



Ranger Professionalization Toolbox Notes

◇ COMPETENCIES ◇
CONDITIONS ◇ CONDUCT



SUPPORTED BY



LED BY



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



INTERNATIONAL
RANGER
FEDERATION



© 2026 International Bank for Reconstruction
and Development / The World Bank
1818 H Street NW
Washington DC 20433
Telephone: 202-473-1000
Internet: www.worldbank.org

This work is a product of The World Bank. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect the views of The World Bank, its Board of Executive Directors, or the governments they represent.

The World Bank does not guarantee the accuracy, completeness, or currency of the data included in this work and does not assume responsibility for any errors, omissions, or discrepancies in the information, or liability with respect to the use of or failure to use the information, methods, processes, or conclusions set forth. The boundaries, colors, denominations, links/footnotes and other information shown in this work do not imply any judgment on the part of The World Bank concerning the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries. The citation of works authored by others does not mean The World Bank endorses the views expressed by those authors or the content of their works.

Nothing herein shall constitute or be construed or considered to be a limitation upon or waiver of the privileges and immunities of The World Bank, all of which are specifically reserved.

Rights and Permissions

The material in this work is subject to copyright. Because The World Bank encourages dissemination of its knowledge, this work may be reproduced, in whole or in part, for noncommercial purposes as long as full attribution to this work is given.

Suggested Citation

World Bank. 2026. Ranger Professionalization Toolbox Note, Competencies. (World Bank, Washington, DC, 2026).

Any queries on rights and licenses, including subsidiary rights, should be addressed to World Bank Publications, The World Bank Group, 1818 H Street NW, Washington, DC 20433, USA; fax: 202-522-2625; e-mail: pubrights@worldbank.org.

Cover photos

- © Adobe Stock / Maciej Czekajewski
- © Administración de Parques Nacionales, Argentina
- © Sichuan Provincial Forestry and Grassland Administration
- © GWP Zimbabwe National Project



COMPETENCIES

CONDITIONS ◇ CONDUCT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	2
1. THE BASICS	3
The Need	3
Solutions	4
2. THE TOOLBOX	5
Global Ranger Competencies	5
Global Register of Competencies for Protected Area Practitioners	7
3. IMPLEMENTATION	8
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 ranger workforces. 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.

Competencies are the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that rangers need to perform their roles effectively across increasingly complex demands. This note presents practical frameworks and tools to define, build, and assess ranger competencies and capacities.

Competencies are closely linked to both Conditions and Conduct: Training is most effective when rangers operate in supportive working environments and when it reinforces clear expectations for professional and ethical behavior. This note should be used to identify priority skills gaps and guide training and workforce development, in alignment with improvements in conditions and conduct.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The notes were developed by the Global Environment Facility-financed, World Bank Group-led Global Wildlife Program, in collaboration with the International Ranger Federation and Universal Ranger Support Alliance. The authors are: Nigel Dudley, Sue Stolton, Hannah Timmins (Equilibrium Research); and Lisa Farroway (World Bank Group). Design is by Luísa Ulhoa (World Bank Group, GCS).

The authors thank the following for inputs, case studies, and review: Alice Péretié (Chengeta Wildlife); Benson Kanyembo (Conservation South Luangwa); Peeranuch Dulkul Kappelle (Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, Thailand); Helen Karki-Chettri, Rob Small (Fauna & Flora); Jamie McCallum (Force for Nature); Louise de Bruin (Game Rangers' Association of Africa); Mike Appleton (IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas); Monica

Alvarez, Jonathan Churcher, Chris Galliers, Werhner Atoche Montoya (International Ranger Federation); Richard Chepkwony (Kenya Wildlife Service); Sonali Ghosh (Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, India); Miguel Angel Cueva (Northwest Argentina Rangers Association); Sophie Roland (The Royal Foundation of The Prince and Princess of Wales); Charlie Mayhew (Tusk); Wiene Andriyana (United Nations Development Programme); Kasper Agger, Emilie Fairet, David Jurado, Matthew Linkie (Wildlife Conservation Society); Yadranka Farita, Amy Kathryn Juelsgaard, Tong Jin, Maria Bernadete Ribas Lange, Remi Moncel, Stephanie O'Donnell, Meerim Shakirova, Anita Bimunka Takura Tingbani, Di Zhang (World Bank Group); Hamera Aisha, Rohit Singh (WWF); Robert Kimathi (Zoological Society of London); and Marcelo Selagerba (Brazil).





