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Building trust between rangers and communities

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Building trust between rangers and communities

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www.ursa4rangers.org

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Back cover: Dorji Duba, government ranger in Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park, Bhutan © Emmanuel Rondeau / WWF-UK

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Foreword



Madhu Rao
Chair, IUCN WCPA

Managing protected and conserved areas (PCAs) is not just about conserving species and ecosystems, it has a major social dimension. There is now widespread awareness among PCA managers and agencies of the necessity and obligation to respect the rights of those using and living in or around PCAs, to resolve disputes, address grievances, prevent misconduct, and embrace much more collaborative and equitable forms of governance.

Addressing issues of policy, governance and rights can be frustratingly slow however, and may be beyond the scope of the work and powers of rangers and community members. While the big issues are being resolved, there is much that can be done, and is being done, at the site level to maintain and improve relations between PCAs and local people. These guidelines provide clear, positive practical guidance and real examples of how rangers can work with Indigenous people and local communities to build trust, cooperation and neighbourliness, to prevent and resolve conflicts, and to find common purpose in addressing threats to nature, people and culture.

The almost 80 good practices included here are practical and achievable for most PCAs and their personnel. They do not rely on large investments, but rather on thinking and doing things a little differently and adjusting established ways of working. They have all been applied successfully somewhere in the world, and most, adapted to the local context, could be adopted almost anywhere else. They are not designed to resolve longstanding grievances and disputes over rights, ownership and injustices, but they can improve the day-to-day lives of rangers and communities alike, and build the foundation of trust, respect and peaceful relations that are essential for the bigger, systemic changes to take root.

I would like to thank the many rangers from countries around the world for their contributions to this unique work and to encourage all managers and rangers to review, adapt and adopt the recommendations they have shared.



Preface

The need for rangers is growing rapidly. There are currently about 286,000 state rangers working in terrestrial protected areas worldwide. This is far short of what is considered necessary. It is estimated that 1.5 million rangers (from a wide range of conservation governance types) will be needed to effectively conserve 30 per cent of the planet by 2030,[1] as outlined in Target 3 of the Convention on Biological Diversity's Global Biodiversity Framework.[2]

Ranger roles are also changing (see glossary). As the number of rangers grow, the skills of rangers and their professionalism will also need to grow, as will the 'diplomacy' aspects of their work in many jurisdictions.[3] A continuing challenge for rangers is that in many places they are seen primarily as law enforcement officers, whereas their work usually encompasses a wide range of other activities[4] including monitoring, community development, nature-based tourism, education, fire management, invasive species control and most recently disease containment and monitoring.[5] Rangers are often perceived as only protecting biodiversity, while in reality they are often also securing ecosystem services, cultural heritage and peoples' rights.[6] Similarly, rangers of state-run protected areas are seen as government employees and out-of-touch with local cultures, when, in fact, a growing number of rangers originate from and are employed by the communities they work within.[7]

As the role of rangers changes so does the image associated with them. The common image of a protected area ranger is unfortunately, in many parts of the world, a man with a gun. The poaching crisis of the early 21st century increased the militarisation of many ranger workforces. Rangers experienced threats to themselves and their families, and many died, increasing tensions and also leading to severe mental health problems amongst rangers on the frontline. While there certainly are armed rangers in some parts of the world, this is a very biased and incomplete picture of their role. And although the growth is slow, the number of women involved in the ranger workforce is increasing all over the world.

This IUCN WCPA Good Practice Guideline focuses on one specific area of rangers' work, their relationships with Indigenous people and local communities. The good practices are a contribution towards the implementation of the five-year (2021–2025) Action Plan for professionalising the ranger workforce developed by the Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA). The Plan supports the implementation of the International Ranger Federation's (IRF) Chitwan declaration[8]



Lead authors Nigel Dudley, Sue Stolton and Hannah Timmins (left to right) discussing the good practices in Serengeti National Park with park rangers. © Equilibrium Research

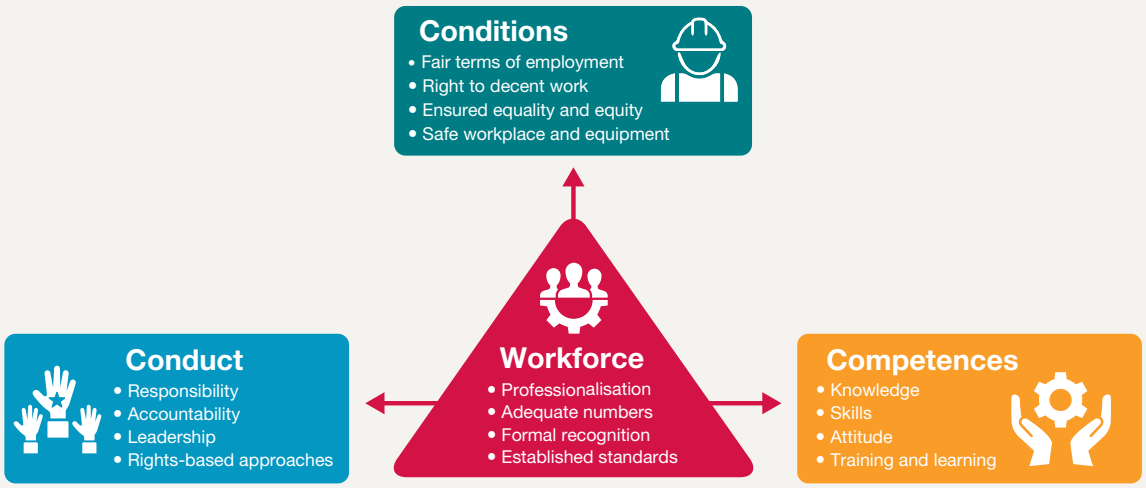

Figure 1: The 'Rangers for 30 by 30 framework' defines essential requirements for conditions, conduct and competence for a workforce that is sufficient in numbers, diverse and recognised[12]

developed and adopted by over 550 rangers from diverse backgrounds from 70 countries at the 9th IRF World Ranger Congress in 2019. The guidelines respond specifically to sub-objective (number E3) which states that: URSA, "*IRF and ranger associations are actively engaged in building trust between rangers and communities, by establishing meaningful participation and respect for human rights*". Rangers also identified issues of trust with local communities as their number one challenge in a global survey carried out by WWF in 2019.[9]

Although these guidelines have a specific focus, they therefore need to be seen within a wider programme of work promoting and enhancing global understanding of what rangers do and identifying necessary changes in how rangers operate, their numbers and support networks.[10] It has been suggested that the ranger workforce needs to be rebranded internationally as "*essential planetary health workers*" and recognised for the vital role rangers play in achieving major conservation policy goals.[11] To do this, rangers, ranger employers and ranger associations need to ensure their workforces have the three major elements (conditions, conduct and competences) outlined by the Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA) and the International Ranger Federation (IRF), see Figure 1.

As lead authors of this volume, we want to thank the huge number of rangers, managers and others working with rangers, who have shared their knowledge, ideas and experiences. Our job has been to compile these into the good practices presented here. We've been impressed and heartened by the enthusiastic response from many different rangers around the world. Compiling this volume has been hard work but it has also been fascinating to see the ingenuity and dedication with which different ranger communities are tackling some of the biggest problems facing humanity, often at risk to themselves.



Executive summary

This is the first volume in the WCPA Good Practice Guidelines that is predominantly by rangers and for rangers. The editors worked with partners to collect good practices and stories from rangers worldwide, reflecting global experience and lessons learned.

The text focuses on actions that rangers, and to a lesser extent managers, can do themselves. It does not address institutional changes that would need intervention at government level. Whilst the latter are often necessary, decisions are out of the hands of individual rangers. Nor is the guide the last word on the issue, another global ranger survey is being carried out simultaneously with the production of these guidelines and we will continue to learn about ranger needs, strengths and challenges in the future.

The guidelines outline a set of principles and good practices, along with many ranger stories and capacity building guidance, that can contribute to professionalisation, competence and conduct. Local, national and international bodies, IRF, its many member organisations, and URSA, have been providing opportunities to share experience and develop ranger guidance and policy for many years. Thanks to this work, a better understanding of ranger roles, rights, responsibilities and challenges is being developed, including through a code of conduct which provides principles for behaviour, ethics and accountability,[13] along with defined competencies to help ensure that training needs are met[14], both of which were essential sources for these guidelines.

The guidelines start with a discussion about the need for a human rights-based approach in conservation management and the concept of trust.

The longest and most important section outlines 79 good practices (all of which can be found listed in Appendix 1) subdivided into eight principles. Each good practice draws on real-life examples, sometimes supported by a short case study or ranger story, where a ranger explains the good practice.

Principle 1. Diversity, equity and professionalisation: to help manage and sustain a diverse, committed, well-trained and high-quality ranger force, secure in and proud of their profession.

Principle 2. Respect, cooperation and peacebuilding: building relationships between and within local communities and rangers characterised by mutual respect is a major contribution to developing trusting relationships.

Principle 3. Connecting, listening and learning: mutual understanding of rangers' roles and community needs helps connect people and, through listening and learning, trust can be developed.

Principle 4. Being a good neighbour: creating a positive and supportive community environment, with rangers a functioning part of the local community, considered by the community as a member not a visitor.

Principle 5. Finding common ground: helping communities and rangers reach agreement over topics and work together towards common goals.

Principle 6. Presenting the right image: good practices rangers and their managers can employ to help soften the image of rangers to present a more friendly, trustworthy persona.

Principle 7. Sharing a love of nature: rangers make excellent facilitators for inspiring and encouraging a love of nature, both for tourists and community members.

Principle 8. Working and playing together: frequent, positive experiences of working and playing together can underpin feelings of support, reliability, friendliness, generosity and kindness.

A third section proposes a modular approach to applying the good practices, starting with understanding the situation and the different types of trust. A guide is provided on identifying which good practices would be relevant to a given situation and making an action plan. Advice is given about options for training.

Scattered through the text are nine mini case studies, 12 ranger stories and a series of boxes covering issues such as Free, Prior and Informed Consent, the ranger code of conduct, rapid responses to human–wildlife conflict, etc.

In addition, the editors have collected a series of video interviews with rangers, to bring the subject more alive. Many can be accessed by clicking links in the text, more will be added as we continue to learn more about how rangers and communities work together. You can add subtitles in the language of your choice by changing the settings in the video.

We hope that this practical guidance, drawn directly from the experience of rangers around the world, will help rangers everywhere in their continuing efforts to build trust with Indigenous peoples and local communities who often live in or around protected and conserved areas, and thus ensure the effective and equitable conservation of nature.

Videos can be accessed by clicking on this video icon

Use settings to add subtitles in your language



One of the few female rangers in Nairobi National Park, Doreen is part of a monitoring and surveillance team of c. 60 KWS rangers, protecting c. 92 rhino and other wildlife from the threat of poachers. © Jonathan Caramanus / Green Renaissance / WWF-UK

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Acronyms and abbreviations

CEESP	IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
GAPA	Governance Assessment for Protected and Conserved Areas
GBV	Gender-based violence
GPS	Global Positioning System
HWC	Human–Wildlife Conflict
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IP & LC	Indigenous peoples and local communities
IRF	International Ranger Federation
ITT	Integrated threat theory
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
NLCP	North Luangwa Conservation Project (see p.67)
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OECM	Other effective area-based conservation measures
PA-BAT+	Protected Areas Benefits Assessment Tool Plus
PCA	Protected and conserved areas
RAMP	Ranger Advanced Medical Program
SAGE	Site-level Assessment of Governance and Equity
SAPA	Social Assessment for Protected and Conserved Areas
SMART	Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNDRIP	UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
URSA	Universal Ranger Support Alliance
WCPA	World Commission on Protected Areas

Glossary

Communities: Rangers work across the world in many different local, regional and national contexts. In this document, we use the term communities to encompass all people who are local to protected and conserved areas and who are likely to engage with and be impacted by rangers. The focus of this document is not primarily on other stakeholders, rightsholders or actors such as businesses (e.g. tourism operators). Communities can encompass both Indigenous and traditional communities and other local communities (see definitions below).

Indigenous peoples: As defined by IUCN follows the definition or "statement of coverage" contained in the International Labour Organization Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries. 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.[15] The right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), as recognised by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), has been developed to specifically protect the rights of Indigenous peoples.

Local communities and people: This covers a vast array of individuals and groups ranging from those living in and relying on a protected or conserved area for their livelihoods, to local people using the area for recreation. The focus of the current project is on people living in or adjacent to protected and conserved areas, or living nearby, whose livelihoods and well-being are to some extent dependent on the area or are impacted by conservation initiatives taking place in the area.

Protected and conserved areas: Area-based conservation now encompasses two terms, protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), as defined by IUCN (see inside back cover for definitions). The principles, good practices and capacity building guidance are relevant for all types of conservation, and examples of good practices from OECMs will be encouraged as these areas are beginning to be recognised and reported.

Rangers: As defined by the IRF, rangers 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.[16] The term ranger applies to any person regardless of title, including but not limited to wildlife warden, forest guard, forester, scout, watcher, game scout, marine ranger, park guard, and others working in conservation, with responsibilities for safeguarding nature, wildlife, biodiversity, landscapes and habitats, and for the preservation of cultural and historical heritage.[17] **Community rangers** are rangers that are from the local community or Indigenous peoples.



video link

To hear more about the diversity of rangers click here

Section 1.

Introduction



Ranger Rajak acts as a library to the students of Yellu Village, Misool Island, Indonesia
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The issue

Protected and conserved areas rangers have many responsibilities which include, but are not limited to, working to conserve biodiversity through monitoring, law enforcement, education, etc., providing and protecting social and cultural benefits, promoting climate change resilience/adaptation, and much more (see Figure 2). They are essential planetary-health professionals and in many cases, they are succeeding. But there has been a hidden cost borne by communities around the world. Rules, regulations and restrictions designed to protect nature and ecosystems, in some instances, have had serious adverse impacts on human rights. Rangers, increasingly from those very communities,[18] and other personnel working within protected and conserved areas, often have to deal directly with the impacts and consequences of these policy failures on Indigenous peoples and local communities. Rangers are, however, rarely in a position to solve the complex causes of these problems with the mandate, tools and training they are provided with and may be viewed as an extension of the problem. Today far more attention is being paid at a policy and implementation level to human rights and in ensuring that protected areas' management respects the rights of both Indigenous peoples and local communities and the rights of the rangers, on top of safeguarding nature.[19] Developing trust between rangers and the communities they work with is the best way to ensure good relationships, and having good relationships is the best way to ensure successful conservation.

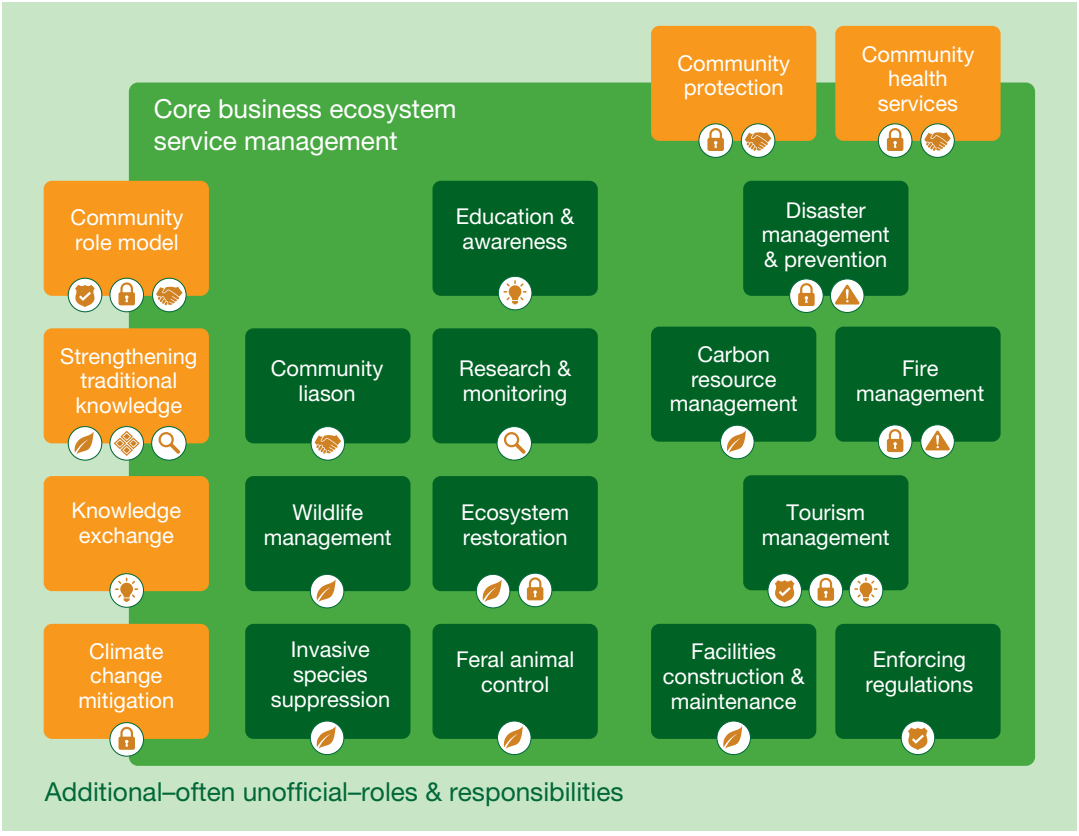


Figure 2: The diversity of ranger roles [20]

Protecting, conserving and restoring natural and cultural values in protected and conserved areas

Developing and maintaining trusting and respectful dialogue and relationships with key stakeholders

Providing education and awareness for communities, visitors, the younger generation and society

Enforcing relevant laws, maintaining area integrity, ensuring compliance and managing visitors

Empowering, collaborating with, engaging and supporting Indigenous peoples and local communities

Monitoring and researching wildlife, habitats, and features of cultural and historical importance

Maintaining a safe, secure and balanced environment for communities and wildlife

Managing and controlling environmental risks, and providing assistance during emergencies

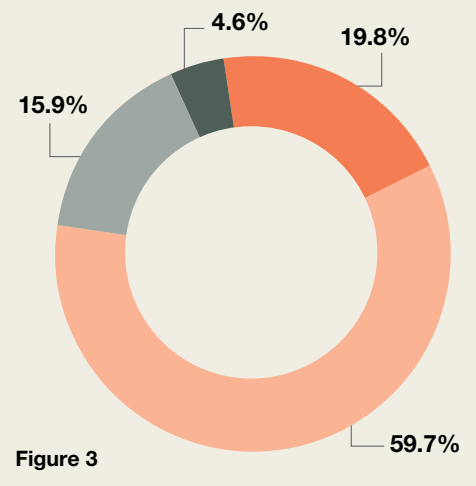


Figure 3

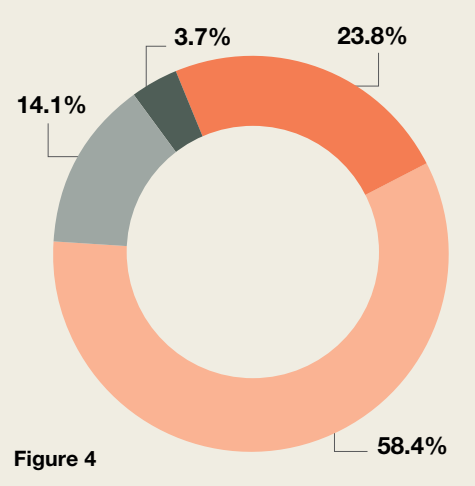


Figure 4

Results from the global survey of the working conditions of rangers (2019)

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Figure 3: Responses to the question "I believe community members trust me" [34]

Figure 4: Responses to the question "I believe that part of rangers' success at their jobs depends on the community providing them with information" [35]

There are plenty of examples where rangers, Indigenous peoples and local communities have trusting, harmonious and respectful interactions, and many cases where rangers, Indigenous peoples and local communities are one and the same. However, there are unfortunately also places where this is not the case. In the last major ranger survey carried out in 2018/19, a fifth of all respondents noted that they did not have trusting relationships with their local communities (see Figure 3 and Figure 4).[21]

Conservation strategies which are poorly designed or implemented can cause conflict and difficult relationships. Many communities around the world feel threatened due to their rights and roles not being recognised and respected, restrictions on their access to resources, and/or relocation from or threats of relocation from protected areas, which are declared in areas where people have been living for generations. At the same time, many rangers feel undervalued, undertrained, under-resourced and isolated socially and culturally from surrounding communities, and in some cases, their actions may directly be the problem or exacerbate existing tensions.[22,23] At the most extreme, both rangers and communities can face life-threatening situations linked to conservation practice and enforcement, although for different reasons.

