seven processes (Figure 1) for implementing the code of conduct. The code can be implemented at individual sites or institutionalized across a national protected and conserved area system. The adapted code should be precise and easy to communicate.

**Figure 1:** Seven steps to adapt and implement the code of conduct



Implementation steps include the following

- 1. Identify the need:** Successful implementation requires willingness from rangers, communities, employers, and ranger associations to agree to adapt and adopt the code.
- 2. Secure buy-in:** Understanding the purpose of the code and the need to professionalize the ranger sector helps ensure buy-in for the code.
- 3. Find champions:** Champions help drive the process and advocate for the need for the code to be developed.
- 4. Adaptation:** The code should be adapted and strengthened to meet site, biome, and/or country contexts. However, although local contexts will vary, the key principles and values of the code should remain. Adaptation processes could include
  - a.** Translation of the IRF Code of Conduct;
  - b.** Establishment of a small working group to identify areas of the code that need adaptation (for example, where terms need more explanation) or strengthening;
  - c.** Review in collaboration with rangers, communities, employers, ranger associations, and any additional groups likely to be affected by the code, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities;
  - d.** Additional reviews from legal advisers and national human rights institutions; and
  - e.** Final drafting, sign-off, and endorsement of the code.
- 5. Awareness raising:** Adoption is dependent on capacity building to understand the code and to ensure that rangers, communities, employers, and ranger associations see the code as a tool to support decision-making.
- 6. Adoption:** Various types of adoption are possible:
  - a. Full adoption:** With the code incorporated into ranger contracts and conditions of service, often through a ranger-led or ranger-involved process;
  - b. Enforced adoption:** A top-down approach where the code is communicated to rangers and appended to contracts;
  - c. Voluntary compliance:** Where rangers agree to comply with a ranger association code;
  - d. Training:** Through specific training and integration into training curriculum and materials;
  - e. Dissemination and implementation:** Publicizing the code, implementing it, and building trust and accountability through its use.
- 7. Review:** The code should be reviewed every few years to support updating, implementation lessons, and the widest uptake.

To be effective, the code must be adapted to relevant legal and cultural systems, requiring time, consultation, and legal review to ensure alignment with national laws, use-of-force regulations, and worker rights. Without high-level political and agency buy-in, adoption could remain symbolic and fail to translate into daily practice. Resourcing gaps, including insufficient training budgets, can lead to confusion, inefficient response to incidents, inconsistent decision-making, and reputational damage for the wider ranger profession. These risks can be mitigated by pairing adaptation, training, and oversight with the code of conduct process from the outset.



## APPLICATION EXAMPLES

### Developing a national ranger code of conduct for Bhutan

The Department of Forests and Park Services formally endorsed a Bhutan-specific adaptation of the IRF Code of Conduct in 2021. A review committee was established to adapt the global code to Bhutan's legal and institutional context. In doing so, it considered potential conflicts with the Civil Services code, Forest Rules, and other relevant legislation; ensured terminology was coherent with national usage, including guidance, principles, and standard operating procedures; and assessed whether the existing government grievance redress mechanism was suitable for handling violations of the code. Training and advocacy materials were developed to support the Bhutan code of conduct, and the code was incorporated into training curricula to support institutionalization. Rangers across the country underwent training in the code of conduct in 2022. With support from WWF, over 1,300 rangers, including senior managers, were trained on the adopted code, emphasizing ethical behavior and high standards in their daily work.

© Conservation South Luangwa



### Site-level implementation of a code of conduct in Zambia

Conservation South Luangwa is a nongovernmental organization that employs over 100 community scouts (anti-poaching rangers) working alongside the national wildlife authority, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife of Zambia. Their activities include ground patrols, K9 detection dog units, aerial surveillance, wildlife rescue and veterinary outreach, community-based anti-snaring, and delivery of community engagement, coexistence, and outreach programs. The organization has adopted and implemented the IRF Code of Conduct. To support adoption and tailoring of their own code, community scouts held weekly meetings to discuss the international code, translate it into the local language, and identify needed adaptations to the local context. These helped ensure that the code was understood by all community scouts. Implementing the code has improved the security of rangers, as they know when to act and how to act in challenging situations. This has led to increased professionalism and discipline, as well as more respect for the role of community scouts and their interactions with communities.