1.

THE BASICS

Expectations of rangers are continuously growing. Along with wildlife management, equipment maintenance, monitoring, community relations, visitor management, and enforcement, rangers are expected to understand climate change, undertake restoration, control invasive species, and respond to volatile situations of conflict between wildlife and local communities. They face personal security risks from

their work combating poachers, including organized criminal groups that use increasingly sophisticated methods. They often work in vast, remote areas and frequently become involved in disaster responses, health emergencies, and community security. Adequate training matched to global standards is essential to enable rangers to effectively fulfill these diverse roles.

THE NEED

1. Being a ranger is often seen as a second-class job by outsiders and there are few dedicated training institutions.
2. Rangers sometimes receive little professional training. This leaves them underqualified for their tasks and undermines prestige and confidence.

Research for the first global [State of the Ranger Report \(2024\)](#) by the International Ranger Federation (IRF) found only 62 percent of rangers surveyed had received introductory training. Only 51–53 percent were trained on tourism, ethics, communication skills, or community relations—all vital skills for rangers. Significant gaps remained in foundational conservation skills, with 36 percent of respondents reporting no training in biodiversity conservation. Access to ongoing professional development was also limited, as 23 percent had not received refresher training for at least two years. Most surveyed rangers felt they needed additional training to effectively deliver their responsibilities.

3. Training in many countries misses key skills. Older rangers may be untrained in some issues, like adaptation to climate change, the use of new technologies, or the pros and cons of carbon credit programs.
4. Rangers often lack adequate management capacities. Skills and knowledge also need to be built at more senior levels of ranger institutions and in higher management.
5. Ranger training programs are often not based on clear assessment guides or an understanding of the skills and standards that need to be met by trainees. This limits the ability to assess training impact and means that individual trainees often do not know the standard expected of them.
6. Rather than considering skills needed, some countries require certain educational qualifications for rangers to advance beyond junior ranks. In practice, this can mean that the people with the most experience and the skills to do the job cannot proceed up the organizational hierarchy. This can particularly hamper rangers from local communities and Indigenous Peoples.



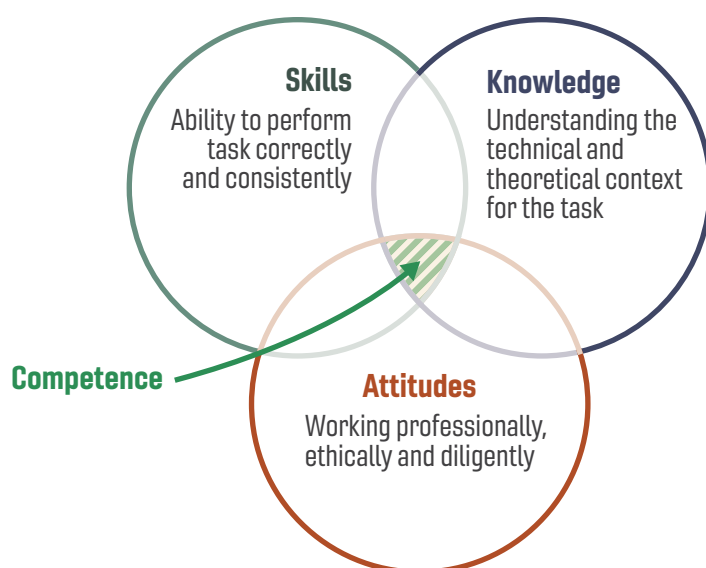
© Equilibrium Research

SOLUTIONS

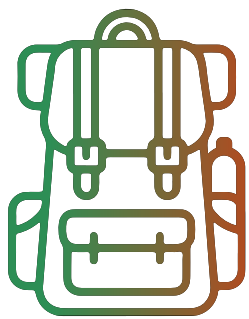
Any ranger seeking to improve their knowledge is faced with a bewildering range of subjects. Clear expectations of the skills and standards needed are essential for both rangers being trained and ranger training institutions. These help training institutions, protected and conserved area management authorities, managers, and rangers align training