These problems are often rooted in long-term and frustratingly intractable issues, such as historical legacies, power asymmetries, corruption, inequality, poverty, poor governance and lack of understanding of and competencies for upholding human rights. It should also be noted that public lack of trust in state security forces is often not limited to rangers, many communities around the world also perceive police forces to be threatening or otherwise unsupportive.[24,25,26,27,28] Challenges with ranger and community relationships and the outcomes have been written up widely and thus will not be repeated here, but it is vital to acknowledge the backdrop to this work.[29,30,31,32,33,34,35]

Scope and aim of the good practices

While these Good Practice Guidelines acknowledge the major issues outlined briefly above, and recognise the need for policy and legislation changes in many cases, the primary focus and scope of these guidelines is to collect 'on the ground solutions' that rangers and communities have developed and that are potentially replicable or adaptable across geographies.

The aim is to provide simple, practical guidance for rangers and their managers working all over the world to strengthen ranger and community relationships. The good practices are developed with and for rangers, and with and for communities, and are all drawn from real life experiences.

Audience

These good practices are aimed primarily at rangers (taken in the broadest sense of the word) and their managers. After this introductory section (section 1), section 2 presents a variety of good practices many of which can be implemented by rangers within their day-to-day duties, others will need changes in working practices or specific training and a few may need changes in policy practices (e.g. standard operating procedures). Section 3 contains ideas around how these good practices can be socialised and specifically considers processes which may be needed to implement the suggestions, these will clearly be very context specific.

Ensuring a human rights approach

Participation in conservation processes is a basic human right and a necessary component of conservation success.[36] National governments should take on the role of promoting, protecting and fulfilling human rights, ensuring institutional frameworks and processes (e.g. legislation, judiciary, oversight, policies, management, monitoring and reporting) adhere to international, regional and national human rights standards and norms. Alongside, efforts should be made and supported to create greater knowledge and understanding of human rights values and norms amongst individuals and communities.[37]

Any focus on building trust between rangers and communities therefore needs to start with a human rights perspective (see box 1) for all involved – rangers, other conservation staff, Indigenous peoples and local communities. Three key resources should be known by all working in this field:

1. The 2018 *Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment*[38] should underpin conservation initiatives, notably the symmetry identified in the Framework Principles whereby protecting the environment helps protect human rights, and protecting human rights helps protect the environment.
2. IUCN's *Natural Resource Governance Framework*[39] is an initiative of the IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP). The framework aims to set standards and guidance for decision-makers at all levels to make better and more just decisions on the use of natural resources and the distribution of nature's benefits, following good governance principles, such that improved governance will enhance the contributions of ecosystems and biodiversity to equity and sustainability.
3. *Tools for assessing the social impacts, governance and equity of conservation*,[40] developed by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), include three practical and relatively low-cost tools for stakeholders and rightsholders to assess the social impacts, quality of governance and equity of conservation and associated development activities. The tools are listed below and a brief overview comparing the tools and their requirements has also been developed:[41]
    i. *Social Assessment for Protected and Conserved Areas* (SAPA)[42] focuses on the impacts of area-based conservation on the well-being of local people, plus a basic governance assessment. SAPA can be used with almost any type of protected or conserved area.
    ii. *Governance Assessment for Protected and Conserved Areas* (GAPA)[43] focuses on governance challenges and underlying causes but only for PCAs where actors are willing to explore sensitive governance issues.
    iii. *Site-level Assessment of Governance and Equity* (SAGE)[44] is less detailed than GAPA but covers a broader scope of issues and costs less. SAGE can be used with any type of PCA.



Indigenous ranger, Kenya
© Jack Hewson

Box 1

Understanding human rights

Human rights are rights we have simply because we exist as human beings – they are not granted by any state. These universal rights are inherent to us all, regardless of nationality, sex, ethnic origin, colour, religion, language or any other status. They range from the most fundamental – the rights to life and food – to those that make life worth living, such as the rights to education, work, health and liberty.[45]

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. This was the first Declaration in human history to set out basic civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all human beings should enjoy. The UDHR, together with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its two Optional Protocols, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, form the so-called International Bill of Human Rights.[46]

Recently, there has been increased focus on understanding the relationship between human rights and the environment. Of specific relevance here are the 16 framework principles related to human rights and the environment[47] that should be the foundation of policies and implementation worldwide, including in the interpretation of human rights law in relation to the environment. Developed by the UN Human Rights Council appointed Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, the framework is aimed at states to implement, but nonetheless all those involved in conservation should be aware of the principles and their intent.

The principles start with promoting substantive human rights: the right to attainable standards of physical and mental health, to an adequate standard of living, to adequate food, to safe drinking water and sanitation, to housing, to participation in cultural life and to development, as well as the right to a healthy environment, should be available to all. The principles stress that legal and institutional conservation frameworks must not strike an unjustifiable or unreasonable balance between environmental protection and other social goals, in light of their effects on the full enjoyment of human rights. The principles also stress that states should take additional measures to end discrimination and protect the rights of those who are most vulnerable to, or at particular risk from, environmental harm, taking into account their needs, risks and capacities. These include women, children, persons living in poverty, members of Indigenous peoples and traditional communities, older persons, persons with disabilities, ethnic, racial or other minorities (including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities) and displaced persons. The principles stress that states should ensure that they comply with their obligations to Indigenous peoples and members of traditional communities, particularly in terms of rights to the lands, territories and resources that they have traditionally owned, occupied or used, and full and effective participation of Indigenous peoples and traditional communities in decision-making on the entire spectrum of matters that affect their lives.

Box 2

Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)

Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is a specific right that pertains to Indigenous peoples and is recognised in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)[48] and in the 16 framework principles. It ensures Indigenous peoples the right to give or withhold consent to a project that may affect them or their territories. Once they have given their consent, they can withdraw it at any stage. Furthermore, FPIC enables Indigenous peoples to negotiate the conditions under which the project will be designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated. This is also embedded within the universal right to self-determination.

Training rangers in human rights is becoming more standard in many countries, particularly those with human rights issues often linked to decolonising conservation. For example, a human rights training manual for rangers has been developed for Central Africa by the Wildlife Conservation Society. The manual contains a wealth of background on understanding human rights and then guidance on developing ranger specific training around these issues and how human rights can be ensured in protected areas by rangers; much of the guidance is applicable beyond the Central African region.[49]

What do we mean by trust?

Participation in conservation is far more likely to be successful if carried out in an environment of trusting relationships. Similarly, an understanding of how to predict, prevent and manage social conflicts and breakdowns in trust, that can arise when working with diverse stakeholder groups, can help partners reach equitable solutions in conservation.[50]

Trust has been defined as: the firm belief in the reliability, truth or ability of someone or something.[51] This definition has been further elaborated to describe a relationship in which one person (the trustor) accepts vulnerability (i.e. the willingness to accept the emotional risk that comes from being open with someone) to another person (the trustee) who acts on behalf of the trustor.[52] This definition has been expanded for the conservation domain to define four different types of trust (see Table 1).[53] This illustrates the complexity of trusting relations by identifying the underlying basis for trusting or distrusting authority (e.g. protected area governance authorities). These relate to the specific outlooks and contexts of different groups of stakeholders (e.g. trust relationships can vary between different villages around a protected area or involve differences within a village or even within individual households). Building trust through a diversity of different types of trust can also help secure trusting relationships even when one level or type of trust breaks down.[54] For instance, using the definitions defined below, procedural trust can break down when processes fail (e.g. compensation payments for human–wildlife conflict are delayed), but if emotional trust remains then trust can be maintained while processes are revised to restore procedural trust.

Table 1: Understanding different types of trust between people (adapted from[55])

Type	Definition/basis	Notes
Disposition	The general tendency or predisposition of a person to trust or distrust another person or entity. This tendency is often context specific.	Can be based on innate tendencies, personal history, cultural norms, and/or can be driven by experience or current cultural influences.
Rational	Trust based primarily on a personal calculation of the consequences of placing one's trust in a person or entity.	Evaluations of information about the prior performance of the person or entity and the assessment of likely outcomes.
Emotional	Trust is based primarily on an emotional judgement of the qualities of the potential trustee.	Judgements can be based on a variety of issues, for example: (a) assumptions of shared values or concerns; (b) feelings of social connectedness (e.g. friends and family); (c) shared positive experiences; (d) subconscious or emotional response to charisma or perceived shared identity.
Procedural	Trust in procedures or other systems that decrease vulnerability, enabling trust in the absence of other forms of trusting relationship.	Perceptions of legitimate, equitable, transparent and/or binding procedures that enable confident predictions of the behaviours of others.

Trust is thus a very individual concept linked to past experiences and future expectation, personal qualities and so on, this makes it hard to quantify and measure. Communities (whether of rangers or of local people) do not trust as a block. Trust is also mutual: it requires actions with and by communities or individuals and actions with and by ranger/s to build effectively. Trust is built by two or more parties being clear and constant in their approach to an issue, when equity, equality and empathy, understood as the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person, are present and through the innumerable small acts of kindness and thoughtfulness which help build a relationship. The breakdown of trust can happen in a moment, or over decades, when expectations are not realised, when there is a breakdown in communication, when people/communities do not feel respected or when inequalities are so entrenched that trust is virtually impossible. Mistrust between two parties can also be caused by third parties, who may benefit from the breakdown of trust between the first two parties. Furthermore, trust may never be complete and is not unidirectional.

Park ranger Tram Chim, Viet Nam
© Thomas Cristofoletti / WWF-US



Section 2.

Principles and Good Practices



Members of Olkiramatian all female team of community rangers on morning patrol, Olkiramatian, Shompole, Kijado County, Kenya
© Greg Armfield / WWF-UK

The relationship between rangers and communities is only as good as the system and associated processes that support them (e.g. national and institutional arrangements and policies, governance model for the protected area) and the shared values and aspirations that bind them (although this is often less challenging when rangers come from the local communities).[56] Building on the discussion in section 1, protected and conserved areas should develop a positive vision with diverse stakeholders and rightsholders (including protected area staff, local people and Indigenous peoples) who live and work in and around the area and interact with the protected area. Achievement of this vision should:

- Ensure a strong understanding of and respect for the human rights of all individuals and corresponding obligations (see box 1).
- Ensure people from all backgrounds feel valued and enjoy similar life opportunities.
- Find opportunities for mutual collaboration between rangers and local communities, to build and maintain trusting relationships.
- Generate respect through participatory dialogue processes and by breaking down stereotypes and misconceptions about 'others'.
- Develop through collaboration and inclusive consultation a defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and groups to an area, its conservation, local livelihood potential, etc. and find common/institutionalising platforms that can bring both parties together.
- Have in place requirements of effective and accountable management including ranger codes of conduct, an independent and fully functioning grievance mechanism, safeguarding mechanisms, monitoring and reporting relating to human rights issues and agreed channels of communication and decision making.
- Foster a culture of openness on all sides to understand and accommodate the perspectives, culture and systems of others.

The principles and good practices outlined in the section below can all contribute to the achievement of this vision. Although, as noted above, a few will be dependent on changes in policy or practice, most are based on the concept that small acts of kindness, fairness and acting transparently can go a long way in developing trust. Indeed, there is considerable psychological research around the concept of 'small acts of kindness',[57] specifically actions intended to benefit others, which has been reviewed through the development of these guidelines.

The good practices offered here have been collected over a three-year period, reaching out to rangers and community leaders around the world using a wide range of forums: a widely distributed questionnaire in English, French and Spanish and associated social media campaign, workshops, conferences and gatherings, individual meetings in person and through video conferencing, and through socialising the concepts presented here in news stories and trainings. In total over 200 suggestions were made in relation to good practices and practical examples.

This feedback from rangers and communities worldwide (see Figure 6) has been synthesised into eight overarching principles (see Figure 5) and 79 good practices, all of which are illustrated by either short examples, mini case studies, ranger stories and explained by rangers themselves in a series of videos.



video link

See feedback from rangers and communities worldwide here

The principles and good practices should not be seen as a 'to do list' as not all will be relevant, feasible, practical or suitable for a site, but rather they are a compendium of good ideas to pick and choose from and adapt where appropriate (see section 3 for ideas on how to do this). And of course, the factors that help build and maintain trust are likely to change over time and across generations, what has worked with one generation may not work with those following, and one strategy is unlikely to cover all members of a community.

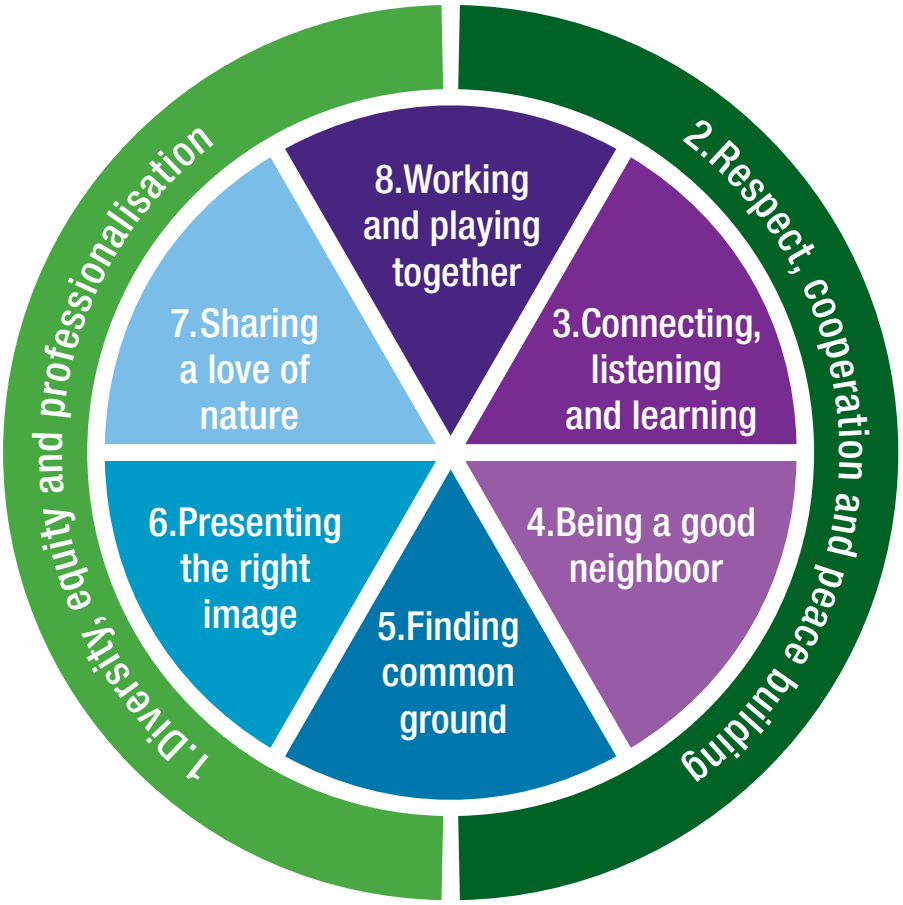


Figure 5: The eight principles through which the good practices are presented.

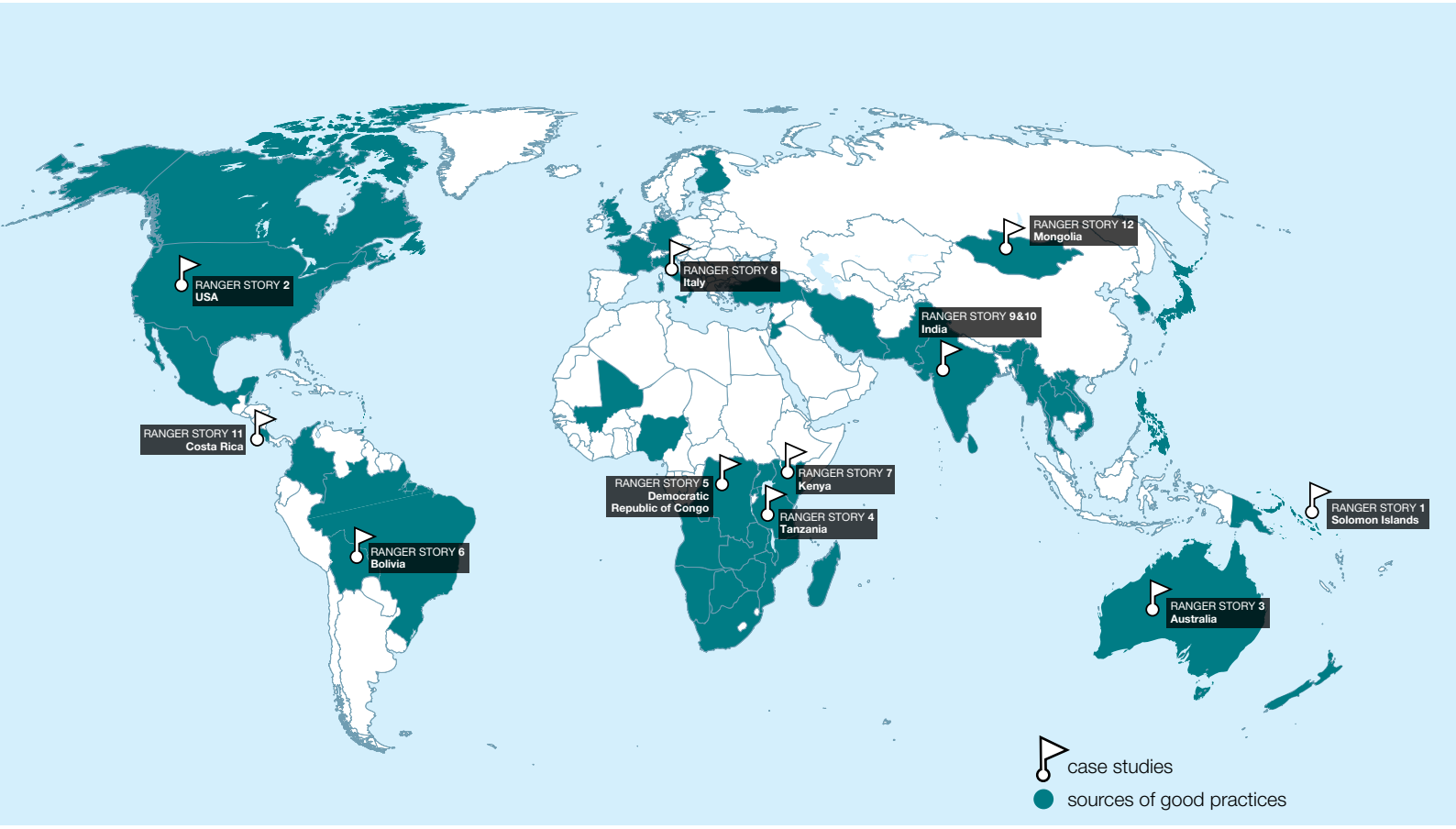


Figure 6: The global reach of the good practices and examples presented in this publication (Map produced for this report).

PRINCIPLE 1

Diversity, equity and professionalisation

Rangers have a diversity of roles, which means that we need rangers with many different skills, backgrounds, cultures and characters. This first section, much of which is directed particularly at managers and senior staff, aims to help manage and sustain a diverse, committed, well-trained and high-quality ranger force, secure in and proud of their profession, which in turn builds self-esteem, confidence and a professional identity. Experience is important, particularly at the senior level; managers who have never themselves worked as rangers will be at a disadvantage in understanding practical challenges faced by their workforce and this can lead to discontent amongst field staff. Managerial staff should therefore ideally either be promoted from the field or undergo careful initiation and training to ensure that they can properly represent their staff.

Good practice 1.1

Make long-term professionalisation and employment commitments to rangers.

An underlying problem for many rangers has been the lack of professionalisation linked with ranger employment (see box 3), which is represented by a range of poor working conditions, insufficient safeguarding and inadequate (or inappropriate) training.[58,59] Professionalisation is seen as a critical step in developing ranger capacity and status,[60] and in ensuring long-term career opportunities. Training needs to be supported by decent living and working conditions and wages, regularly paid.[61] Paying rangers a living wage that allows their children to be educated and their families to be fed also reduces the likelihood of corruption from rangers seeking to protect their personal welfare and leads to more professional and committed rangers. Job security is also important, particularly in the case of community rangers, as well-trained but unemployed, underpaid, undervalued or otherwise dissatisfied rangers could be a divisive force in the community.[62] Of course this also has to be equitable, in that both the rangers from outside the area and rangers from the local community should have equal benefits. Dissatisfied rangers can create a security threat to the community and conservation either through a risk of corruption, providing information to poachers coming from or through surrounding communities, or as highly trained and knowledgeable poachers themselves.