## Conducting institutional assessments to clarify law enforcement responsibilities and accountability

The World Bank's [Good Practice Note](#) on Managing the Risks of Projects Involving Protected and Conserved Areas offers tools for a structured institutional assessment process to analyze how protected area enforcement entities function, assign responsibilities, and maintain accountability. It encourages reviews of governance, legal mandates, staffing, training, conduct, and cross-agency coordination to ensure that enforcement functions are carried out effectively and safely, in accordance with applicable law and good international practice. For example, in Indonesia, an assessment found that marine protected area enforcement responsibilities are shared across five government agencies and community-based surveillance groups. While individual entities had separate codes of conduct and reporting pathways, the assessment recommended additional training on incident reporting protocols and a harmonized code of conduct to apply standards consistently. This example shows how codes of conduct can be operationalized by embedding them within clear governance and accountability processes, rather than relying on individual behavior alone.

## Site-level implementation of human rights training in Guinea

The Ziama Man Biosphere Reserve is a protected forest area in southeastern Guinea, managed by the Forestry Center of N'Zérékoré. Rangers carry out patrols and law enforcement across core, buffer, and transition zones; support biodiversity monitoring; engage with the over 30 surrounding communities; and contribute to transboundary conservation with neighboring protected areas in Liberia. A site-level human rights training program was delivered to rangers using the [Fauna & Flora](#) ranger training manual. The training combined preparatory work, scoping research with rangers, and in-person workshops with rangers, managers, and community governance representatives. Implementing the training has strengthened ranger understanding of human rights, legal frameworks, and appropriate conduct in the field, particularly during community interactions and conflict situations. The program has contributed to increased professionalism, more consistent decision-making, and the integration of human rights considerations into daily patrols and operational practices.

## Using ranger enforcement resources to support local communities in Kenya

Enforcement resources in protected and conserved areas can provide broader services to communities, helping to build trust between enforcement entities and local communities. Over the last decade poaching pressure across much of Kenya has declined, due in large part to the efforts of rangers. At Ol Pejeta Conservancy on Kenya's Laikipia plateau, trained dog teams form part of a wider anti-poaching strategy alongside patrols, intelligence, and community engagement. As the poaching threat diminished, rangers started to use the dogs to provide services to local communities. The dogs now support police investigations with the pursuit of stolen goods when cattle have been raided or shops or homes broken into, and they have assisted with missing person and lost children searches. The communities have come to rely on the canine unit; they see them as a helpful resource, and, in turn, they share any poaching intelligence they have with the rangers. In this way, ranger-community trust has been built and the community around Ol Pejeta has become a key partner in protecting wildlife.



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## ABOUT THE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS



**The Global Wildlife Program (GWP)** is a Global Environment Facility-funded, World Bank Group-led program to combat illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade, promote wildlife-based economies and jobs, and enable human-wildlife coexistence. It brings together 38 countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean to strengthen transboundary collaboration and scale up knowledge exchange and replication of solutions across countries and regions.



**INTERNATIONAL  
RANGER  
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**The International Ranger Federation (IRF)** was founded in 1992 and is a worldwide, non-profit membership-based organization, established to develop, advance, and promote the ranger profession. The IRF recognizes rangers and protected and conserved area workers, whether state, regional, communal, Indigenous, or private, as essential on-the-ground planetary health professionals that are responsible for safeguarding nature, cultural and historical heritage, and protecting the rights and well-being of present and future generations. The IRF is the standard-bearer for the ranger profession globally and the voice of ranger associations and rangers everywhere.



**The Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA)** is a global coalition of leading conservation organizations united to strengthen the IRF and champion the role of rangers worldwide. The URSA purpose is to elevate rangers as essential frontline conservation professionals to ensure that they are recognized, respected, and represented fairly across the globe. Through their collective strength, URSA reinforces IRF's leadership and capacity and helps include rangers' voices and priorities into international conversations and policy frameworks.



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