with the practical needs of protected and conserved areas, and provide clarity to individual rangers on the expectations of them. These standards are known as competencies. A competency is the ability of an individual to perform adequately in a job, encompassing the three elements of skills, knowledge, and attitudes (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The skills-knowledge-attitude model for competencies



Source: Adapted from IRF and URSA 2023.



2.

THE TOOLBOX



GLOBAL RANGER COMPETENCIES



GLOBAL REGISTER OF COMPETENCIES FOR PROTECTED AREA PRACTITIONERS

GLOBAL RANGER COMPETENCIES

The IRF has published a selection of Global Ranger Competencies aimed particularly at rangers.

These provide a summary of the skills, knowledge, and personal qualities needed by a competent, professional ranger. They were identified through a consultation process with inputs from over 500 people across 88 countries.

The Global Ranger Competencies document 38 competencies across eight categories (Table 1).

This includes 23 universal competencies needed by all rangers, an additional seven competencies for commonly required specialist roles, and a further eight competencies required by rangers in positions of senior management and leadership.



© Equilibrium Research

Table 1 Summary of the IRF Global Ranger Competencies

	THE RANGER'S WORKPLACE, ROLE AND JOB
	- Describe and identify main natural values and threats. <i>URC</i> - Describe and identify groups that have rights of access and use. <i>URC</i> - Describe and identify the main cultural and use values and threats. <i>URC</i> - Describe overall management strategies. <i>URC</i> - Demonstrate knowledge of the legal framework and system of governance. <i>URC</i> - List and explain duties, responsibilities, legal rights, and obligations. <i>URC</i>
	PLANNING, ADMINISTRATION AND DOCUMENTATION
	- Complete reports of patrols, incidents, etc. <i>URC</i> - Lead and prepare strategies, plans, and operating procedures. <i>SNC</i> - Maintain written and/or electronic records. <i>SNC</i> - Prepare accurate official management reports and documentation of ranger activities. <i>SNC</i>
	MANAGING AND LEADING PEOPLE
	- Manage projects, plans, and work programmes. <i>SNC</i> - Supervise teams. <i>SNC</i> - Train, instruct, and mentor rangers. <i>SNC</i> - Ensure overall welfare and safety of rangers and associated personnel. <i>SNC</i>
	CONDUCTING PRACTICAL WORK
	- Work, navigate, and travel safely and responsibly. <i>URC</i> - Undertake practical tasks safely and according to good practice. <i>URC</i> - Conduct field observation and monitoring of human activities. <i>URC</i> - Conduct field observation and monitoring of species and habitats. <i>URC</i> - Use and maintain equipment and facilities. <i>URC</i> - Prevent and respond to accidents and emergencies. <i>URC</i>
	CRIME PREVENTION, LAW ENFORCEMENT AND SECURITY
	- Conduct patrols and other operations. <i>URC</i> - Identify and respond to unauthorised activities and threats. <i>URC</i> - Apply correct procedures for securing crime scenes and handling evidence. <i>URC</i> - Apply correct procedures for interactions with suspects, including human rights. <i>URC</i> - Respond correctly and appropriately to threats and attacks. <i>URC</i> - Apply correct procedures for managing crime scenes and handling evidence. <i>SPC</i> - Process formal actions in response to breaches of laws and regulations. <i>SPC</i> - Use, where allowed, weapons including firearms for personal safety and safety of others. <i>SPC</i>
	INTERACTING WITH STAKEHOLDERS
	- Communicate respectfully with community members, etc. <i>URC</i> - Build and maintain good relations with communities. <i>SNC</i>
	VISITATION AND EDUCATION
	- Direct visitor activities. <i>SPC</i> - Operate visitor facilities. <i>SPC</i> - Deliver educational and awareness activities. <i>SPC</i> - Guide visitors on trails and activities. <i>SPC</i>
	PERSONAL CONDUCT AND ATTRIBUTES
	- Demonstrate good conduct and a positive attitude. <i>URC</i> - Demonstrate effective personal initiative. <i>URC</i> - Maintain professional relations and good communication. <i>URC</i> - Maintain personal health, hygiene, fitness, and welfare. <i>URC</i>