Awapy Uru Eu Wau Wau and his wife Juwi Uru Eu Wau Wau from Rondônia State, Brazil. Both are part of the surveillance team which oversees the Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau Indigenous land to record loggers' invasions and illegal deforestation © Marizilda Cruppe / WWF-UK

Box 3

What do we mean by professionalisation?

Over time, the role of rangers has increased as expectations for protected and conserved areas have developed. Skills required vary from the very practical, like fixing vehicles or first aid training, to a deep knowledge of ecology and the ability to deal with people, ranging from visitor management through resolution of human–wildlife conflict to tackling illegal activity. There are few professions where an individual is expected to understand such a broad range of issues. Additionally, in remote areas rangers are often the first point of call to tackle everything from natural disasters, health emergencies and assisting or even replacing police.

The IRF and Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA) has identified eight main groups of competencies that rangers are expected to have, with 23 separate skills:

a. **The ranger's workplace, role and job:** Knowing about the place where a ranger works: its cultural, historical and biological values, the people who have rights in and use the area, the threats it faces, and the management strategies and plans that guide their work. Knowing the specific duties, responsibilities, legal rights and obligations of rangers.
b. **Planning, administration and documentation:** Planning, documenting and reporting on the work of rangers and ranger teams. Keeping records of ranger activities.
c. **Managing and leading people and activities:** Leading, supervising and managing individual rangers and ranger teams and operations.
d. **Conducting practical field work:** Undertaking routine field tasks including navigation, use of equipment, routine collection of information related to values and threats and emergency response.
e. **Crime prevention, law enforcement and security:** Detecting, identifying and responding to illegal, unauthorised and harmful activities in the area of operations. Use, where relevant, of firearms and less lethal weapons.
f. **Interacting with stakeholders and rightsholders:** Collaborating and communicating with individuals and groups, and with rightsholders within the area of operation.
g. **Visitation and education:** Working with tourists, other visitors and educational groups.
h. **Personal conduct and attributes:** Working professionally, responsibly and ethically with due care for oneself and others.[63]

Good practice 1.2

Employ local rangers from a broad spectrum of the community.


video link

Research has shown that humans tend to coordinate, collaborate and be kind to others with whom the actor shares a common interest – teammates, group members, etc.[64] A recent study of ranger survey data from across 11 countries explored how being local to a conservation area might affect ranger experiences and perceptions (local was defined as being within 20 km of the conservation area). The survey found that being local corresponds to more positive relations with local communities, specifically with regards to perceived trust from local community members.[65] The term 'cultural broker' is used to describe individuals who act as trusted intermediaries between individuals, families and communities (see also good practice 3.12). The term can be applied to rangers who often act as a go-between among stakeholders and rightsholders, advocating on behalf of conservation management. A study from Pu Mat National Park in Viet Nam found rangers act as cultural brokers with communities, with roles varying from gatekeepers to liaison between different groups.[66]

Being local also means rangers are closer to families and friends (see good practice 6.6.). Research in Madagascar found that attachment to place was a major motivation in people becoming rangers, again suggesting the importance of a local connection.[67] This also correlated with rangers having a higher job satisfaction due to more amicable community relationships. Employing rangers from the local community helps ensure integration of local values and traditional/custodial roles within PCA management.

Employing local rangers can also help avoid the feeling that jobs are being taken away from local people or that strangers are being brought in to 'control' local people. The perception of 'local' can vary; for some, coming from a neighbouring village is local, in other cases neighbouring villagers are seen as outsiders. Local rangers also have the additional benefit of having more chances to build relationships with the rest of the community. For example, the US Forest Service recruits local high schoolers (15–18 years old) to join a Youth Conservation Corps where they learn about conservation whilst working alongside experts on various projects. These teams help connect families with the work of the rangers whilst also educating young people on how the community uses and views the protected area.[68]

However, it is also important to note the potential issues around employing local rangers and to manage such issues. In many cultures, respect is paid to community leaders no matter what the cost, for example, a local ranger might find themselves in a compromising position if their community leader or elder does not wish to follow equitably agreed rules. It is essential to support local rangers with training, resources and potentially anonymity if such a situation occurs. It is currently a common practice for rangers to be deployed in sectors that do not include their own villages, and/or to be rotated regularly between sectors depending on the size of the area being conserved. Ranger employment and deployment is of course very context specific, but mixing ranger teams of locals and non-locals to maintain some independence from local politics is worth considering. Also having robust mechanisms in place such as whistleblowing for rangers and grievance redress mechanisms for local communities should ensure that potentially negative issues are minimised (good practices 2.3. and 2.4.), and benefits in terms of developing trusting local relationships by having local people managing local areas maximised.

URSA has conducted a study into the benefits of employing Indigenous peoples within the ranger workforce. These benefits include the ability to both communicate, empathise and understand local Indigenous communities, and to assist and educate non-Indigenous colleagues. This results in wider organisational dissemination of insight and awareness of Indigenous customs, traditions and knowledge. The issues highlighted above were also noted, in particular the difficulty of enforcing laws and regulations in the communities that Indigenous rangers are from, as well as difficulties in recruitment and promotion.[69]

"Normally, when someone is sent to local communities, they are accompanied by us. So, we are always there, to translate, because of our presence, and the way that we translate, really there is not a problem. In the case that a new man goes there alone, it would not work. If they do not know the language, they need us to go together, then everything works well." Anonymous Indigenous Ranger responding to the URSA study[70]

Good practice 1.3

Ensure gender diversity when employing rangers.

At present the representation of women in ranger teams is low worldwide and several issues will need to be addressed before the role of women in developing trusting relationships can be fully maximised. This may involve challenging social norms (see ranger story 1). There is a balance between avoiding the imposition of ideals or values that go against the culture of a country or community and promoting human rights and values such as equity and equality. For instance, in patriarchal societies and communities, there may be opposition to employing female rangers or gender minorities; it may not be acceptable for women to be working in nature or working with men they are not married or related to. The militarisation of rangers and a perception that poaching is a predominantly male activity has increased this tendency.[71,72] To become a ranger, women often have to go against their culture. As Caroline Olory, first female Conservator of Park for the National Park Service in Nigeria, states being a female ranger is often not seen as an appropriate role for a woman. However, this is changing worldwide with female rangers being employed from the Solomon Islands (see ranger story 1) to Saudi Arabia.[73]

In countries where it is legal to post job advertisements according to gender, many ranger jobs are advertised as male only.[74] It is estimated that only 3–11 per cent of rangers globally are women,[75] although the presence of women amongst a protected area agency's leadership is found to significantly increase women at other levels of the organisation.[76] Evidence is building that female rangers are especially suitable for communicating with and educating communities on local conservation efforts, including other women.[77] It is vital however when building equity in the workforce not to disempower male employees while developing female empowerment.

More research into the direct and indirect roles of women in wildlife crime is needed to help make the case for female rangers.[78] However, the evidence to date shows that employing female rangers can have wider societal implications. Members of Team Lioness, an all-women ranger team in Kenya, are the first women in their communities ever to gain employment.[79] In Zimbabwe, the Akashinga Rangers is a community-driven conservation model, which empowers disadvantaged women, many who are survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse, to restore and manage large networks of wilderness areas as an alternative economic model to trophy hunting.[80]



video link

"It is not easy in the midst of men, many of whom still think the place of women should remain in the kitchen."
Caroline Olory, Nigeria [82]

Mini case study 1: The Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit

In South Africa, the Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit was established in 2013 in response to the escalating rhino poaching problem in the region. Traditional anti-poaching methods had proven inadequate, prompting the recruitment and training of 36 women from local communities to primarily undertake visual policing and early detection. This recruitment was done in partnership with the local tribal council; the chief's endorsement of the project sent a powerful message to the community of support for conservation.

The decision to employ women was motivated by various factors from enhancing their family's financial security to harnessing the influence women have to drive social change thanks to their role as primary caregivers, enabling them to convey values to family and other community members. Other key attributes highlighted by the programme include:

- Women having keen observational skills, enabling them to detect subtle changes – an important asset in spotting potential poacher incursions.
- Women being more approachable and perceived as better at ensuring effective communication with other stakeholders and rightsholders such as reserve management, landowners and tourists, who play a pivotal role in protecting natural areas.
- Women often excelling at conflict resolution through dialogue, deescalating tense situations (see good practice 2.7.)
- Women introducing diverse perspectives, contributing to an equitable environment of skills, ideas, and collaborative efforts alongside their male colleagues.

The Black Mamba programme provides women with a platform to excel and demonstrate a working environment that fully addresses women's needs. The approach also enhances workplace safety, mitigating issues such as sexual harassment and gender-based violence within the work and potentially the home. After ten years, the programme reports a steady decline in various forms of poaching within the deployment area of the Black Mambas.[81]



Singye Wangmo, Senior Forestry Officer at Royal Manas National Park, Bhutan
© Simon Rawles / WWF-UK

The first review of female rangers globally carried out for URSA, concluded that:

- In law enforcement or possible conflict situations, women are perceived to have stronger de-escalation and negotiation skills.
- Women rangers may be better at 'details' (including keeping patrol logs) than men.
- Women rangers may have better access than men to different constituencies (especially other women) in communities and can thus expand the reach of ranger networks.[83]
- It has been suggested that women rangers can contribute to preventing internal corruption.[84]

Change will come from sharing experiences worldwide and a process of conversation, understanding and agreement, rather than imposing quotas or other external processes that do not address cultural norms and perceptions. The URSA review also noted good practices that facilitate women's integration into ranger workforces:

- Women-specific training opportunities.
- Critical mass hiring of women (not just one by one) and at a senior level.
- Strong mission statements of commitment to gender equality, and enforceable and enforced policies of zero-tolerance to gender-based violence (GBV).
- Women's specific ranger and conservation associations, both formal and informal.
- Training programmes on gender equality for all protected areas staff.[85]

In Australia, a specific organisation, the Women Rangers Environmental Network (WREN), has been developed and led by Indigenous women to support the rangers, coordinators and cultural advisors and to discuss the challenges that face female rangers, identify solutions and push for policy changes and more jobs.[86]

"When women are involved in conservation, we know that it's not just the environment that benefits. There are healthier people, healthier families, healthier communities, and that flows onto a healthier economy, and a healthier social landscape." Rosie Goslett-King, Women Rangers Network Coordinator at WWF-Australia.[87]

Encouraging female rangers also requires some systemic changes in the work environment and practical steps such as building female only toilet facilities, access to sanitary wear,[88] flexible hours for working mothers, recruiting more than one woman so that women are not working alone with a group of men, gender equity training for all staff, and many more.[89,90] These of course will often have budgeting implications.

"Forest frontline staff (especially the Ranger and Deputy Ranger level) has seen a lot of women entrants in recent years. They are young, fit and enthusiastic. As long as there are basic facilities (such as a private bath, and toilet) and sometimes a school/crèche to take care of children (below five years), there is nothing that can stop a woman from joining the department," Sonali Ghosh, the first woman field director of Kaziranga National Park, India.[91]



The ranger teams at Khulano Integrated Conservation Area. Khulano means 'leatherback' in the local Solomon Islands language. © Justine E. Hausheer / TNC

Sadly, once hired, many female rangers face misogyny from their male colleagues, which can result in serious abuse. Gender-based violence is among the most prevalent human rights violations perpetrated by rangers and other security personnel against their own colleagues.[92] As the USAID's rights-based training stresses, the right to be able to work free from sexual harassment or discrimination should be a fundamental right for all rangers, a right that may have particular relevance to female rangers.[93] Standards on harassment and discrimination in the workplace are also included in the draft International Labour Standard developed by URSA.[94] Establishing a women ranger network like the Queensland Indigenous Women's Ranger Network (QIWRN) is another way to support women rangers by sharing their experiences, ideas and information, and providing support and advice.[95]

But this is also a serious issue between (mainly male) rangers and communities (particularly women and girls) too and nothing is more likely to undermine trust than violations of this sort. Critical to preventing and responding to gender-based violence is understanding the way that inappropriate gender norms impact the power dynamics between male rangers and women and girls from local communities. Thus, it is crucial that rangers abide by safeguarding policies and procedures and that training imparts a clear understanding of harmful gender norms and social considerations.[96]

Groups of empowered female rangers can be reliable whistle-blowers, ensuring that this kind of behaviour does not go unchecked and defending the rights of local women and girls. There should also be efforts to recruit staff members of other under-represented groups in terms of age, ethnicity, religion, ability and disability, sexual orientation, etc.

Good practice 1.4

Ensure workplace equity.

All rangers, whether men or women, government employees, local community rangers or voluntary rangers, should be treated equally in terms of safeguards and working conditions.

Equity in conservation is a matter of governance and includes recognition and respect for actors and their human and resource rights, equity in procedure (e.g. participation, accountability) and equitable cost/benefit distribution. This is crucial both for ethical reasons and for effective conservation and applies both to conservation actions on site, and to complementary activities designed to support conservation (e.g. stewardship incentives, support for local schools). With existing protected and conserved areas, equity can be improved by action on governance, informed by assessment and social safeguards. Improving equity will, in most cases, be an incremental process. For new protected and conserved areas, equity will be a critical success factor both in terms of conservation effectiveness and social and political legitimacy. Social safeguards should be used to predict and effectively mitigate potential negative impacts.[97]

Ranger story 1:
Lynette Haehathe and Jessica Haraputti: Women have ideas as well[98]

Solomon Islands





Lynette Haehathe, Jessica Rhoda Haraputti, Nora Tuti, Anita Rosta Posala © Justine E. Hausheer / TNC

Lynette Haehathe and Jessica Haraputti are two of the first women rangers in the Solomon Islands. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) helped establish three women's ranger groups at Haevo, Sasakolo and Sosoilo. Together with their male colleagues, they are helping to protect a critically endangered population of Western Pacific leatherback turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*).

In the Solomons, women are not usually allowed to work in technical jobs alongside men. Men hold the majority of the decision-making power in both homes and communities, and they dominate employment opportunities that require technical expertise, including work as conservation rangers. Changing cultural perceptions around gender is neither simple nor straightforward, and it will not work without the support of the local community. It is not as simple as mandating that women participate, but rather requires building programmes with local communities and adapting notions of equity to local cultures.

There are many issues to consider when employing women rangers for the first time. In the Solomons, it is not culturally appropriate for women and men to live together in the same building or use shared bathrooms and laundry facilities. Community leaders have thus granted permission to build a second ranger station next door to the existing facility, and TNC staff have secured additional funding for building materials. Separate living facilities will help make the men and women more comfortable, but it will also help alleviate the concerns of the rangers' spouses. Some of the rangers' spouses, men and women alike, have concerns about their partners working alongside members of the opposite sex. In small communities, gossip can easily lead to false accusations of infidelity, creating embarrassment for all parties and jeopardising the conservation work.

Other issues arose as the women rangers started taking up their posts. After several weeks of work, hiking along the beach and kneeling to gather turtle eggs in uniforms with skirts, the women asked if comfortable trousers could be added to the ranger uniform. Another goal is to make ranger work more family-centred and family-friendly, so that rangers can bring their partners and children along while they work as there is concern about how long the women are expected to be away from their families.

Having women on the team has proven to be a conservation success. As Lynette Haehathe recalls: "*All the men in the village would get out their axes and knives and they would kill the turtle. When the conservation started and we became rangers, we realized that the turtles were innocent… so I'm really happy to be a ranger to help save them, because their numbers are declining*." Jessica Haraputti sums up why having women involved is important: "*We women have ideas as well, and we want the opportunity to work, like men. We want to be involved and have responsibility*." She goes on to say: "*When they picked us to be the first women rangers, I was really proud to represent my village. I'm really happy, because if I hadn't become a ranger, I'd still be stuck at home, struggling. Now I feel free*."

Lynette and Jessica are forging the way for women rangers (good practice 1.3.) in the Solomons and in doing so, changing the face of rangers for local people and diversifying the ranger stereotype (good practice 6.4.). In employing Lynette and Jessica, the ranger managers had to work carefully to understand issues of equity in the communities (good practice 3.10.) and the working conditions that needed adjustment if they were to bring in women, including making employment more family-centred (good practice 6.6.).

"When they picked us to be the first women rangers, I was really proud to represent my village. I'm really happy, because if I hadn't become a ranger, I'd still be stuck at home, struggling. Now I feel free."

Mini case study 2: Ensuring equity in the workplace in Papua New Guinea

For the Building Resilience in Treaty Villages project, incorporating women into the ranger workforce of Papua New Guinea has been challenging and has required persistence and strong leadership. But the tide is shifting and now, across 13 Treaty Villages in the South Fly District of Western Province, women rangers are enjoying the same opportunities as their male counterparts: leadership roles, working in the field and the opportunity to meet female ranger role models.[99] Many also receive the same training as male rangers including boat handling, first aid, building, communications, small motor maintenance and plumbing. These changes have resulted in an increase in confidence and equity in the ranger group. Some female rangers have now taken additional training in women's health, nutrition and birthing assistance and are supporting communities with these new skills. The success of the female rangers and the appreciation by community members has resulted in the female rangers having greater participation in village meetings and decision-making. The female Community Rangers have developed an anti-family violence narrative demonstrating that such violence is bad for the whole community.[100] See also ranger story 1.

Good practice 1.5

Recognise different educational experiences to promote diversity.

Given the evidence that employing women, local community members and Indigenous peoples is vital for developing trust between local communities and rangers, the pathways to employment need to be diverse, and there is a need to integrate and optimise local and tacit knowledge. Particularly in rural or remote areas, potential rangers may not have completed formal education and this can exclude them from jobs or create a 'glass ceiling' preventing promotion beyond the most basic level, even though their essential 'tacit knowledge' and 'traditional/cultural knowing' may be way beyond other rangers (see also ranger story 4). Various options exist for addressing this and promoting professionalisation without discrimination. In South Africa, 'life-long learning' can sometimes replace formal educational certificates. Other protected area agencies recognise qualifications from online learning, allowing keen rangers to advance through their own efforts. At the same time, less formal educational opportunities need to be taken advantage of whenever possible, for example young rangers can often learn a lot from community elders or senior/retired colleagues; this has been an important part of developing Indigenous Protected Areas in Australia.[101] And even those with deep knowledge of many aspects of management, such as local Indigenous rangers who have an intimate understanding of life on their land or water, may need specific training on issues such as monitoring.

Good practice 1.6

Employ rangers who speak the local languages/dialects.

Where necessary, promote the learning of local languages and dialects and provide learning resources for rangers; knowing and using even a few words and practising with the local people will be appreciated as an effort to embrace the local culture. This is true even when community members all understand the dominant language of the country. In Wales, UK, virtually everyone speaks English but around 30 per cent of people aged three or over speak Welsh, many as a first language. National Park rangers are encouraged to speak Welsh because defence of the language has been such a strong part of Welsh identity. Bilingual signs are standard practice and national parks are being renamed: Snowdonia National Park is now officially Eyri and the Brecon Beacons National Park is Bannau Brycheiniog.

Good practice 1.7

Train and effectively equip local people as volunteer rangers.

Volunteer rangers play a key role in many protected areas and where appropriate can support conservation and build community relations. Volunteers can range from individuals assisting vegetation management, wildlife surveys and monitoring, to elected individuals who play a critical role in defending community interests. Some are formally recognised by governments; others are wholly unofficial. However, in setting up a voluntary ranger programme, it may be important to ensure that this does not create a poverty trap for the volunteers, specifically that ranger duties do not interfere with their jobs and income, and that it is clearly communicated to volunteers if the voluntary position is unlikely to result in a paid job.

In Mexico, voluntary "*Vigilantes comunitarios*" are certified by the government). There are only eight federal protected areas in the state, but there are 371 Áreas *Destinadas Voluntariamente a la Conservación*, covering 1,655 km^2, these are owned by Indigenous peoples, social organisations and individuals or legal entities that have voluntarily dedicated them to environmental conservation. They are a formal part of the national protected area system. Full-time rangers work with the internal organisational structures of the respective communities, strengthening the capacity of volunteers for management, vigilance and monitoring. This has proved a far more effective approach than imposing external structures that have nothing to do with the community and employing people who do not know the territory. While the system has proved effective and popular, it is not perfect. Community guards are not armed and lack many powers to stop poaching threats, and communities are seeking the authority to issue penalties for poaching.

In Port Cros marine protected area in the French Riviera, artisanal fishing is permitted and local fisherfolk assist with measuring trends in population levels using a variety of monitoring techniques.[102]

Mini case study 3: Volunteers become the mainstay of ranger patrols in Trinidad and Tobago



Leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) heading back to the ocean after laying eggs on a beach, Trinidad & Tobago © WWF / Vincent Kneefel

Nature Seekers[103] is a community-based organisation founded in Trinidad and Tobago in 1990 to protect nesting leatherback turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*) from poaching. Seeking a long-term solution to this problem, the Wildlife Section of the Forestry Division worked with the local Matura community to establish a guide training programme and to educate the community about the environment. Nature Seekers emerged from this process. Although it initially operated purely on a volunteer basis, and struggled to obtain funds, the government later commissioned the organisation to provide ranger services such as patrolling the beach and providing visitor tour guide services. Educational efforts have been so successful that even some poachers and their families joined the Nature Seekers. Through this and patrolling efforts, Nature Seekers has brought down the rate of turtles killed from 30 per cent to zero, and the anti-poaching patrol is being refocused on monitoring and research.



Drawing class at the Tashi Choling Monastery, Bhutan encouraging wildlife and management awareness © Emmanuel Rondeau / WWF-UK

Good practice 1.8

Explore opportunities for mentoring and knowledge sharing for young rangers.

Younger rangers can be greatly helped and encouraged by a formal or informal process of mentoring (see also good practice 7.5.). This can be as simple as the opportunity to work with a more experienced colleague to pick up from their experience but can also be introduced more formally through leadership courses, opportunities to travel to other protected areas and access to online courses. Learning is seldom unidirectional; older colleagues can catch up with modern innovations that may have passed them by at the same time as passing on their own experience to people just starting out in their careers.

Through the US Forest Service's Resource Assistants Internship programme, students, recent graduates and people from underrepresented population segments are immersed in a rigorous, paid internship in conservation and natural and cultural resource management. This internship helps the Forest Service to attract and retain a diverse and inclusive workforce and carry out mission-critical work.[104]

In Africa, well over 100,000 people have now taken part in the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) on protected area management produced in French and English by IUCN. In 2023, 1,165 certificates of achievement were awarded to students who scored more than 75 per cent in final exams. While not everyone has access to the internet, the opportunities are increasing all the time.[105] Using a different approach, the Korean National Park Service (KNPS) has made a tradition of sending promising young staff members to work with organisations such as IUCN for one or two years, to gain experience and bring this back to KNPS, allowing it to expand rapidly in scope and ambition despite only being established in 1987.

Good practice 1.9

Pay attention to ranger concerns about their safety and security.

Rangers face numerous hazards, both from the natural world (dangerous animals, inhospitable terrain, storms and other natural hazards) and from organised poaching gangs and other people using the site illegally. Around the world an average of two rangers die each week in the line of duty.[106] Problems spill over to families, who are sometimes directly threatened by criminals or left struggling if rangers are injured or killed. Many countries have inadequate support schemes and the Thin Green Line Foundation was initially set up specifically to help families of rangers killed on duty.[107] Research in 2016 found that rangers in 20 per cent of countries surveyed had no health insurance, 35 per cent no life insurance and 45 per cent no long-term injury cover, with problems particularly acute in Asia and Africa. Temporary rangers were particularly likely to be left without cover.[108] Greater efforts are often needed both to provide maximum safeguarding at work (proper equipment and training, strong protocols for attitude to risk) and support when things go wrong, including provision of insurance schemes[109] and family support in case of accidents and fatalities. This not only helps rangers and their families but delivers the message of a caring organisation to the wider community.

In the absence of government support, NGOs are in some cases providing cover. Since 2018, the ForRangers initiative of the Save the Rhino group has funded annual life insurance policies for rangers across Africa. In 2022, 3,200 rangers were supported across 62 protected areas in 11 countries: Angola, Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.[110] Similarly, the Game Rangers Association of Africa provides accidental death, disability and medical evacuation cover, in the form of their insurance package Ranger Protect, to over 2,400 rangers across Africa for just US$ 45 per ranger per year.[111] Since 2001, the Wildlife Trust of India has been supplementing government insurance schemes, covering 30,000 permanent and temporary Forest Department staff working in protected areas around the country.[112] WWF India also runs an insurance scheme.

Good practice 1.10

Understand and support the well-being of ranger mental health.

The dangers faced by rangers are not just physical but also link to levels of stress, which can cause mental health problems which amongst other issues can lead to errors of judgement and increased tensions with local communities. Taking steps to maintain mental well-being in the face of constant stress is a critical step in building trust both within and outside the ranger force. This requires a multi-factor response, starting with adequate safeguarding. Beyond that, simple steps include minimising the uncertainty and levels of risk, making sure that rangers have adequate opportunities for relaxation including time with their families (see good practice 6.6.) and, if necessary, professional counselling. In Kenya, some conservancies run mental health forums, with professional counselling and external facilitators, allowing rangers to share problems with a sympathetic audience and in a safe space.[113] In South Africa and the UK, specific programmes have been developed to consider rangers' mental health (see box 4).

"I always start my day with a prayer … In reality, we live each day knowing it could be our last,"

Gracien Muyisa Sivanza, Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of Congo, where 18 rangers were murdered between 2020 and 2021.[114]

Box 4

Rangers and mental health

There is increasing recognition that rangers can suffer severe mental health problems as a result of their job, with serious knock-on effects for their relationship with their families and local communities. Impacts can range from feelings of isolation to stress caused by interacting with awkward or aggressive visitors or people undergoing some kind of crisis, to the extreme pressures faced by rangers when they or their families are under threat of physical violence. A survey of 58 patrol rangers across seven sites in Pakistan in 2019 found almost half the rangers reporting difficulties trusting others, over a third had anxiety interacting with others and around a quarter experienced occasional breathing problems, chest pain and grinding teeth at night – all symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD.[115]

Apart from the high human costs involved, frustrated, tense rangers are likely to be less tolerant of other people. Frightened, armed rangers can be trigger-happy, leading to a mounting cycle of violence. In many countries, mental health problems increased dramatically after the surge of poaching and the consequent paramilitary application of ranger forces. While immediate stress symptoms can last for a week to a couple of months, PTSD can last far longer and involve flashbacks, illusions and symptoms of burn-out.

Experience shows that these issues are most common in the ranger force working daily in the field. Research also suggests that many people at the top of protected area agencies lack understanding about mental health risks, particularly if they have not worked their way up from the field. Problems can go unrecognised and therefore unresolved.[116]

Addressing these issues involves first a recognition by the ranger or their manager that help is required and then access to a trained mental health care professional. Unfortunately, at the moment, few protected area agencies offer such a service and, in many countries, it would be very difficult to access trained professionals. But in places where mental health care has been taken seriously the results are encouraging. In South Africa, rangers are offered professional help to address mental health problems, and this has been embraced enthusiastically by many field staff with positive results. In the UK, the National Trust, a charity which is also one of the largest landowners in the country, has set up a Mental Health First Aider programme where staff can get professional training in dealing with mental health issues amongst both the public and their own colleagues. Still a fairly new programme, 160 Mental Health First Aiders have already been trained. They share online space and have monthly meetings to swap experiences; all interactions with people seeking help are anonymous. While 'first aid' is important, rangers also often need advice about where to access follow-up support.

The first stage in tackling mental health issues amongst rangers is to address the stigma associated with the term, particularly in a profession that has traditionally placed high value on strength, resilience and independence. This often includes building support from people in higher management. Putting greater emphasis on the mental health of rangers is an important step in building trust further afield.[117]

Good practice 1.11

Ensure rangers are aware of the IRF ranger Code of Conduct.

In April 2021, the International Ranger Federation with support from URSA, launched the world's first *Global Ranger Code of Conduct*,[118] already available in over a dozen languages,[119] and has begun working towards its implementation (see box 5). The Code provides a set of principles for performance and good practices for rangers, as well as steps to help formalise the field to ultimately build and strengthen the reputation of the ranger profession.[120]

Additionally, some individual countries and organisations have developed their own code of conduct, and it is important that all relevant rangers are fully briefed on what these contain. For example, the US National Parks Service has detailed ethics requirements for all employees,[121] as does the conservation NGO Flora and Fauna International.[122]

Box 5

The ranger Code of Conduct



Community Forest Guards in Tanzania taking an oath to uphold their Code of Conduct © WCS Ruaha-Katavi Landscape, Tanzania.

The need for strong principles to guide conduct and professionalise the ranger workforce was a clear request of the 2019 Chitwan Declaration from the World Ranger Congress. The IRF thus developed a Code of Conduct to ensure high standards of practice and ethics. This code (which has been translated into over a dozen languages) provides a set of internationally agreed definitions of values and desirable conduct which should guide the work of rangers. The intention is for the Code to be adopted and implemented by ranger groups and institutions, with the code adapted as needed to local contexts.

Key purposes of the code:

- Provides an operational framework for rangers and supporters of the profession.
- Helps guide rangers, ranger employers and possible supporters to make better decisions and take appropriate actions.
- Promotes implementation of globally accepted best practices and can contribute to the prevention of rangers violating laws and regulations.
- Builds and strengthens the reputation and understanding of the sector.[123]



Rangers across the age range in Kuiburi National Park, Thailand © WWF-Greater Mekong / Sittichai Jittatad

Good practice 1.12

Provide basic human rights training for rangers.

Most state rangers are trained primarily in wildlife management or sometimes they are simply transferred from other divisions, such as the national forest department, with only minimal re-training. Community rangers often rely mainly on the innate knowledge they have of the region. Addressing human rights issues is sometimes perceived as being complicated and rangers can feel overwhelmed. Specialised training, ideally as part of a curriculum, is needed so that they understand the human rights[124] of local community members and Indigenous peoples and know exactly what the duties and obligations of rangers should be (see box 1). Capacity building should also cover an understanding of rangers' own human rights and how to claim them.[125]

Relevant information is increasingly available. In addition to the IRF's *Global Ranger Code of Conduct*,[126] USAID has developed a whole training module focusing on human rights for rangers, particularly those associated with its supported projects.[127] The Wildlife Conservation Society and partners have produced a guide to human rights in Central Africa.[128] Similar guidance is needed in many more parts of the world.

Good practice 1.13

Ensure good succession planning when rangers retire or change jobs.



video link

Ensure rangers have the time and resources to hand over community relationships to their successors. Succession planning is important in every aspect of a ranger's job but in this case has special importance because communities will often have developed a rapport with a particular person and be suspicious of a newcomer. Time should be made for two-way learning, to ensure newly deployed rangers understand the history and cultural priorities of local communities, and to ensure local communities are introduced to new rangers and are ready to interact with new rangers as partners. This requires a careful handover process and possibly several joint meetings with communities to ensure they are comfortable with a new ranger and for the ranger themselves to understand the nuances of maintaining a cordial relationship, who they need to consult with and to understand any likely problems they could encounter along the way.

Daniel James-Jiron, former US Forest Service ranger (see ranger story 2), encourages ranger leaders to leave good instructions to their successors and background information detailing any prior agreements and lessons learned with communities. In his experience, a file containing this information is helpful along with a personal explanation and ensuring the successor has the time to read the information. Communities do not want to have to re-explain things that they already discussed with previous ranger contacts, this can be a frustrating experience for communities and sour relationships before they have begun. Ideally, Daniel proposes an overlap with your successor to introduce them to the community and give you time for a goodbye, this can ensure a smooth transition and gain credibility for the new ranger with local people.

PRINCIPLE 2

Respect, cooperation and peacebuilding

Building relationships between and within local communities and rangers characterised by mutual respect is a major contribution to developing trusting relationships. This can be based around the concept of two-way learning/reciprocal learning. This is a collaborative learning approach where knowledge, skills and experiences are shared between two or more groups, leading to mutual benefits and deeper understanding. This method recognises that learning is not unidirectional but involves contributions from all parties involved.

Rangers are given authority to act to conserve and promote conservation in a wide manner of ways including education, social engagement and law enforcement. This should be underpinned by social acceptance that this authority allows rangers in certain circumstances to make judgements, lead decisions, and act in a specific way. Acceptance is generally much easier in an environment where all the partners have trusting relationships. Indeed, although authority is usually conferred through policy, it is far more likely to be negotiated, contested, developed and implemented on the ground through social interactions.[129] Ideally conservation actions, and where necessary restrictions, can be co-created (e.g. created by all parties involved) rather than transmitted from one party to a another. All participants thus engage in dialogue, share experiences and develop new understanding together. The good practices under this principle look at a range of situations under the loose heading of respect, cooperation and peacebuilding which can all help build trust between rangers and communities.

Good practice 2.1

Seek to promote community cohesion through understanding tensions.

The concept of community cohesion[130] recognises the differences between and within communities, and between communities and rangers, but attempts to resolve problems by encouraging understanding and cooperation and tackling disadvantages and inequalities. Situations where there are disadvantages and inequalities often equate to where there are actual or potential tensions and conflicts. It may be useful to map social, historical and political dynamics to develop different strategies and protocols for community engagement.

USAID's rights-based training encourages rangers and managers to conduct a 'conflict analysis' in order to stay well-informed of the tensions and fault lines that exist between protected area management, local communities, youth groups, the private sector and other services. Without such analyses, protected area managers often fail to take pre-emptive measures to address simmering tensions and potential conflict. It is important for rangers to have access to this situation awareness to minimise the chances of reacting improperly and escalating conflict (see box 6 and good practice 2.7).[131]



Park rangers and local community meeting, Playona, Colombia © Fílmico Colombia/WWF-US

Box 6

USAID's guidance on situation awareness[132]

1. Rangers should understand where they are working. Is the physical environment forest, savannah, marine? What is the terrain like? What are the boundaries? Is the area remote, close to local communities, subject to political instability? What level of protection does it have? Is it a national park, a private reserve, or another category of protected area? What activities are allowed in the protected area? Who lives in the communities within and bordering the area? What prevailing gender, cultural and other social norms inform relations within and between communities? Are there enduring conflicts within or between communities, or conflicts between authorities, rangers and community members that shape relations in the park? Have there been known abuses between law enforcement or the military that have disproportionately impacted women and girls, minority ethnic groups, Indigenous peoples or other marginalised groups?
2. Rangers must also understand what they are patrolling and protecting? What are rangers trying to protect? Are there threatened or endangered species? Flora? Fauna? What are people most likely to be hunting or removing from protected areas? Are there natural resources that are collected or used, such as wood for charcoal, peat, water or minerals? Is such collection or use legal, subject to permitting, or illegal?
3. Rangers must also be aware of who they are most likely to encounter. Are there local villagers hunting or gathering for subsistence? Will women and girls be collecting assets such as firewood? Are there tourists or researchers? Are there armed gangs, organised criminals, insurgents or rebels operating in the area? If so, what kinds of weapons are they likely to be armed with: automatic weapons, rifles, spears? Are there private industries operating in the area, for example, mining concessions?
4. In addition to knowing who they may encounter, rangers must understand why the people are there. Rangers might expect to encounter villagers, but the reasons why those villagers are in the area are equally important. Are there certain rights and concessions granted to local communities that allow them into the protected area? If there are armed groups operating in the area, are they there to poach or are there other reasons behind their presence in the territory?

Good practice 2.2

Think about how individuals react to having authority when rangers are employed or deployed.

It is important to consider how rangers may respond to having authority over a specific situation (see also good practice 2.7). Those with a communal relationship orientation (e.g. those who take into account other people's needs and feelings when making a decision) tend to demonstrate a greater generosity when using authority than those that have not.[133] When rangers perceive themselves as a service, they tend towards helping protect the environment and its inhabitants, if rangers perceive themselves as a force they are more inclined to simply enforce the law without considering implications for the human rights of local people.

There is a huge and complex literature about the relationship between power and individual behaviour,[134] going back to the controversial Stanford Prison Experiment in the 1970s,[135] which used a mock prison setting with college students role-playing prisoners and guards to understand how power influences an individual's attitude, values and behaviour. Academic debates notwithstanding, managers should be aware that some individuals may abuse power. Ensuring that the conduct of individual rangers does not undermine good community relations is a responsibility of both protected area managers and rangers; one person behaving badly undermines everyone.

Ranger reactions can of course be influenced by overall laws and policies, or the lack of them. Research in Mozambique highlighted key issues. Drawing from research discussions with rangers across the country, the internal contradiction rangers feel of wanting to protect wildlife but also stop poachers and have them held accountable was evident. As was their discomfort with the violence used against people who could be compatriots or even neighbours, and concerns around the increasingly militarised tactics which alienate local people within and around protected areas and turn them against wildlife conservation. The researcher noted that one ranger summarised how the underlying power structures of a country can normalise and even promote violence. He explained how the poachers were not being punished due to the failure of Mozambique's justice system; ranger frustration builds up as they risk their lives trying to protect wildlife. One way to get around the lack of formal punishment of poachers is to take matters into the rangers' own hands, further eroding public trust.[136]

Good practice 2.3

Ensure that policies and processes are in place to mitigate corruption and misconduct.

No-one is perfect and rangers have undoubtedly been guilty of misconduct of various kinds[137,138] and because they are often in positions of relative power within communities this can have major implications for relations with local communities.[139] Problems can be compounded if senior staff encourage or order more junior staff members to do things they know to be corrupt or cover up wrongdoing. Factors such as delayed salary payments may incentivise corruption because rangers need money to address practical needs.[140] Managers and senior rangers therefore need to take particular care to help alleviate concerns related to human rights violations and other misconduct including corruption. Important elements in robust policies include fair working conditions, as well as a clear set of rules and principles for rangers, proper oversight, opportunities for confidential reporting of misconduct and sanctions in the case of corruption or misconduct being discovered. Random or shadow monitoring of patrols is important in many cases to ensure compliance with rules and regulations, including those related to interactions with resident or nearby communities. Of course, private-sector and community collaboration can also be leveraged to strengthen the integrity and effectiveness of law enforcement and the criminal justice system.[141]

Corruption risk assessments may also be needed to gauge the level of risk involved[142] and research methods to understand corruption in conservation are becoming increasingly sophisticated.[143] WWF and a consortium of partners have developed the Targeting Natural Resource Corruption (TNRC) hub which contains a suite of resources and tools to advance anti-corruption knowledge and support the integration of good practice into conservation work. Their guidance on law enforcement, for example, includes sections on corruption risk assessment and capacity building, transparency, traceability and technology, case and court monitoring, and reporting and whistleblowing mechanisms.

The human rights training manual for rangers in Central Africa stresses that sanctions must be visible, predictable and effective when dealing with misconduct. Specifically, the guidance notes that:

- Experience shows that the more visible sanctions are and the more predictable their application is, the greater their deterrent effect.
- Sanctions can be enforced by criminal or disciplinary measures.
- Internally, it is advisable to develop compliance mechanisms and investigation capacity to prevent and respond to misconduct or abuse.[144]

Good practice 2.4

Develop mechanisms for rangers to feel safe when whistleblowing.

Some agencies pay 'whistleblowers' for information on local poaching activities, etc.[145] But it is also important that rangers feel confident in identifying illegality or bad practice within their own workforce. In the 2019 global ranger survey, 17 per cent of rangers indicated that they would not report their fellow rangers if they witnessed them accepting a bribe or engaging in other corrupt and illegal activities, which is concerning but indicates a lack of process and training and poor institutional culture. Indeed, 17 per cent also noted that their organisation does not do a good job in reprimanding rangers found to have participated in corrupt activities (such as accepting bribes). Perhaps even more concerning, almost 60 per cent of rangers either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "I would be concerned for my safety if I reported a fellow ranger who I witnessed accepting a bribe or engaging in other corrupt and illegal activities". [146]

Processes need to be in place allowing rangers to make complaints and raise issues of concern, either anonymously or confidentially, and to raise concerns that standard operating procedures or codes of conduct are not being adhered to.[147] This should include a safe way to complain about senior rangers if necessary. Most people instinctively find it difficult to report on their colleagues, and there is a balance between identifying serious misconduct and developing a workforce grounded on suspicion and mistrust; all managers should be able to help staff steer between these two extremes. As noted above, trust can be built in many different ways (see Table 1), with effective, efficient and equitable processes being among the major pathways to developing trust.

USAID's rights-based training manual for rangers recommends that "if a ranger witnesses harm being done by another ranger, they should follow the 'duty to intervene' model, which should be embedded in all ranger training and operational procedures. The duty to intervene requires rangers who witness behaviour such as complicity in illicit activities or physical abuse of any kind, including sexual abuse, to take action to stop or prevent such activity from occurring or continuing. It is important to protect from retaliation and ensure significant and timely consequences for retaliation against a peer ranger for stopping or reporting misconduct by peers. Mechanisms for confidentiality or anonymity of reporting abuses and having effective referral pathways in place are also important components to improve reporting and accountability for misconduct."[148] As noted above, the Targeting Natural Resource Corruption (TNRC) hub contains a wealth of information on topics such as whistleblowing and grievance redress mechanisms (see good practice 2.3.).[149]



Community ranger, Kenya
© Greg Armfield / WWF-UK

Good practice 2.5

Develop safe, secure, functioning and independent incident logs and grievance redress mechanisms for local communities.