Note: *SNC* = Senior; *SPC* = Specialized; *URC* = Universal.



© Jürgen Freund / WWF

GLOBAL REGISTER OF COMPETENCIES FOR PROTECTED AREA PRACTITIONERS

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Commission on Protected Areas has published [A Global Register of Competencies for Protected Area Practitioners](#). This provides a more comprehensive directory of the skills, knowledge, and personal qualities required of managers, staff, and stewards of protected and conserved areas.

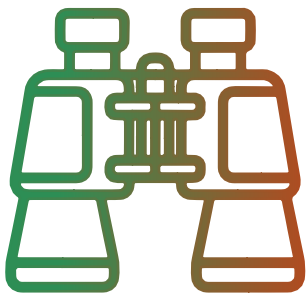
The Global Register lists 300 competencies, reflecting the broad scope of protected and conserved area work. These are aligned to the skills requirements of different job levels for protected area professionals. Four job levels of rangers and managers are identified: (i) executives, (ii) senior managers, (iii) middle managers and technical specialists, and (iv) skilled workers. A skilled worker (for example, a ranger) should have up to 76 of the 300 competencies, depending on local needs and requirements of their specific role. The wide range of competencies has

been developed to be used as a 'menu' that can be adapted for local use.

For each of the 300 competencies, the register includes the following:

- ▶ **A brief competency statement:** What is expected and what the individual should be able to do
- ▶ **Details, scope, and variations:** A brief explanation for the competency
- ▶ **Main knowledge requirements:** Factual information that, with the right skills and attitude, can help an individual achieve the competency.

An accompanying [Excel tool](#) includes examples of performance criteria, examples of means of assessment, and any closely associated competencies and necessary prior competency standards.



3.

IMPLEMENTATION

Competencies are used as a way of developing and assessing training courses for rangers. They can function as a checklist, both to ensure that training covers everything necessary and—importantly—to show others that training is thorough and meets internationally agreed standards. Clear competencies play an important role in supporting the evaluation of training to assess if it delivers measurable performance improvements among trainees.

The Global Register provides guidance on how to make use of competencies to create staffing structures, specify job descriptions and terms of reference, identify performance indicators, conduct a range of needs assessments, and design courses and curricula. Uses include the following:

- ▶ **Preparing job descriptions.** Listing the competencies needed makes it easier for applicants and helps managers think through clearly what they need from a particular position.
- ▶ **Designing and reorganizing staffing structures.** Rangers' jobs will vary with time and place, so there is no single 'ranger competency' package. Some countries will need to emphasize anti-poaching patrols, while others will not.
- ▶ **Identifying capacity development needs for implementing management plans.** As a checklist for protected area plans or system plans, identifying training needs for existing staff or the need to recruit particular skills.
- ▶ **Assessing and certifying competency.** Providing clear performance standards for training assessments and guiding certification in cases where countries or organizations have more formal ranger assessments.