The issue of grievance redress mechanisms being in place at community level is fundamental. Communities must be aware of the channels they can use to raise concerns regarding their social and environmental safeguards so that they can be independently reviewed and where needed acted upon.

Particularly in places where tension and potential conflicts are high, it is important to properly document interactions with local communities. At the most basic level, these incident logs can be hand-written summaries of incidents, although if technology is available, more sophisticated and fully independent systems can be employed such as body cameras or smart phone videos. Incident logs should include details of how any conflict began and include notes about any injuries. To minimise repeat incidents, it is important for rangers and partners to identify the causes of conflict.[150]

Small problems develop into much bigger issues if they are not addressed quickly and effectively, potentially undermining months or years of work in trust-building. Establishing protocols for communities to report any issues and concerns to rangers and managers is therefore important. Grievance redress mechanisms are a way for people or communities to express their concerns about a project, process, action or person. The ideal in the current context is for all community members and protected areas staff to be supportive of the conservation activities and the management actions taking place in a protected area. But when problems over policy, process, management or relationships do occur, grievance redress mechanisms provide a structure for addressing these issues.

IUCN has outlined key principles to guide grievance mechanisms, stating that they should be:

- *Accessible*: Mechanism is fully accessible to all parties that might be affected.
- *Practical*: Mechanism is cost-effective and practical in its implementation and doesn't create a burden for implementers.
- *Effective and timely response*: The provisions and steps for responding to complaints and seeking solutions are effective and timely.
- *Transparency and accountability*: Ensuring clear communication, accountability and grievance mechanisms to foster trust and confidence within the community.
- *Independent*: Oversight body and designated investigator is independent from the project, process, action or person the complaint has been made against.
- *Protection from retaliation*: Procedures are in place to protect the complainant and minimise the risk of retaliation.
- *Maintenance of records*: Diligent documentation of negotiations and agreements and good maintenance of records on all cases and issues brought forward for review.[151]

Communities should be aware of grievance mechanisms but formal systems may not always be needed, and rangers should be prepared to listen to and discuss any problems communities have. Every grievance should be taken seriously and dealt with, however small. When issues are reported special consideration should be given to community members who have experienced conflict.

A community wildlife corridor focused programme supported by the Wildlife Conservation Society in Tanzania defined a confidential grievance redress mechanism and decision-making tree. Widely publicised amongst member communities, it included provision of a hotline telephone number and standardised grievance review process, with all complaints or suggestions tracked and monitored. The grievance redress mechanism was aligned with existing community governance systems, ensuring more effective adoption and sustainability.



Developing the decision-making tree for the grievance redress mechanisms in Tanzania © WCS Ruaha-Katavi Landscape, Tanzania.

Good practice 2.6

Ensure disciplinary procedures are transparent and fully implemented.

If things go wrong, fair sanctions and disciplinary procedures are needed. It is important that these are known and understood by both rangers and local communities; and that those procedures are fully implemented. Failure to discipline a ranger for misconduct in the community will rapidly erode trust; some of the most controversial issues relating to rangers and communities in the last decade have been exacerbated by attempts to cover them up.

Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association's *Standard Operating Procedures for Wildlife Scouts* includes a Disciplinary Code describing categories of offences and the penalties for them, and notes that standardising disciplinary measures reduces bias when dealing with misconduct.[152]

Good practice 2.7

Ensure rangers' team structure and actions are coordinated and focused on de-escalation.

Rangers face very different levels of threat around the world. For some rangers, enforcement means dealing with rule breaking such as camping away from official campsites, for others it is trying to protect natural resources from illegal armed groups.[153] This good practice is aimed more at minor violations than life threatening situations.

video link

De-escalating tensions during an encounter is generally far more difficult than escalating them. Ranger training should include instruction on techniques to quickly diagnose the nature of a situation, determine the areas of legality under question, and subsequently take action as warranted. Having several rangers and ideally community members present during enforcement activities which impact local communities helps reduce false accusations and/or bad practice and protects both the rangers and community members. Ranger teams should ensure that all colleagues agree in advance (ideally through team training and simulation exercises) on when to intervene in a situation, how to react and when to withdraw from a potentially dangerous situation (see mini case study 9). Ranger training should include instruction on critical thinking skills, during which rangers are taught how to assess situations and communicate calmly, respectfully, and with an appropriate authoritative tone with all parties.[154]

Where de-escalation is not possible, clarity and transparency of processes is vital. USAID's rights-based training manual stresses that rangers must have clear rules regarding the use of force, based on principles of legality and proportionality. There should be clear rules about the treatment of persons whom they search, arrest or detain to ensure that human rights and the dignity of subjects are respected. Rules on confiscation of items should be included in this procedure. Furthermore, when a serious incident does occur, teams should debrief as soon as possible and any issues which impact local communities and relationships with them should be logged, considered and remedial actions taken.[155]

Mini case study 4: Dealing with conflict, lessons from Germany

Below is a summary of key points discussed in a webinar between Dr Gertrud Hein, retired education expert at the North Rhine-Westphalia Academy for Nature and Environmental Protection[156] in Germany and Ranger Frank Grütz, head of the Nature Guard in Saarland.[157] The webinar, organised by the European Ranger Federation through the German Ranger Association, was on conflict management training for rangers.[158]

- **Be aware of your own capital:** Ranger self-confidence is very important for de-escalating a situation. Rangers have an official mandate and are experts in their protected area. If possible, role-play with colleagues to ensure that you radiate authority and calmness when faced with conflict situations.
- **First impressions are important:** Be convincing and think about how you will be assessed when in conflict situations. Be calm but determined, upright and get into a position of being at eye level if possible. Maintain eye contact when talking to your counterpart, be friendly to the person, but firm on the matter. Do not belittle your interlocutor but make it clear that you cannot tolerate his or her behaviour (see good practice 2.9.).
- **Try to relax, then act:** Breathe deeply into your stomach, shut down your adrenaline, anger, rage or frustration before introducing yourself in a neutral and polite way.
- **Pay attention to self-protection:** Before taking any action, carefully analyse the situation. What is the danger level, are the people involved intoxicated? Are there indications of poaching and thus potential firearms? Self-protection should always have absolute priority. Position yourself so that you can avoid attacks at any time, keep your distance.
- **Be aware of the level of conflict, then consider next steps:** Use a 'traffic light' system to constantly check the level of conflict and potential outcome. When it is green, a goal-oriented conversation is still possible, when it is orange, there is a potential for the situation to become dangerous. When it is red your counterpart is no longer accessible to arguments and the risk of irrational outbursts is high. Consider your next steps when in the orange. For example, do not continue the discussion or add fuel to the fire by making disparaging remarks. Call the police, back-up or other relevant authorities if you can be sure that they will come quickly.
- **Train yourself to have a 'thick skin' and to move on:** If the conversation escalates into verbal insults and attacks, imagine that you have skin like a rhinoceros. Do not let insults or threats get to you. Erase them from your memory. If something sticks in your mind, write it down and talk about it with your colleagues or your boss. This documents it, and in most cases, you will find you are not alone and others have had to deal with similar situations.
- **Create unity, seek order in partnerships:** If you are on patrol with a colleague ensure all colleagues agree on which violations you will intervene in and how.



Rangers patrol up the Semliki River, in Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of Congo
© Brent Stirton / Reportage by Getty Images / WWF

Good practice 2.8

Ensure rangers understand the application of law and order and traditional approaches to conflict resolution, including restorative justice, are used when appropriate.

Some of the greatest risks of social conflict occur when rangers need to apply the rule of law for transgressions such as subsistence poaching and illegal resource use. In most cases application of the law should be a last resort and only for major criminal offences. Wherever possible and feasible restorative justice which focuses on repairing harm, restoring relationships and addressing the needs of all stakeholders involved is a preferred approach. Unlike punitive justice systems, which primarily aim to punish offenders, restorative justice seeks to heal and rehabilitate by involving victims, offenders and the community in the resolution process.

In many Western societies, or Western influenced societies, the criminal justice system is built on principles of individual rights, due process, and punishment proportional to the crime. However, this often fails to resolve issues. The use of traditional approaches to conflict resolution can wherever possible be far more effective.[159] Culturally relevant systems of dealing with deviant or criminal behaviour are often shaped by cultural norms, values and historical context. Community leaders or elders may play a significant role in resolving conflicts and determining appropriate consequences. For example, local poaching offences may be dealt with more effectively by a local tribal official if procedures already exist, and this is likely to cause less tension within the community.

> "People are arrested because of makala [charcoal]; they are then forced to sell their fields and plots to pay the fines. Then they have no other work and will return to the park to cut makala. Arresting people is not helpful at all. It's a vicious cycle."
>
> **Anonymous, Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of the Congo[160]**

Many Indigenous cultures, such as the Maori in New Zealand or the Navajo Nation in the United States, have traditional practices centred around restorative justice. Restorative justice principles are also being explored in South Africa.[161] This approach brings the victim, the offender, members of the larger community, and oftentimes professional service providers, together into a non-hierarchical setting in order to collectively address a harm that was committed and to set a path towards reconciliation between all relevant parties.[162] These processes aim to produce a sense of responsibility in the offender after they have heard how their actions and behaviour have affected the victim and larger community. This, in turn, aims to initiate a desire within the offender, but also within the victim and community, to begin the work of healing and restoring relationships, and rebuilding the community's well-being.

In some countries, such as Canada, restorative justice has been incorporated into the criminal justice process, with sentencing circles, releasing circles and healing circles from the cultural traditions of certain Indigenous nations used to discuss and resolve criminal conflict. The participants sit in a circle and pass a "talking stick" or "talking feather" to each speaker so that everyone has a chance to speak and be heard, which reflects the Indigenous principle of including all voices. [163] In certain African cultures, the concept of Ubuntu emphasises interconnectedness and communal well-being. Restitution and reconciliation are important components of addressing deviant behaviour, with an emphasis on healing relationships within the community.[164]

Situations still unfortunately arise where a more formal response to a criminal activity is needed, and it is important that rangers have access to and are trained in the use of clear protocols and standard operating procedures on law and order (see box 7),[165,166] including:

a. In what situations different types of rangers should intervene, especially in situations where there is a combination of 'formal' rangers and community rangers/volunteers.
b. The limits of their jurisdiction, specifically, when they are authorised to make decisions and when they should refer to colleagues/superiors, or to other bodies such as the police.
c. The national, local and site-based rules under which rangers operate.
d. How conservation law enforcement works with other law providers (e.g. police, army).

If rangers do have recourse to the law, it is also important that the police and judiciary back this up with appropriate sanctions,[167] otherwise the ranger is undermined.

Box 7

Protocols on rangers bearing arms

Standard operating procedures should be clear to rangers and other staff, and local communities should have access to these and understand how they are applied. Standard operating procedures should include:

a. Who is allowed to carry arms.
b. Storage of arms and ammunition outside of working hours (this should be in an armoury).
c. When and how the use of firearms is permitted.
d. Protocols on documentation of when ammunition is used (and why).
e. Protocols if someone is injured/killed by ranger firearms[168] including any mental health follow-up (see good practice 1.10).
f. Reporting by the rangers and investigations by the recognised authority of any use of firearms.

Additionally, it is important that rangers understand:

a. International standards governing the use of force.
b. When the use of force is appropriate.
c. The concept of self-defence.[169]

The IRF's *Global Ranger Code of Conduct* contains a passage for rangers to commit to and includes ensuring that they are abiding by laws and regulations, acting only with mandate, and the safe securement, use and maintenance of firearms.[170] The UN has also published principles on the use of force and firearms,[171] and International Human Rights standards on the use of less-lethal weapons in law enforcement.[172]



Rangers setting out for patrol (Thailand) © WWF-Greater Mekong / Sittichai J

Good practice 2.9

Practise non-violent communication when in a disagreement with community members or colleagues.

Non-violent communication is an approach for enhanced communication, understanding and connection based on the principles of non-violence and human psychology – basically it stresses kindness as opposed to aggression. It is not an attempt to end disagreements, but rather aims to increase empathy and understanding.[173] Non-violent communication is focused around trying to respond to a situation with language which is not judgemental, critical and isolating (see box 12). Non-violent communication is used in a range of situations and taught to multiple professions, including uniformed forces, negotiators, peacekeepers, etc.



video link

Table 2: The four elements of non-violent communication[174]

Element	Explanation	Example
Observations	This is what you can see or hear about a situation. Describe without judgement and distinguish observations from evaluations, e.g. "He always…" or "They never…", these qualifiers may be perceived as a criticism and elicit defensiveness.	"When I hear…" "When I see…" "I've noticed how…" "What I remember is how you…"
Feelings	Relate the observation to the feeling it evokes. Many words actually describe thoughts or interpretations of how others view us, for example, saying "inadequate" when we really mean "nervous" or "uncomfortable".	"…I feel pleased…" "…I feel hurt…" "…I feel frustrated…" "…I feel worn out…"
Needs	People can sometimes struggle to express what they need, value or expect in a situation. Expressing judgement of someone else, is likely to elicit defensiveness. Compassion flows when making direct links between feelings and needs.	"...because I value honesty" "Clear communication is important to me" "This doesn't meet my need for safety"
Requests	The final step is to convey what specific action can be taken to meet our needs. Language should be clear, specific, concrete and positive; what you want rather than what you don't want. Reduce perceived demands by asking what the person is willing to do.	"Would you be willing to…?" "Are you able to…?" "Can I ask you to…?" "I'd like you to…"

Ranger managers can consider training and non-violent communication courses for their staff as part of the de-escalation courses.[175] Leave No Trace (LNT) has also developed the Authority of the Resource Technique specifically for rangers and protected and conserved area users that want to better educate other users in protecting natural resources. On discovering someone misusing or damaging natural resources, LNT recommends a five-step approach:[176]

1. Initiate a conversation and say hello.
2. Make an objective statement, such as "I noticed some people hiking off trails", instead of using phrases like "you shouldn't…"
3. Explain the implications of the actions, helping people learn how their actions impact nature, LNT recommend standing shoulder-to-shoulder here in a less confrontational body language than face-to-face.
4. Tell them how you feel about these impacts and what can be done to improve the situation.
5. Give an alternative for what they can do.

Good practice 2.10

Encourage understanding, collaboration and peacebuilding.



video link

Encourage open and honest communication between individuals or groups in conflict; ideally in situations that are engineered to reduce tension (see below and good practices under the principle working and playing together). Establishing a platform for dialogue can help people understand each other's perspectives and find common ground. Communities often have valuable insights and can actively contribute to finding sustainable solutions to conflicts.

A research study in Iran on the interactions between rangers and illegal hunters stressed the importance of understanding the rangers' perception of illegal hunters as a major step in reducing negative interactions. Using the social psychology integrated threat theory (ITT), which categorises how different interactions between groups shapes emotions, prejudices, perceived threats, attitudes and behaviours, over 350 rangers were asked to complete a questionnaire based around levels of anxiety associated with illegal hunting. The research results suggest that relationships based on positive interactions between rangers and illegal hunters, such as playing or working together (good practice 8.1.) and cooperating in community meetings or ceremonies (good practice 4.6.), can reduce fear and prejudice. The researchers recommended that rangers and hunters be provided with safe spaces to have positive interactions, which may help lower tension and develop cooperative conservation mechanisms. Maintaining positive relationships requires investment in ranger training and education, including ensuring that there is adequate training in ethical standards and codes of conduct. In addition, the researchers suggested rangers be trained in social psychology principles which influence individuals' judgements and behaviour.[177]

Although beyond a ranger's ability to address, there at least needs to be an understanding and appreciation of the underlying issues and history of social justice, inequality and injustice. Ultimately, peace requires addressing the root causes of conflicts and working towards a more equitable society.

Box 8

Environmental peacebuilding: Nurturing an ecosystem for peace

The 'White Paper on the Future of Environmental Peacebuilding'[178] aimed to deliver a strong, cogent message about the relevance, evidence and promise of environmental peacebuilding to the Stockholm+50 forum in June 2022. Below is a direct quote from the paper which is worthy of attention for all those involved in protected areas.

"The field of environmental peacebuilding still tends to see women, Indigenous peoples, youth, and other marginalized groups as passive targets for aid rather than as change-makers and knowledge-holders in their own right. Environmental peacebuilding, in common with environmental action in general, tends to suffer from Western centricity, which perpetuates the paternalistic idea that ecosystems and people in the non-Western world require 'saving' through interventions from the West. This mindset also tends to blame the non-Western world for being poorly governed and underdeveloped, and glosses over its own responsibility in causing these problems."

More specifically the Tkarihwaié:ri, the Code of Ethical Conduct to Ensure Respect for the Cultural and Intellectual Heritage of Indigenous and Local Communities Relevant to the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity,[179] notes that conflicts caused by activities/interactions related to the conservation or sustainable use of biological diversity between Indigenous and local communities and local or national governments should be avoided. Should this not be possible, national and culturally appropriate conflict resolution mechanisms should be put in place to resolve disputes and grievances. Those interacting with Indigenous and local communities should also avoid involvement in intra-Indigenous and local community disputes.

Ranger story 2:
Daniel James-Jiron: Healing through reconciliation
USA



Daniel has a 35-year career in conservation spanning from being a forest-fire-fighting ranger to being the Associate Chief of the US Forest Service, but it is Daniel's role as a ranger that he sees as most informing his work in conservation and he dedicates much of his time now to supporting rangers globally.

"*I've met so many rangers starting out in their careers and imagining they would be working remotely in nature, only to find themselves working mostly with local people.*" Daniel tells us, "*I always remind them that actually most of their work is going to involve people and that respect is essential for building trust. Often, people just want to know you are listening to them; listening to what their concerns are and what is important to them first before bringing in your own agenda*."

In 2006, Daniel was Forest Supervisor for the Santa Fe National Forest, New Mexico, managing a number of rangers. "*In and around the forest, there are 18 Indigenous groups with individual governance systems and interests that are dependent on the forest and they have lived there for thousands of years*."

Daniel is a US citizen with a Spanish family background and his ancestors were early Spanish colonial leaders in New Mexico 300 years ago. "*Early in my time at the Santa National Forest a tribal leader invited me to join him at an historical battle site*." The site was highly significant for the tribal leader; it was the location where in 1694 his tribe was defeated by the Spanish Military in one of the last battles they fought. "*I felt nervous and vulnerable and wasn't sure if he wanted to discuss this history. But he wanted me to acknowledge what had happened. I think this was important to him, given my family background and because I was a recognised representative of the government of the United States.*"

Instead of resisting, Daniel chose to listen and talk with the tribal leader and this day marked a moment of healing and understanding for all involved, including Daniel. "*It was the beginning of a close relationship with this tribe and the other local Native American tribes*." Moments of respect, like this one, help to strengthen communities – their history, connection to the land and their view of themselves. Together they developed new programmes through which the tribe took on leadership roles in conservation and archaeology and preserving cultural heritage resources.

Daniel tells us "*I am extremely grateful for the lessons the Native Americans of the Santa Fe National Forest area taught me. I think it's really important that rangers think about their personal history and connections to the areas they are protecting and the people living there. Study the history of the tribes and ask them about their stories. Try to be humble and interested in how local people see you and your role.*"

Through his mentorship, Daniel highlights the importance of respect and listening when interacting with local people (good practices 3.2 and 3.4). But Daniel's experience with the Indigenous peoples around the Santa Fe National Forest go beyond listening and learning. The process of understanding, peacebuilding (good practice 2.10) and healing helped build community cohesion (good practice 2.1.) and trust for Daniel as a ranger. To hear more about Daniel's experience, you can watch these videos.

video link **video link** **video link** **video link**

Often, people just want to know you are listening to them; listening to what their concerns are and what is important to them first before bringing in your own agenda.

Good practice 2.11

Share good practices on rangers working and building trust with communities.

Conservation objectives and the way sites are managed to meet these objectives are changing rapidly and rangers inevitably have to learn on the job. It is important to exchange information on what works and does not work in terms of approaches and practices, such as relations between rangers and Indigenous peoples. While local conditions dictate approaches to a certain extent, there are also many general lessons to be learned, and sharing experiences also helps to boost confidence.[180] This can be done in multiple ways, through social media platforms such as a Facebook page, WhatsApp group or Apps such as the Ranger App from Force for Nature,[181] through study tours, webinars, and national and international meetings. Note that apparently universal social media platforms like Facebook are not available everywhere and multiple avenues of communication are useful. A growing number of rangers are writing their experiences down in articles, blogs and academic papers and sharing their expertise on video channels. Sharing information not only helps build skills and experiences but also lets people outside the ranger community understand more about what day-to-day issues are of concern in protected and conserved areas around the world.[182]

Sharing experiences need not be expensive or time consuming. Rangers from conservancies in Kenya get together periodically to talk about how they are addressing particular issues and are learning from one another.[183] At the other end of the spectrum regional or global meetings of the International Rangers Federation allow people to share experiences from very different starting points.



Kenya Wildlife Service rangers in Tsavo and ZSL team socialising good practices
© Hannah L. Timmins

PRINCIPLE 3

Connecting, listening and learning

As stressed above, someone who works in a protected or conserved area tends to be labelled a 'ranger', yet the jobs of individual rangers vary immensely; it is as if all the doctors, nurses, receptionists, porters and catering staff in a hospital were all treated as identical 'health workers'. It is important to be very clear about the different roles that rangers play. Every ranger needs to act in a way that helps support good community relations, but some are likely to have to deal more closely with communities, and their role needs to be clearly delineated and understood by all stakeholders. It is particularly important that surrounding communities know who the first person is to call if there is a problem or a sudden emergency, such as a human–wildlife conflict situation. However, it is also important that all rangers have a basic understanding of community relations; in situations where rangers are divided strictly into 'community rangers' and 'enforcement rangers' the good work done by the former in terms of building trust can be quickly undone by heavy-handed actions of the latter. Mutual understanding of rangers' roles and communities' needs helps connect people and, through listening and learning, trust can be developed.

"The population's perceptions of the park are to a large extent shaped by their encounters with park guards."
Anonymous, Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of the Congo[186]

Good practice 3.1

Base communications between protected and conserved area staff and local communities on principles of equity, transparency and participation.

Establishing open lines of communication based on the principles of equity, fairness and transparency is foundational to respect. USAID's rights-based training for rangers in national parks and other protected areas has clear principles stating that rangers must not discriminate on the grounds of race, colour, tribe/clan/group/people, ethnicity, gender, religion, social origin, social status, Indigenous status or sexual orientation. Rangers should treat all persons they encounter equally and may not give preference or mistreat based on discriminatory grounds.[184]


video link

Encouraging open dialogue allows rangers and neighbouring communities to express thoughts, concerns and ideas freely, fostering an atmosphere of understanding. Practising active listening (e.g. paying attention and providing feedback) demonstrates genuine interest and respect for others' perspectives. It is also important to avoid passive participants and try to encourage communications with as many community members as possible. Recognising and respecting personal and professional boundaries when communicating with local communities, colleagues and neighbours, and privacy should however also be noted.

Box 9

Ranger competency statement on communication

Competence Statement (number: URC19): Communicate appropriately and respectfully with community members, rightsholders and other stakeholders.

Details and examples:

- Engaging in appropriate respectful interactions with individuals and groups.
- Demonstrating understanding of and respect for local cultures, languages, traditions, values and valued places.
- Communicating basic information about overall values, threats, policies and legislation relevant to the area.
- Providing information (where appropriate) about ranger led activities in the area.
- Engaging with community members and volunteers supporting the work of the area.[185]

Good practice 3.2

Ensure rangers, and all staff, have the time to engage with local communities as neighbours.

Listening is often more important than talking, at least at the beginning of the conversation. While formal meetings are sometimes needed, it is day-to-day interactions that often mean the most, chance meetings, sharing a drink, talking in a shop, café, post office or market stall. This is particularly important in finding out what local people know about the conserved area, in terms of issues which impact conservation and their likes and dislikes about how management is taking place. It is often hard to find time to do this when everyone is under pressure, but managers need to make sure staff feel comfortable that this is a legitimate part of their work.

video link

"In my role I need to be able to talk to people from all walks of life and stay positive in every type of weather and situation. To work as a Ranger, you need to be able to really engage with people; from volunteers, children and young people during education and events, as well as the general public and not forgetting your colleagues too." Sarah Badman-Flook, Land Operations Officer, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park.[187]

Short or even non-verbal communication is also important. A wave as you walk or drive by, a quick greeting, a smile, stopping to kick a football around with a bunch of kids or stepping aside to let an elder pass in front of you are all part of building day-to-day social capital.[188]

Former US Forest Service ranger, Daniel James-Jiron, recommends getting out of your office and spending time in places where you know community members are more likely to approach you. He remembers collecting his mail from the post office in town at a regular time every week and usually spending an hour there whilst local people approached him for a conversation. He recommends developing a routine like this where people know where you will be and when they can have a casual chat with you (see ranger story 2).



Conservancy ranger, Elangata Enderit village lower Loita, Kenya © Ami Vitale / WWF-UK

Ranger story 3:
Andy Davies: Take your time with people, listen first and bring them into nature
Australia





Andrew (Andy) Davies has been volunteering and employed in protected area management in Australia since the early 90s; he is currently the District Manager South Gippsland with Parks Victoria and sits on the IRF's Board of Directors as the Secretary. For over 20 years, Andy has been in management and leadership roles working with rangers and communities at National Parks and World Heritage Areas such as Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Parks, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, Wilsons Promontory National and Marine Parks and the Savannah/ Gulf Region around Katherine.[189] Through all this experience, Andy sees the collaboration between rangers and local people as crucial for achieving conservation objectives, he stresses

"government agencies, NGOs and their rangers cannot do this work alone".

In his current role, Andy leads a team, including rangers, in marine park management, visitor experience and commercial tourism, invasive species control, fire management and climate change adaptation. He works with his rangers on building trusting relationships with communities and asks rangers to listen to community issues before they speak. "*When rangers do need to communicate plans to communities, they need to ensure that communities have the time to let these plans sink in, to absorb this news and ask questions. This may take hours or weeks and responses may not be instant; community timelines do not necessarily match ranger timelines; they need time to socialize ideas and formulate opinions*," Andy notes. He has also learnt the importance of being yourself around communities and being honest and transparent. When starting in a new post, Andy tries to immerse himself in the local culture, to learn about and understand the perspectives of local people, to be curious and ask questions.

When Covid-19 led to lock-downs and curfews, Andy saw how protected areas became increasingly valuable to the public. "*I was in our capital city the other day, and it's a concrete jungle! People living there must feel so separated from nature!"* During Covid-19, Andy encouraged as many people as he could to get out into Australia's parks. Like many who work in nature, Andy knows how being in green or blue space can make people feel better,[190] and he believes that getting people out into protected areas is the best way to win hearts and minds.

Andy's story highlights the importance of listening first and taking time to understand from communities about their issues and their relationship to the area (good practice 3.5.). Crucially, Andy makes sure his rangers have the time to do this (good practice 3.2.). He also underscores the importance of collaborating with communities, identifying and inspiring shared goals of protecting nature (good practice 5.2.) and inspiring a love of nature through bringing people into the protected areas (good practice 7.2.). To hear Andy discuss these tips, watch these videos.

video link **video link** **video link** **video link**

Good practice 3.3

Do not overpromise and under-deliver and be honest when answering questions.

Do not falsely raise expectations and be very clear about what the protected area managers and rangers can and cannot do when discussing issues and grievances. Ranger manager Andy Davies (see ranger story 3) says it is better to acknowledge you do not know an answer to a question and commit to trying to find out the answer (where feasible) than making something up. Or work with the communities to make a plan together and work together to implement it; small concrete progress beats big promises never delivered and builds more trust.

video link

Good practice 3.4

Drop in and share a drink or a meal as part of regular interactions with communities.

A key element in developing trusting relationships is to sit and listen, allow time for people to absorb what has been discussed, and not necessarily expect an immediate response. Practise non-violent communication to find common ground, empathy and collaboration (see good practice 2.9.).[191] To foster trusting relationships with local communities and Indigenous peoples, rangers need to be open, honest and understanding of their conditions; interact with them by listening to their stories and traditional folklore and eat with them.

video link

Shared meals can create a sense of belonging and security, allowing time to share joys and challenges. Cooking and eating together can promote open communication and trust and provide a safe space where everyone can express their thoughts, feelings and concerns without judgement. This open communication fosters trust and strengthens the connections between rangers and local communities.

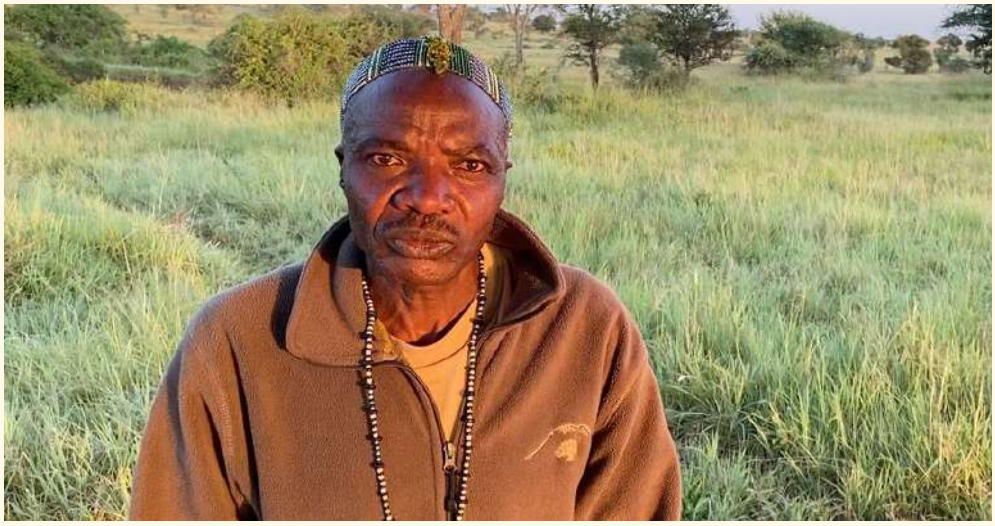
spanish



Eating and cooking can be a great way to connect with people © Jonathan Caramanus

Ranger story 4:
Hun/!un/!ume Endaya: Talk … talk …. Talk
Tanzania





Hun/!un/!ume discussing the importance of talking with communities, Serengeti National Park, Tanzania. © Hannah L. Timmins

Hun/!un/!ume is an Hadzabe, a member of East Africa's last hunter-gatherer groups, living in the Great Rift Valley around Lake Ayasi, Tanzania. Although present in the region for at least a thousand years, their available land has been successively squeezed by incoming tribes and other land-use change and they now live mainly in the southern part of Ngorongoro Crater. There are about a thousand Hadzabe, speaking a unique click language that uses clicks as consonants and carries a rich oral tradition. The Hadzabe live in temporary encampments, caves and hollow trees and feed themselves by gathering wild plants and hunting with spears, traps and bows and arrows, often tipped with poison. Hadzabe have no formal religion but a deep spiritual attachment to the natural world and believe that they return to the sun when they die.

Hun/!un/!ume joined the Tanzanian National Park Authority (TANAPA) as a ranger after officials visited his camp. He worked for 35 years in various Tanzanian national parks, one of the earliest Indigenous rangers in the region. He attributes his traditional knowledge as making it extremely easy for him to pass the ranger exams: "*One of the questions was how many teeth a male zebra has and of course I knew that perfectly, without studying.*"

Hun/!un/!ume has seen many changes during this period, particularly in terms of local peoples' attitudes to national parks, which he believes have evolved from resentment and opposition to much greater acceptance of and support for wildlife as a rich cultural heritage. He attributes this to continual engagement, talking with people constantly over many years, staying with them, meeting the heads of communities, and viewing nature conservation as a multi-generational challenge that people need to carry with them even if they move to the city.

Hun/!un/!ume's story also highlights the importance of employing rangers directly from the local communities (good practice 1.2.), particularly rangers that speak the local language (good practice 1.6.), and empowering individuals like Hun/!un/!ume who can broker lines of communication (good practice 3.12.). More importantly though, his story showcases how taking time to be social with communities, dropping in to share a meal (good practice 3.4.), and understanding a community's history and connection to the land (good practice 3.5.) builds powerful bridges between rangers and communities for the benefit of people and nature.

To hear more from Hun/!un/!ume, watch this video.

video link

Good practice 3.5

Take time to learn from communities about their sense of place, traditional knowledge on the use of resources and relationship with the area.


video link


spanish

Listening and learning should be a central part of a ranger's job. The importance of a particular forest, lake or coastal area to the local communities will extend beyond any faith-based issues to include historical and cultural values, a particular sense of place and often a deep knowledge of natural resources. This type of information (place, values, history, interactions, and cultural bonds) can be collected informally through conversations within the community or through a more standardised approach as described in box 6. Understanding and valuing these is important; management needs to take these things into consideration and local people often know more about the wildlife of an area than outside 'experts' (see also ranger story 4). Understanding a community's relationships with a protected area can be complex, whilst some communities are homogeneous in culture or need, others are highly heterogeneous, with multicultural mixes that have varied needs, demands and social norms,[192] making this understanding challenging even for rangers from the local area.

Practical, utilitarian values are often not the most important for local people. During a survey of protected area values in central Colombia, a local Indigenous leader identified all the most sacred places in the nearby forest on a map but said that for him the most important value was the feeling of peace he got when he looked across the valley at the view.[193] Tapping into local knowledge has very practical values as well. In the far north of Finland, Metsähalitus Parks and Wildlife Finland found that local Sami Indigenous peoples were far more efficient than their own staff in surveying rare species such as bear and wolverine.[194]

Box 10

The Protected Areas Benefits Assessment Tool Plus

The Protected Areas Benefits Assessment Tool Plus (PA-BAT+) describes how to run a participatory, consensus-led evaluation of the range of ecosystem services available from a protected area (or any other defined area of land or water).[195] It brings together a diverse range of stakeholders in a workshop setting over a day to discuss what the site being assessed means to local people, what benefits (economic and non-economic) they derive from the area and how they perceive those benefits flow to society. A standardised set of questions helps to identify and assess the level of importance and distribution of current and potential ecosystem services ranging from tourism, through water security and disaster risk reduction, to cultural and spiritual benefits.[196] Open discussion allows facilitators to explore information on any additional benefits, problems, local experiences and stories, and suggestions for managers. Most importantly, managers and staff get to hear the views of stakeholders, and different members of the community have a chance to interact and share ideas and experiences.[197] Application in the Kure Mountains National Park (Kure Dağları Milli Parkı) in Turkey for instance found that several of the values most important to local communities could easily be accommodated in management.

Good practice 3.6

Work with village elders (men and women) and younger members of the community to walk boundaries.

There is often uncertainty, and sometimes disagreement, about the precise location of the boundary of a protected or conserved area. Access to a few more metres of land can be important for a small farmer and the location of marine protected areas is sometimes hard to define. It is therefore important to both agree on the boundaries and ensure that the information is passed from one generation to the next. A certain amount of compromise and negotiation between different stakeholders and rightsholders is often required. On land, rangers, elders and younger community members can walk the boundaries periodically to ensure mutual understanding. In coastal areas, lakes and other freshwaters, physical markers are sometimes used, like tall sticks in shallow water, or physical features such as reefs and mangroves. If the river is the boundary of a reserve, it may shift position slightly as a result of floods or natural erosion and it is important that people realise that in these cases the boundary is the physical feature rather than its precise location.

Good practice 3.7

Work with village elders (men and women) and younger members of the community to mark out trails.

Similarly, local communities are often well placed to help identify and mark trails. If people are benefitting from tourists and other visitors, they may want to see well-marked trails and have opinions about routes. Local people can often clarify local names of places and features. Rangers need to work with community elders to ensure that relevant information is passed from one generation to the next.

Identifying trails and local place names inside Hin Nam No National Park in Laos based on local knowledge was a useful starting point for involving local communities in co-management of the protected area.[198] The mapping also created a good basis for dividing areas of management responsibility between villages and helped set up a village ranger patrolling system, which resulted in much better spatial monitoring data on occurrences of wildlife and threats. Under the village ranger system, villager trail mapping and scientific monitoring data are gathered by the SMART monitoring system.[199] Updated maps were created and used in participatory zonation and other management functions, like guiding the ranger activities. The system works because each village has an interest in keeping people from other villages out of their use area. It also provides a strong basis for co-management between government and local communities. Employing local rangers has also led to an increase in management effectiveness.[200]

Good practice 3.8

Use appropriate messaging services to reach community members.

In many parts of the world information can now be shared much more easily than hitherto by setting up a Facebook page or WhatsApp group, or some similar system. However, information sharing will need to be confidential if it is about anti-poaching or giving information about the whereabouts of animals in places where there is a poaching threat. Maintaining an open dialogue through regular ranger interaction with communities will help develop positive park–community relationships, encourage communities to report wildlife crime, and empower communities to take responsibility for crime control and be more willing to intervene for the common good (see ranger story 11).[201]

Staying in touch with communities regularly can build a better understanding of the roles of rangers, and identify any current challenges or issues that are of interest to communities and the goals of the protected and conserved area. However, it is essential that rangers use a language or media that communities will understand easily.

Different cultures, communities and demographics (such as age, sex, etc.) around the world have preferences for different messaging services and platforms. In some places, social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram might work best. For example, the National Trust Fell Rangers, working in the Lake District, UK, have an active Instagram account[202] where they inform followers and discuss their projects and challenges. In other places, SMS may be the

most appropriate tool to use. For example, rangers of Ol Pejeta Conservancy, Kenya, send out mass-SMS campaigns to community members, almost all of whom have mobile phones and the rangers have worked to ensure they have an up-to-date database of community contacts. SMS is used more frequently than other services by older members of the community, ensuring that they are not left out of any discussions. Local radio stations are a rich source of news in many societies and are often searching for things to report; occasional or regular reports 'from the field' can reach people who would not otherwise come into contact with rangers.[203] In Kafue National Park, Zambia, ranger Billy Banda uses community radio to give advice about avoiding human–wildlife conflict.[204]

Good practice 3.9

Do not consider silence as consent to ranger/management actions.

Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) centres on obtaining consent from communities for any activities undertaken that may impact them (see box 2). *Consent* refers to a collective decision made by rightsholders and reached through their customary decision-making processes, noting that consent can be withdrawn at any stage.[205]

When connecting with local communities it is important to understand that silence is not necessarily indicative of consent about a particular project, intervention or management strategy. It may instead be that people are nervous about speaking out, think that their opinions will be ignored, or simply do not get around to telling rangers what they think. Assuming agreement in these situations will only cause resentment. It is therefore important to go out actively to seek opinions, perhaps starting with those members of the community that rangers know are most likely to speak out and can represent wider opinions within the community. Talking through issues can eventually lead to consent even in situations where people are initially hostile to new ideas; hostility often arises through worry about developments that are not fully understood or when processes are either not appropriate or not followed as expected.

Good practice 3.10

Employ a range of tools to help understand the equity and governance issues.

Approaches to the social assessment of protected areas are becoming more widely available and applied (see introduction).[206] These identify stakeholders' perspectives on the values and impacts (whether real or perceived) of protected areas so that rangers are informed and prepared, and managers can develop strategies to mitigate any emerging problems. In cases where there are serious tensions it may be worth considering bringing in professional facilitators to work through sessions with communities to help understand and address problems.

In Japan's Oze National Park, the Oze National Park Council was established in 2008 with various stakeholders, including local residents, landowners, tourism officials, mountain lodge managers, park guides, conservation organisations and government agencies, with rangers serving as the secretariat. In 2018, a 'New Oze Vision' was adopted for a 20-year period, setting out a plan for Oze National Park's future. Each council member implements initiatives to realise the plan (e.g. combating vegetation degradation, improving tourism facilities, etc.) and reports the results of their efforts back to the council annually. The council also includes conservation experts who advise on activities. The plan results in a cohesive effort and collaboration between rangers and communities and allows each group to understand the values, goals and issues of the other.[207]

Good practice 3.11

Avoid imposing outside ideals or values that go against the culture of the community.

It is always challenging when local values or cultural norms go against the beliefs of managers and others involved in a protected area; but imposed changes are likely to be resisted, particularly if change happens abruptly. There are no firm rules here and managers and rangers need to make judgements on a case-by-case basis but should always move gradually and with plenty of conversation and negotiation. For example, if trying to recruit female rangers in patriarchal communities, build a programme slowly through conversation, understanding and then agreement to, rather than imposing immediate quotas which can build resentment (see ranger story 1 and good practice 1.3.).