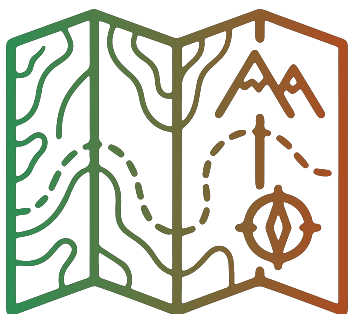
- ▶ **Ensuring that projects investing in capacity development reflect local priorities.** As a common platform for negotiating between project training needs and local priorities.
- ▶ **Widening access to capacity development and protected area work.** Recognizing the individual skills needed, rather than rank in an organizational hierarchy or educational qualifications, helping to foster more inclusive career development.
- ▶ **Browsing for ideas and guidance.** As a 'menu' of potential skills needed by rangers, including for new approaches to management.

A growing range of practical ranger training resources based on competencies is now available online, offering materials that could be used or adapted by other protected and conserved area authorities. The IRF aims to develop an online database for such training to improve access to these materials. In the meantime, the case studies in this note offer practical examples of ranger training resources developed and applied by different countries and organizations.



© GWP Zimbabwe

APPLICATION EXAMPLES



Self-assessment of site managers in Europe against competencies

As part of an EU LIFE project, managers of the EU-wide network of Natura 2000 sites were assessed against key competencies for protected and conserved areas. A 2018 workshop analyzed the IUCN Global Register of Competencies for Protected Area Practitioners and compared this with required functions of Natura 2000 managers. Participants developed a methodological framework for a competency-based approach to capacity development and defined a key list of competencies in the fields of (i) communication and collaboration, (ii) awareness and education, and (iii) policy and planning. An online [training needs assessment tool](#) was developed for management staff of Natura 2000 sites such as head rangers, education/outreach/tourism officers, and senior management to self-assess their training needs against the competencies. The results are used to better plan future professional development actions. The online toolkit provides guidance on how to increase capacity once the self-assessment is completed.

Embedding competencies across ranger training programs in Africa

[Chengeta Wildlife](#) works across several African countries to strengthen wildlife protection capacity by training rangers and managers. Since its founding in 2012, the nongovernmental organization has trained hundreds of rangers through structured programs that combine classroom instruction, field exercises, and operational mentoring. Training focuses on core ranger competencies under the topics of conducting practical work, crime prevention, law enforcement and security, and interacting with stakeholders. Specific courses include wildlife tracking, patrol planning, intelligence gathering, evidence handling, safe navigation, equipment maintenance, first aid, the lawful use of force, community engagement, human rights, and the legal frameworks governing wildlife protection. By structuring these courses around clearly defined skills, knowledge, and behaviors, Chengeta's programs align closely with the IRF's competencies framework. This approach allows training delivered in remote field settings to meet recognized professional standards, helping rangers gain formal qualifications while strengthening confidence, professionalism, and effectiveness across the ranger workforce.



© International Ranger Federation



Building ranger competencies through accredited training in Southern Africa

The Southern African Wildlife College delivers accredited field ranger training programs designed to prepare rangers for their duties. Courses such as field ranger law enforcement and advanced field ranger training combine classroom learning with intensive field-based instruction in patrol planning, wildlife monitoring, navigation, evidence collection, and conservation law enforcement. These programs emphasize the practical skills, knowledge, and professional behaviors required for effective field operations and team collaboration. The college helps professionalize ranger roles and ensures graduates meet internationally recognized standards (including IRF ranger competencies) for protected area management and enforcement.

Promoting the development of standard competencies for rangers in Colombia

A draft law in Colombia aims to improve recognition of and conditions for rangers, lowering the retirement age, increasing insurance cover, and linking career advancement to practical skills. Emphasis is placed on capacity, with a Park Rangers' School proposed to provide extra training for 400 full-time rangers. Training programs will be built around the fundamental competencies rangers need to discharge their responsibilities. The value of competencies to guide entry to ranger positions and career progression is recognized.