Good practice 3.12

Identify and empower individual rangers who can broker lines of communication.

Cultural brokerage refers to the process by which intermediaries, like rangers, facilitate interactions between relevant stakeholders and rightsholders such as communities and government officials. This brokerage may take the form of relationship-building, information-sharing or resource exchange. Agreements, trade-offs and addressing problems often requires considerable negotiating skills and not everyone has this to the same extent. Government-employed rangers are often the only state employees regularly present in remote rural areas and therefore get pulled into debates about issues far from conservation. It is important to choose the best possible rangers to negotiate between different constituencies (e.g. particular village communities, genders, elders, etc.) and if possible, also choose the most appropriate person in the community (see ranger story 4). Understanding the dynamics of brokerage (see below) and if necessary, providing additional training is an important part of trust-building.[208]

Based on the experiences of protected area rangers in Pu Mat National Park, Viet Nam, five different types of brokerage (see Figure 7) can impact trust, information gathering and group cohesion.

1. Liaison: broker's role is to link two separate groups without having a previous alliance to either group.
2. Itinerant: initiator and receiver are part of the same subgroup; the broker is an outsider but temporarily facilitates a brokerage relation between the initiator and the receiver.
3. Coordinator: all the actors belong to the same group and thus the broker is internal to the group.
4. Gatekeeper: the broker is aligned with the receiver of the brokerage relation and negotiates the initiator's access to the receiver.
5. Representative: broker is aligned with the initiator of the brokerage relation and represents their interests to the receiver.[209]

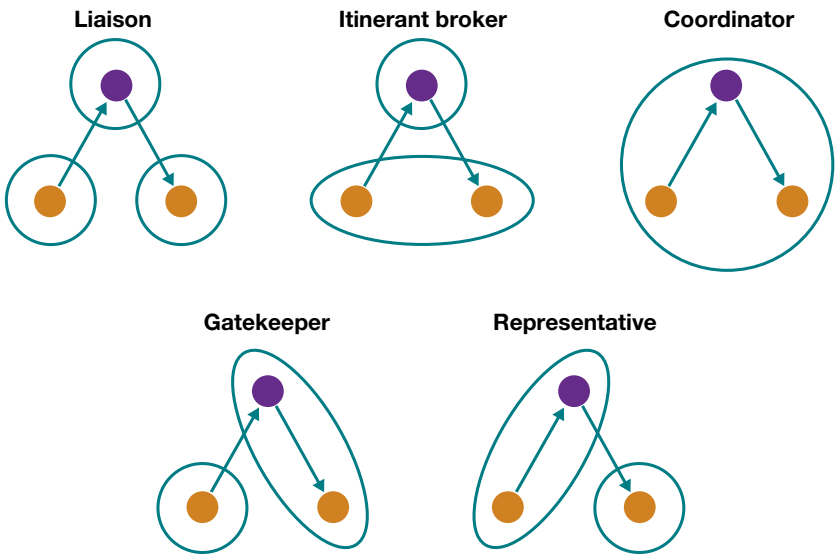


Figure 7: Types of brokerage relevant to wildlife rangers. The black dot represents the broker, the circles represent subgroups, and the arrows represent the direction of information and resources[210]

Principle 4

Being a good neighbour

Being a good neighbour is about creating a positive and supportive community environment. Small gestures and respectful behaviour contribute to neighbours feeling valued and secure. Rangers should aim to be a functioning part of the local community, even if they are not originally from the area and should be considered by the community as a member not a visitor (see good practice 8.8). Acts of kindness and empathy, particularly during difficult situations, build a culture of care and support.

The practice of giving, reciprocating and acknowledging favours is an essential element for building trust, strengthening connections, and fostering positive community relationships. Lending a helping hand is a sure way to win hearts and minds. Rangers who actively engage in community service or support local initiatives often find that their efforts are reciprocated by a more cohesive and supportive community. In return, rangers should sincerely appreciate any favour received from a community member and if possible, indirectly reciprocate (preferably a little later so it's less like paying for a service but rather a more subtle expression of the value of the service provided).[211]

A large body of research has established an association between kindness and well-being.[212] Research has also explored the relationship between being a giver and a receiver of small acts of kindness. The pleasure of being a recipient of a small act of kindness is clear, but research found that givers tend to underestimate the consequences their small acts of kindness will produce in recipients. These findings are important when understanding ranger and local community relationships. A lack of realisation of the importance of giving may result in rangers missing out on opportunities to enhance both their own and others' well-being through acts of kindness.[213]

Good practice 4.1

Be alert to current/rising issues in communities.

Community dynamics can change slowly (e.g. demographic change) or rapidly (e.g. in relation to events such as natural disasters, economic collapse, disease outbreaks). Rangers, and their managers, can help provide responses to these changing dynamics, such as lack of health care, domestic abuse, food shortages, and be flexible to assist communities in the ways they need. The Covid-19 pandemic, for example, saw an increase in domestic abuse worldwide. In response, Mongolian rangers were trained in how to recognise and respond to domestic abuse, report and bring in relevant social services and or government authorities.[214]

video link



Conservancy rangers Musa, Daniel and Solomon meet with villagers who have lost livestock to wildlife in Elangata Enderit village in lower Loita, Kenya © Ami Vitale / WWF-UK

Good practice 4.2

Do not travel fast and aggressively through communities.

Typical aggressive driving behaviours include speeding and not respecting regulations. Such actions are anti-social in many ways, raising dust and sand is unpleasant and can destroy crops. Fast driving also endangers people, especially the young and old, livestock, pets and wildlife. In freshwater and marine protected and conserved areas fast speed boats cause smaller boats to capsize or simply drench occupants of neighbouring boats. Fast boats can also destabilise riverbanks, causing a range of problems from destroying stabilising vegetation to impacting mooring or access points.[215] It is also important to maintain exhaust pipes, mufflers and engines to ensure noise and pollution are not a nuisance for local people.

In Northern Kenya, plenty of speed bumps and signs warn drivers to slow down for people, livestock and wildlife. Rangers here have internalised these messages and ensure that they do not race down stretches of roads even if there are no signs or bumps. In driving more slowly, they can also see and wave to local people walking along roads (see good practice 3.2.), they regularly stop to roll down the window and say hello and often ask if the community member needs a lift to their destination. Acts like these engender a sense of kindness and also provide more opportunities for rangers to learn what is happening in the communities (see good practice 4.1.).

Good practice 4.3

Hold consultation meetings in communities and at the convenience of local people in a setting of their choosing.


video link

It is important to recognise and account for local customs and expectations when planning meetings. Rangers and managers should not expect people to travel to park management buildings/venues, rather it is better to hold conservation meetings in local schools or other community buildings. It is also important to be sensitive to the needs and timetables of community members (who often have little time for or cannot afford to attend many meetings, workshops, etc.).

This is particularly important for ensuring that local women can also attend meetings; women may have a number of informal duties and obligations at home, including family-care. Make sure adjustments are made to allow for women to attend, for example by allowing them to bring children, holding the meeting during school hours or ensuring that any catering for the meeting does not preclude women from joining.

Think about timing (e.g. safety of travel at certain times of day, not holding meetings during planting/harvest times, think of tides/weather impacts in marine areas, etc.), and take into account the different schedules of different groups within communities (women/men, youth/the elderly, etc.). Consider where the community gathers and where and how they receive information. Work with community leaders on who should be invited to attend, participate and listen, provide information, answer questions as appropriate.

Daisetsuzan National Park in Japan is one of the largest terrestrial national parks in Japan. The surrounding communities of Daisetsuzan are comprised of ten cities and towns, so no matter which city or town the meeting is held in, some community members will have to travel over two hours each way. To tackle this challenge, multiple meetings are held in different locations and in recent years it has become possible to attend meetings via web conferencing to meet the needs of those who cannot travel.[216]

Ranger story 5:
Dalley-Divin Kambale Saa-Sita: Build awareness by visiting communities
Democratic Republic of Congo





Community rangers © Paradis des Primates

Dalley-Divin Kambale Saa-Sita is a primate researcher in the Democratic Republic of Congo, working with the University of Kinshasa, President of Paradis des Primates and Director of the Congo Biotropical Institute. The Congo Biotropical Institute is an organisation dedicated to the protection and conservation of biodiversity with a focus on community conservation. It does so by involving local communities in the process of wild biodiversity conservation, sustainable and rational use of natural/forest resources, and youth learning to prepare for a new generation committed to the process of nature protection. His work focuses on conservation with local communities and Indigenous peoples and he works with both protected area staff and community rangers, recruiting the latter from the community and providing training and employment.

The forests of the Congo Basin are being depleted of wild animals at an alarming rate driven by the increasing demands of the wild meat trade and demand from markets in the major cities. This is undermining the Indigenous food system and exacerbating poverty in Indigenous peoples and rural communities.

Dalley-Divin notes: "*In some areas where I have worked, local communities can hunt and eat wild meat. These communities recognize that some species may not be hunted, including okapi, gorillas and chimpanzees, yet the list of endangered species is very long, and more species should be protected. So, more often than not, park rangers are sent on missions outside the protected areas to meet with local people who have no idea about protecting endangered species, but who are then told not to hunt specific species. In such situations, local people feel unfairly treated … The government and managers of protected areas therefore need to work to maintain a high level of awareness, popularize the law on the protection of wild species by all possible means (radio, television, telephone communication network, groupings of associations, posting of printed material, schools, etc.) so that everyone can be made conservation aware*."

Dalley-Divin's story highlights the importance of rangers informing local people about their work (good practice 6.5.) by employing and adapting to appropriate messaging services (good practice 3.8) and travelling to those communities themselves at the convenience of local people (good practice 4.3.). Dalley-Divin also underscores the rangers' collaboration and discussions with communities to better understand their uses of wildlife and help them reach sustainable levels (good practice 7.6.).

Good practice 4.4

Locate ranger outposts in or near villages.

Problems can arise between rangers and communities when they only meet in 'official' situations. Embedding rangers and their families more closely in the local community can help to break down these barriers naturally, because they inevitably meet regularly, use the same facilities and with a little effort play sports together, share drinks and develop friendships (see also the principle working and playing together).

In Nigeria, for example, rangers are required to live in the communities in or around the protected area, drawing water from the same source, using the same market to buy food and thus building a stronger bond with community members and no longer being viewed quite so much as outsiders.[217]

Good practice 4.5

Try to source ranger rations from local communities.

If rangers need food rations on-site (e.g. when posted in the field), local sourcing can provide important direct financial benefits.[218] Care should however be taken not to impact local food security and to ensure that rangers' dependence on local communities does not foster any possibility of corruption.

In Mounts Iglit–Baco Natural Park in the Philippines, rangers have their own vegetable garden, which also acts as a demonstration site for the Indigenous Taobuid People on new crops and growing practices. Rangers share food with the Taobuid, often in exchange for planting materials and produce from the community.

Good practice 4.6

Take part, and assist where possible/appropriate, in local celebrations and events.

An important part of integrating rangers into local communities, particularly if they do not come from the local area, is for rangers to take part in, and support if possible, local ceremonies and celebrations. Celebrations can also be adapted to focus on conservation issues.

In the USA, the State Park Service Ceremonial Corps in South Carolina, is composed of four team leaders and 21 rangers from across the park service. These members volunteer their time to participate in special functions such as posting colours at the annual Governor's Conference and at American Football matches. The specially trained corps helps raise the image of the park rangers through their presence at such large-scale public events.[219]

In Rwanda, the Kwita Izina ceremony is a long-standing tradition where families and friends gather to name their newborns. The Kwita Izina festival has been adapted to name baby mountain gorillas born in Volcanoes National Park. This week-long celebration takes place in September every year. The festivities are a fusion of traditional music, dances and performances. The festival is attended by thousands of visitors, including ranger teams, local communities and international visitors and helps build the profile of conservation among locals, nationals and visitors alike.[220]

Taking an active role in community life can also sometimes impact rangers' duties. For example, rangers in Pu Mat National Park, in Viet Nam, told researchers that there are certain community commitments that prevent them from going on patrol. For example, if there is a death or a wedding in the village, they cannot leave the village for 2–3 days as per tradition.[221]



View from Rumangabo over the Volcano section of Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of the Congo © Brent Stirton / Reportage by Getty Images / WWF



John Tekeles and the Ol Pejeta bloodhounds, Ol Pejeta, Kenya. © Hannah L. Timmins

Good practice 4.7

Use ranger resources to protect the property and rights of the community from outside threats.

video link

Demonstrating a willingness to contribute to community well-being helps build goodwill and reinforces the message that rangers are committed to building good community relationships. Rangers may be able to actively support the protection of community livelihoods and resources from the threat of 'outsiders' taking resources. Community livestock may be at risk of theft, or communities may have exclusive access rights to natural resources that need protecting. For example, the sustainable harvest of a valuable medicinal plant in Bhutan's Wangchuck Centennial National Park, brings households almost US$ 5,000 per year income whilst maintaining the area's ecological integrity. The park's rangers play a vital role in protecting the area from outsiders and are thus highly valued by the local community.[222] Working together with communities, rangers can provide security, protecting community rights and property from outside threats.

Most protected and conserved areas are reasonably well-equipped with material resources such as vehicles, first aid kits, meeting places, etc. and may be able to provide safe spaces for meeting and networking, which may be particularly important for women's groups, etc. In some cases, specific resources, such as equipped first aiders (see also good practice 4.10.) can assist local communities, particularly those isolated from government-run emergency services.

Ol Pejeta Conservancy in Kenya is one of the largest black rhino sanctuaries in East Africa. Set over 364 km^2, its sniffer dog unit with trained handlers was set up as a vital anti-poaching resource. However, seven years of zero-poaching has allowed the dog patrols, which include both sniffer and tracker dogs, to be deployed within the local community to help resolve stock theft, lost children, household break-ins and murders (see ranger story 7).[223]

Ranger story 6:
Marcos Uzquiano: Community help must be agile and timely
Bolivia





Marcos delivering groceries to the local community © Marcos Uzquiano



Surveying the fire damage © Marcos Uzquiano

Marcos Uzquiano is a park ranger in Bolivia's National Service of Protected Areas (SERNAP). With more than eighteen years' experience, he is currently Chief of Protection at the Beni Biosphere Reserve where he leads a group of rangers in charge of the protection and conservation of the Bolivian Amazon, the Indigenous territory of the T'simane People.[224]

Thanks to the collaboration of many supporters, rangers were able to mobilise help to the T'simane Community in the Biosphere Reserve Biological Station in Beni after fire destroyed many homes. Marus relates what happened on Friday 3 November 2023: "*the community suffered the fire of 11 homes while barbecuing fish for dinner. [In a] moment a strong gust of wind came scattering branches to the roof of the huts sparking a chain fire that destroyed all homes in the area. The following morning a patrol of park guards was deployed for the preliminary assessment of damage and needs, while our logistics team coordinated purchases and respective assistance. By Saturday afternoon, thanks to the support received, we were able to help the nine affected families by bringing groceries (5 kg rice, 5 kg noodles, 5 kg sugar, 2 litres oil, 10 bags of salt, 5 soap, etc.) and other immediate support, including nylon tents for each family while they rebuilt their homes*." He said at the time: "*We are aware that the present help is just a small comfort to the magnitude of the disaster for those who have lost everything, but we made it arrive thanks to the compassionate heart of true human beings, since to be useful help must be agile and timely*." At the same time the ranger's put out an international appeal for support through Facebook and Instagram.

Fire is much on the mind of the Beni Rangers. Local volunteers are now being trained in the prevention and control of forest fires and to participate in environmental restoration actions in the northwestern region of the Bolivian Amazon. As Marcos relates, it is hoped that this will lead to "*a very well-trained team of local volunteers to work with local communities and governments to [not only] prevent and control wildfires but also to work in environmental restoration with students and park rangers*".[225]

Marcos and the Beni Rangers demonstrate well how rangers can act as first responders after a disaster like the T'simane wildfire (good practice 4.9.). Their ability to improvise and respond to the community's needs (good practice 4.13.) was an essential act in building trust, and following on from this disaster the rangers and the communities identified a common goal (good practice 5.2.) to prevent wildfires and helped train local volunteers in stopping them.

"We are aware that the present help is just a small comfort to the magnitude of the disaster for those who have lost everything, but we made it arrive thanks to the compassionate heart of true human beings, since to be useful help must be agile and timely."

Good practice 4.8

Ensure rangers have the training, equipment and mandate to provide emergency services and have clear protocols for those services.

Having a role in emergency service provision is often one of the most apparent ways rangers can support local communities. Protocols should be established to ensure the roles of rangers in providing emergency services are clear, and rangers should be insured as necessary in case of any problems. Where possible, community members should be made aware of the roles and responsibilities of rangers, should an emergency happen. During the Covid-19 pandemic, rangers worldwide supported a wide range of duties including delivery of essential goods (e.g. rations) to communities and vulnerable groups, enforcement of social distancing and use of masks among park visitors and communities, providing emergency medical assistance and distributing health kits (e.g. masks, sanitisers) to local communities.[226]

In Kenya, conservancy rangers are more able to respond quickly and efficiently to law enforcement issues in neighbouring communities as police forces are spread across larger areas resulting in slow responses due to long travel times. Clear protocols are established to ensure rangers are only involved once an issue is reported to the police and a case number assigned.[227]

In the Shouf Biosphere Reserve, Lebanon, rangers are often the first responders to fires. Shouf rangers are equipped with clothing and fire-fighting gear and will manage the fire until the fire department arrives and prevent any re-ignition after the fires have been put out. Local communities are aware of this work and appreciate the role rangers play in ensuring their safety.[228]

Good practice 4.9

Ensure rangers have the capacity to act as first responders after natural disasters.

Most disasters which follow on from natural events such as heavy rainfall, fire, hurricanes, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are sudden, unforeseen events. In remote rural areas, rangers are often the closest equipped and trained people who can provide relief. As first-responders,[229] they can help clear roads and watercourses, check properties, rescue people, provide triage and emergency medical care and share resources such as food, water or off-grid power sources. When a rapid response is needed, as well as providing emergency services, rangers training can help provide:

- *Situation analysis*: quickly assess the situation and determine the appropriate courses of action needed.
- *Communication hubs*: Rangers can relay information to and from emergency services, coordinate responses with other agencies, and keep local communities informed about the situation and safety measures.

Around 70 per cent of Parks Victoria staff in Australia are trained in firefighting roles and are deployed to fight fires in parks and forests across the state during the summer fire season, protecting local communities and the unique natural environment from the impacts of bushfire.[230] Pakistan, on the other hand, has experienced a notable increase in severe floods, droughts and storms in recent decades. Floods disrupt rangers' regular duties, including patrolling, habitat and wildlife management, and their ability to address human–wildlife conflicts. Personal losses among rangers included damage to homes, agricultural land and possessions. Despite these challenges, rangers actively participated in emergency relief efforts, providing support to affected communities, rescuing displaced livestock, aiding in evacuations and distributing food to local communities. For example, at Taunsa Barrage Wildlife Sanctuary in Punjab, rangers have worked with local police to assist in evacuating communities from nearby villages affected by floods. Similarly, rangers were involved in protecting communities and livestock from drowning, even though they had limited swimming skills.[231]

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is an island country in the eastern Caribbean. In April 2021, the La Soufrière volcano, located in the north of Saint Vincent, erupted. Rangers led the first response effort after the volcanic eruption; rescuing people, dealing with mudslides and fallen trees, opening roads and access for emergency services, as well as monitoring impact on wildlife. They worked tirelessly through the eruption to ensure that the water supply was restored. This was happening when many people had been evacuated from the North and many people were without water or power.... and were still dealing with Covid. While eruptions continued, the Forestry Department staff and rangers had to clear the way to enable the water and power companies to reconnect supplies. Once that was done, they turned their attention to rescuing wildlife, including putting out fruits for parrots and bats.

Good practice 4.10

Train rangers in first aid to help rangers become community first responders.