Standardized skills assessment as a pathway to ranger professionalization in China

Since 2023, Sichuan Province in southwest China has institutionalized a province-wide skills competition for rangers. The competition helps professionalize the ranger workforce by linking performance to nationally recognized vocational certification levels. It consists of theoretical examinations and practical field components, with hands-on modules focusing on species identification, transect patrols, and infrared camera deployment. Infrared camera networks have been widely deployed across the Sichuan section of the Giant Panda National Park and other provincial protected areas, capturing thousands of wildlife images annually. The cameras reduce the need for labor-intensive manual patrols and allow rangers to spend more time on tasks such as data analysis, environmental education, community co-management, and habitat restoration. By promoting standardized skills assessment and exposure to modern technologies, the competition has reduced ranger resistance to new tools and improved operational capacity. Over two rounds of competition, 18 outstanding rangers have been selected and awarded advanced-level technician certifications. In parallel, Sichuan delivers a 'Ranger Excellence Award' recognition program, with 40 awardees to date. This complementary initiative has further strengthened professional pride and social recognition while also highlighting gender representation within the ranger workforce.



Do-it-yourself modular capacity building

Over 120,000 people have now taken part in the free [massive open online courses \(MOOCs\)](#) on protected area management produced in French and English by IUCN-PAPACO¹. With a focus on Africa, but open to all, the courses are supported by Senghor University in Egypt, which accredits the MOOCs and awards online diploma Certificates in Protected Area Conservation for learners who have completed a set number of MOOCs and pass an additional exam. The list of available MOOCs is continually growing. Topics include essential ranger requirements, law enforcement, marine protected areas, new technologies, governance, human-wildlife conflict, sustainable finance, protected area tourism, human rights for rangers, and One Health. While MOOCs are self-taught, learners are organized into regional MOOC conservation networks and offered virtual support and peer connection to support course completion.

Competency-based training for ranger soft skills in the Amazon

The Amazon Sustainable Landscapes Program, financed by the Global Environment Facility and led by the World Bank Group, contracted the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) to run an 18-month capacity-building project for rangers across seven Amazon countries. The training focused on the soft skills often missed from ranger training. First, a methodology was developed to identify priority training needs for soft skills, drawing on a survey of over 500 rangers and supervisors and nine focus group discussions. Four priority subject areas were identified: (i) leadership and management, (ii) safety and security, (iii) problem solving and decision-making, and (iv) communicating information and ideas. Competencies for identified skills were drawn from a range of resources including the IUCN Global Register of Competencies, WCS training resources, and modules of the Universidad for International Cooperation in Costa Rica. Four virtual training modules and a MOOC are being prepared in the four languages of the region: English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch. WCS is hoping to develop indicators to measure the success of training, ranging from improved knowledge of rangers through to enhanced outcomes on the ground.

¹ The IUCN Programme on African Protected Areas and Conservation.

Translating ranger competency frameworks into everyday field practice

LEAD Conservation and Panthera have developed the [Little Guides series](#) to help translate the Global Ranger Competencies into practical field application. The guides are designed as short, accessible learning resources that can be incorporated into ranger training programs, patrol briefings, mentoring, and ongoing professional development. Current topics around integrated threat reduction include adaptive patrolling, which helps teams adjust readiness levels to changing operational conditions; risk assessment, which provides a structured approach to identifying and managing risks before and during patrols; and welfare support after critical incidents, which helps leaders recognize and respond to the impacts of traumatic events on ranger teams. Each guide explicitly links its content to relevant Global Ranger Competencies, demonstrating how competency frameworks can be applied in everyday ranger work and leadership.

© Thomas Cristofolletti / Ruom for WWF

5. ————— RESOURCES

Appleton, M. R. 2016. ***A Global Register of Competences for Protected Area Practitioners.*** Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. [Editions available in [French](#), [Spanish](#), [Burmese](#) and [Nepali](#)].

IRF and URSA (Universal Ranger Support Alliance). 2023. ***Global Ranger Competences: A Concise Summary of Skills, Knowledge and Personal Qualities Needed by a Competent, Professional Ranger.*** IRF and URSA. [Editions [available](#) in Hindi, Indonesian Bahasa, Khmer, Lao, Malay, Nepali, Spanish, Urdu, and Vietnamese].



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
FEDERATION**

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.



SUPPORTED BY



LED BY



WORLD BANK GROUP

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