Rangers should be trained and prepared to use first aid knowledge in non-conservation related emergencies where appropriate (e.g. accidents, women in labour, responding to domestic abuse problems, etc.). First aid training needs to be place and context specific. It is important to collaborate with local reputable first aid training organisations or healthcare professionals who can conduct the training; and make sure that the trainers have experience in delivering courses in outdoor or wilderness settings.

video link

LEAD Ranger provides medical training and equipment to rangers to treat injuries, wildlife conflicts, road accidents, etc. In this way, rangers become lifesavers for themselves, community members and their loved ones. With each treatment, word gets out that rangers can be relied upon for help and communities see rangers as a positive force.[232] Similarly, Wild Response in South Africa runs the Ranger Advanced Medical Program (RAMP) training including first responder trauma care, providing medical care in remote areas and snake bite awareness. RAMP uses real-world situations and scenarios taken directly from field incidents. The training boosts confidence and camaraderie in ranger units and contributes to making adjacent rural communities safer.[233]



Rangers and chainsaw crews of the Forestry Services St. Vincent and the Grenadines clear upstream of the Hermitage water intake. The international community rallied round and at short notice were able to send better protective and safety equipment for the rangers soon after this photo was taken (note the man in the centre of the picture wearing one wellington boot and one flip-flop) © Jenny Daltry



Rangers in northern Kenya often help local, often transient, pastoralists with their livestock and, having grown up as part of the communities, are usually familiar with livestock husbandry © Hannah L. Timmins

Good practice 4.11

Consider how rangers trained in treating injured wild animals can be first responders in community animal husbandry emergencies.

If local veterinary services are not immediately available, rangers' skills and knowledge can be invaluable in helping treat injured or sick domesticated animals or pets.[234]

Good practice 4.12

Encourage rangers to support or volunteer for local response units.

Due to their skills set, fitness and knowledge of protected and conserved areas, rangers can be invaluable assets to volunteer rescue units such as mountain and sea rescue. Providing services such as these helps reinforce the value of rangers to the wider community. Alpine Cliff Rescue (ACR) in New Zealand carries out day or night search and rescue of people lost in all-weather across challenging terrain including snow and icy slopes and heavily glaciated snowfields. Land Search and Rescue ACR teams are primarily either recreational mountaineers or ski, rock or ice climbing specialists or qualified outdoor professionals, such as ski patrollers, park rangers and mountain guides. Team members have a high level of fitness and self-reliance in the mountain environment and are used to working effectively in small teams. All volunteers need to discuss joining ACR with their employer before signing up, and workplaces allow special leave for search and rescue operations.[235] In Scotland, National Park Rangers and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) have worked together to train the staff of businesses besides the hugely popular Loch Lomond (a large, deep area of water which can be hazardous) to ensure that should they see someone in difficulty in the water, they are equipped with the knowledge to help.[236]

Good practice 4.13

Ensure community appeals for help are responded to promptly and positively.

Appeals for help from local communities can come in many forms and are closely linked to several good practices outlined above (e.g. see 4.7. to 4.12.). It is important for rangers to be mandated and ready to assist local communities before being asked. For example, if a ranger is driving and sees someone at the side of the road waiting for transport or walking, and it is feasible to offer them a ride, they should do so. Rangers should remain flexible and show initiative where possible in their responses to people in need of help. However, in some cases regulations may prevent rangers from offering assistance (for example, a ride in their vehicle). Community members should be made aware of what support rangers are prevented from providing.

When rangers are approached by community members for help, they should not automatically expect something in return or even to be thanked. Ultimately, the return comes in various ways including as trust, and remote rangers, particularly in rural farming communities, may also rely on local people for support when they need it.[237]

In many parts of the world, dealing with human–wildlife conflict and supporting human–wildlife coexistence is one of the major roles of rangers. Mapping hotspot areas for conflict, such as HWC and poaching, is a crucial step in developing effective conservation and conflict mitigation strategies. Involving local communities in the mapping process to enhance the accuracy of data and ensure that community perspectives are considered in conflict mitigation strategies is vital. Rangers are then better equipped to provide effective security in the areas where it is most needed.[238]

Setting up rapid response teams to deal with human–wildlife conflict (see box 11) are important management processes which can build community support for rangers' work.[239] Transparent and equitable systems should be in place for handling complaints and comments about management from all stakeholders; and managers should regularly monitor the speed, efficiency and outcomes of their response.

Communities around Way Kambas National Park in southern Sumatra have suffered from a high level of Human–Elephant Conflict (HEC). To address these issues, the Community for Sumatra Nature Conservation (Komunitas untuk Hutan Sumatera) is working with the park authorities to operate four Elephant Response Units. The base camps of the units are located at well-known conflict hotspots inside the park. The teams are composed of forest police, mahouts, local community members, and captive elephants from the Way Kambas National Park Elephant Conservation Centre, which have been trained for forest patrol and HEC mitigation.[240] So communities are both involved in the response to HEC and benefit from a rapid response to conflict, helping support effective and trusting relationships.

Box 11

Rapid responses to human–wildlife conflict

Where human–wildlife conflict is a major issue, Rapid Response Teams which focus on reporting, crisis management, mitigation and compensation can help build confidence in management and confidence that people's well-being, safety and human rights are a priority.[241]

Response Teams can be made up of specially trained rangers or Community Guardians who are trained in skills such as tracking, use of radiotelemetry, GPS data collection and conflict mitigation techniques. The Lion Guardians scheme in East Africa has been successful in increasing support for lion conservation and decreasing human–lion conflict.[242] Greater presence of teams in villages particularly affected by human–wildlife conflict and clear communication channels ensure conflict situations are quickly addressed, preventing escalation and retaliation, and lead to more trusting relationships between communities and conservationists.[243]

Ranger story 7:
John Tekeles and Edwin Muriuki: Using ranger resources to support local people
Kenya





John Tekeles and Edwin Muriuki discuss the use of the canine unit to support communities, Ol Pejeta, Kenya. © Hannah L. Timmins

Over the last few decades poaching in Kenya has been on the decline and for Ol Pejeta Conservancy the last case of rhino poaching was in 2017.[244] The success of antipoaching efforts is due in large part to the skills and efforts of Ol Pejeta's ranger team, and in particular, to their canine unit.

John Tekeles and Edwin Muriuki are two rangers managing Ol Pejeta's dog team which consists of three bloodhounds, used for tracking, and a spaniel named Drum, traditionally used for searching for weapons and ammunition. John and Edwin train the dogs and coordinate them on missions, but as the poaching threat diminishes, John and Edwin have become more creative with 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 even assisted with missing person and lost children searches*," John reports. "*The canine team, particularly the bloodhounds, are specially trained in tracking. These are transferable skills and they can easily switch to searching for humans and stolen goods*."

Community members now often call the canine unit radio operator to report crimes and problems, and in response John, Edwin and the team travel to the communities to assist them and the police. "*We believe that sending the canine unit to deal with these issues not only keeps their skills sharp and the operations and resources in good working order for any future poaching threat, but it also keeps communities safe*," Edwin says. The communities have come to rely on the canine unit, they see them as a helpful and supportive group and, in turn, they share any poaching intelligence they have with John, Edwin and their fellow rangers. In this way, the community around Ol Pejeta has become a key partner in protecting critically endangered species like the rhino.[245]

John, Edwin and the canine unit emphasise the importance of using ranger resources to protect and support communities (good practice 4.7.) ensuring community appeals for help are responded to swiftly (good practice 4.13). In response and through a growing sense of trust, communities now support Ol Pejeta with wildlife crime prevention (good practice 8.5.). Their work also demonstrates how critical it is to work with local police under clear procedures (good practice 4.8).

video link

To hear more from John, Edwin and Drum you can watch this video.

Good practice 4.14

Direct rangers' monitoring efforts to problems that also support local communities.

Rangers are involved in a range of conservation monitoring activities such as species counts and health, monitoring environmental conditions and poaching and conflict incidents. But discussing the needs of local communities in terms of monitoring data, which can have both social and conservation outcomes, is not always a priority. In the Colombian Amazon, National Park rangers have supported the analysis of mercury contamination from illegal gold mining which has impacts on the health of Indigenous communities. As a result, they have contributed to awareness raising, supported law enforcement and supported communities in identifying the level of mercury in fish.[246]

Technology can support efforts to develop trusting community relationships. EarthRanger, for example, is a software application being trialled in Africa which will enable data from radio collars, cameras, GPS and satellite imagery to collect, integrate and display historical and real-time data on the positions of animals and rangers. EarthRanger has been tested in Kenya, where migration routes near the Amboseli ecosystem were a frequent site of human–wildlife conflict, especially between elephants and smallholder farmers. The Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) has used EarthRanger to ease tension in this area, after creating a map using the platform, to maintain corridors for the elephants to migrate through – reducing the potential for confrontation between farmers, communities and elephant herds.[247]

"We were trained by African Parks on how to use EarthRanger. If there are some problems, like when elephants damaged some of my mother's crops, I try to calm my family and neighbours and contact the park, so that they can log the incident into EarthRanger to help prevent these problems happening again," local community member Joel Akongo, who lives near the Odzala-Kokoua National Park, Republic of the Congo.[248]



Ranger at Mae Wong National Park, Thailand checking camera trap © Doris Calegari / WWF-Switzerland

Mini case study 5: Rangers improving community security in Belize

Since 2018, transboundary incursions from Guatemala into Belize have resulted in a spike in illicit activities including hunting, logging and gold panning. The impacts on the Maya Golden Landscape (MGL) in Belize are being managed by Ya'axché Conservation Trust.

Enforcement and compliance rangers (the majority of whom come from the local Indigenous community) have been trained and authorised to carry and make use of firearms during deep patrols conducted jointly with the Belize Defence Force, Forest Department and often local police. Within their communities they are essentially local police, they have the power to arrest as delegated by the special constable training received and mandated by a co-management agreement with the government of Belize. They are thus providing an essential additional level of security for local people. Patrols are planned and approved by the protected areas programme and executive directors. Enforcement and compliance rangers are required to undergo training on the latest version of Belize's criminal code act along with ammunition and weapons safety.[249]

Good practice 4.15

Consider the role of rangers in supporting peace and security in conflict areas.

In regions marked by conflict and instability, rangers can have important roles in supporting security for local people (see mini case study 5). At the same time, they need to avoid being co-opted as para-security services by the state, a role for which they are untrained and one that is likely to increase conflict with local communities. Article 13 of the draft IRF/URSA Labour Standard states that: "…*rangers shall be deployed only for work for which they are competent and that is within their job descriptions. The national policy shall contain specific commitments against the deployment of rangers as de facto combatants or security personnel when operating inside or in close proximity to conflict zones or in and around border regions*." (See Appendix 2).

This is a tricky area, in practice rangers do sometimes provide security for local communities (often including their own families) in areas of conflict. Furthermore, conflict also increases issues of direct relevance to conservation, such as poaching, with insurgents or others taking advantage of the instability. Rangers and managers need to treat issues on a case-by-case basis, limiting their involvement to direct protection of wildlife and surrounding human communities, rather than getting drawn into a wider conflict.

In 2012, a separatist rebellion combined with an extremist insurgency and a coup d'état in Mali left the country's Sahel ecosystem, including the 32,000 km^2 elephant range, extremely vulnerable. The area became lawless, flooded with firearms, and the new phenomenon of elephant poaching emerged. At the time government was unable to respond. The Mali Elephant Project began working with the Malian government and the non-profit Chengeta Wildlife to build and train an anti-poaching unit from scratch. Their mandate focused on an holistic approach founded on respecting and supporting local communities and human rights, with intelligence-centred and context-adapted tactics at its core. Thanks to the secondment of high-quality Malian military to the unit as anti-poaching rangers, it became fully operational. Poaching dropped dramatically to very low levels due to local knowledge and detection of the incidents and perpetrators owing to local support of the Mali Elephant project and elephant conservation.[250] One member of the unit was medically trained and was able to provide basic treatment for villagers when passing through on patrol. Local people want to support the rangers and refer to them as a "kind army", while in turn, the rangers enjoy interacting with local people.

Principle 5

Finding common ground

This principle focuses on finding or developing shared values and aspirations. Common ground is any topic, opinion or interest that two or more people can agree about. People from different backgrounds may see things differently and hold different beliefs but this does not mean it is impossible to agree, or at least be amicable and respectful. Even when two people disagree on something, common ground can help bring them together as there are nearly always some interests and beliefs that people share.

Identifying common ground between communities and rangers can help both sides reach agreement over topics and work together towards common goals.[251]

Box 12

Finding common ground: Psychology tips

There are several actions that can help with finding common ground: [252]

- Use the power of story to connect with another person. Share stories about past experiences. This can help people recognise shared situations. The human experience has more common ground than not.
- Show interest in what others say. Use body language to show you're engaged. When appropriate and topics are of common interest, dig deeper and ask follow-up questions to find out more about the other person's experience.
- With someone you do not know well or are meeting for the first time, avoid prying too much. Do not ask too many personal questions right away.
- Ask for an opinion on the subject and ask open-ended questions.
- Find out small areas of common ground before diving deeper into a conversation.

With someone you do know or have a disagreement with:

- Share opinions about the current conflict and express the desire to find common ground, because the area of disagreement matters but also the relationship matters.
- Use non-violent communication (see good practice 2.9.).
- Acknowledge differences.
- Stay open-minded.
- Pay attention to how the other person is feeling and be respectful of how they feel at all times. For example, if the other person seems uncomfortable, check they are okay, if they are feeling uneasy, suggest taking a short break.



Ranger discussions in Viet Nam © Nigel Dudley

Good practice 5.1

Walk and talk together to solve problems.

There is much anecdotal and experimental evidence linking walking to creativity, brilliant ideas and problem-solving.[253] Many great thinkers from Simone de Beauvoir to the Buddha were famed for making walking a key part of the fabric of their lives and work, and believed in the ability of walking to clear their thinking.[254]

In the words of an African proverb, if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together. Walking and talking is a good way to encourage communication with local people. While moving through a landscape, people feel freer to unburden themselves of difficulties and the process of moving forward can aid problem-solving together.

Rangers and ranger managers can organise more formal 'Take a walk with a ranger' events which can be youth focused, as part of education programmes, or focused on members or representatives of local communities or Indigenous peoples. Alternatively, rangers and community members can arrange more informal walks together, perhaps through the protected and conserved areas or look for opportunities to accompany community members on their walks to work, markets, schools, etc.

The US National Park Service arranges 'Take a walk with a ranger' events, for example, in New River Gorge National Park[255] and along the Beech Springs Nature Trail of Natchez Trace Parkway.[256] The walks are posted online, and communities are encouraged to meet the rangers at a specific location and time. They are asked to wear appropriate clothes for the season and terrain and commence a typically one-hour hike through the protected and conserved areas.

"The moment my legs begin to move, my thoughts begin to flow."

Henry David Thoreau, American naturalist, essayist, poet and philosopher, 1817–1862



Walking and talking with rangers in Finland © Equilibrium Research

Good practice 5.2

Develop and collaborate with groups and/or projects that benefit from nature.

It is important that rangers have the time and are encouraged to learn and respond to community-led initiatives. Communities working in groups can coordinate conservation or restoration projects and/or regulate sustainable use projects. Such projects can have win-win benefits for the protected and conserved areas and the community. For example, community forests, tree nurseries, tree-care programmes, beekeeping projects, traditional resource management and use, sustainable fisheries groups, birding groups, natural history groups, etc., all provide benefits to local people.[257]

Fisheries spillover from the Fernando De Noronha Marine Protected Area (MPA), in Brazil, generates US$ 674,000 annually for local fisherfolk. Much of this is sold to local restaurants catering to the 70,000 tourists that visit the MPA each year, the rest constitutes an important source of protein for local families.[258] The MPA is patrolled by eleven rangers via land patrols and permanent observation points overlooking waters around the main island; the rangers are equipped with four vehicles and a speedboat. The Marine Park Authority actively promotes the participation of local people in conservation activities and rangers have developed good relationships with groups of fisherfolk who often assist in monitoring illegal activities. This has created a successful partnership to control and patrol this site.[259]

In Kenya, the Indigenous Ogiek People are partnering with Kenya Forest Service (KFS) rangers to restore the Mau Forest complex and promote conservation coupled with sustainable livelihoods such as beekeeping. Volunteer community members have planted over 60,000 native trees and the KFS relies on traditional Ogiek knowledge of the terrain and geography of the forest to provide intelligence on the routes used by illegal loggers and those starting forest fires.[260]

Good practice 5.3

Consider trade-offs between conservation and community well-being.

Long-term conflicts over resource use and conservation management have led to direct contention between rangers and communities around the world. However, in many cases well negotiated, thought-through and monitored trade-offs where both sides win a little and lose a little can solve what seem like intractable conservation problems. Protected area authorities might choose to allow for some sustainable or emergency livestock grazing for example or collection of non-timber forest products. Rangers can play a vital role in brokering these trade-offs, informing management of the community's needs and negotiating with communities on behalf of the protected and conserved areas.

In the Amazon region, small-scale gold mining has been at the centre of one such conflict. However, a change in administration of the protected area saw a new priority, to improve the relationship between the area's personnel and the local community. A joint solution was sought between the community and rangers over resource use to help regain trust with the community. The result was a negotiated and mutually settled agreement to allow limited artisanal gold extraction while communities sought alternative economic activities that were not harmful to nature to make up their income. The rangers in the area stress that when danger is involved, it is necessary to negotiate and make difficult decisions; to make trade-offs. Transparency and openness were essential parts of the process and that both sides of the agreement were fulfilled. It has been a gradual process, they still do not have full trust, but the relationship has improved significantly. It has been a long task; it was achieved through visiting people and talking with the people. Now local communities and rangers undertake collaborative activities: sowing plants together or sharing lunch strengthens the relationship (good practice 3.4.).[261]

Good practice 5.4

Take time to understand different communities' 'world views' and their governance structures, beliefs and influences.

Communities are not homogeneous and are made up of people of different ethnicities, religions, political or other belief systems. It is important to develop relationships with a range of community representatives, from younger men and women, through to the elders (both men and women), and to target discrimination and inequalities and recognise groups whose voices are not currently being heard in decision-making.

video link

Unless rangers are themselves members of the local community, they may well not have identical philosophies, belief systems or ways of seeing the world. But failure to identify the beliefs of others, or take them seriously, can cause unnecessary tensions, by for instance blocking access to sacred natural sites or carrying out noisy operations during periods of worship. IUCN WCPA has produced detailed guidance on managing protected areas while bearing in mind different worldviews[262] and specifically on management of sacred natural sites.[263]

Protected area staff need to be sensitive to local customs and belief systems. Rangers and the communities they work in often share spiritual belief systems, which can be a cornerstone to their lives and also provide an opportunity to spend time worshipping together, deepening trust and generating opportunities for collaboration. For example, park managers and rangers in Jordan pray in the same mosque as the community. They also help find resources for repairs of the building, which has made a huge difference to community relations. In Madagascar, managers in the Amber Mountain National Park gave access to a sacred waterfall for local people to take part in religious ceremonies, thus removing an important source of tension. Further south in the country, the island of Nosey Vey is a nature reserve containing a sacred natural site and a colony of nesting frigate birds; local fishing communities use the site and also protect the birds.[264]



The Tsechu festival in Paro, Bhutan © Emmanuel Rondeau / WWF-UK

Principle 6

Presenting the right image

Rangers are often perceived as only protecting biodiversity, while in reality they are also securing ecosystem services, cultural heritage and peoples' rights.[265] Similarly, there is a tendency to portray rangers in 'military' stance, in uniform often with weapons. Clearly this issue is larger than rangers and solving it will require the global conservation community to reconsider how they present imagery of rangers who have multiple roles. This shift will need more imagery around community involvement, showing rangers are part of the community to help change attitudes. However, below are a series of good practices rangers and their managers can employ to help soften the image of rangers to present a more friendly, trustworthy persona.

Good practice 6.1

Wear casual or non-military uniforms for community visits and interactions.

The design of ranger uniforms plays a pivotal role in their psychological impact on the morale of the rangers wearing the uniform and the perceptions of those interacting with the rangers. For rangers, wearing the same uniform often evokes a sense of pride, shared identity, belonging, camaraderie and unity. However, for communities, there may be little daylight between field-wear and combat-wear; ranger uniforms can look militarised and intimidating. Research also suggests that uniforms obscuring the face and body may allow the wearer to behave more violently, and conversely dehumanise the wearer so that others can behave more violently towards them.[266]

video link

When visiting a community, ranger appearance should signify safety, competence and approachability. Knee-high boots, camouflage,[267] weapons and bullet-proof vests are more likely to signal the potential for violence. Research indicates that even slight alterations to the style of the uniform will change how people perceive the wearer. Having clear guidance for different uniforms depending on tasks is one way to help the public understand the different roles of rangers (see for example the Standard Operating Procedures of the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association).[268]

Managers and protected area authorities can consider variations on the current field-uniform and reserve the paramilitary gear for where it is genuinely needed. For example, Myanmar state rangers have three uniforms that have different functions: Traditional/ceremonial/formal, informal (polo shirt, etc.) and field-wear.

Julia Miranda Londoño (top left) was the director of the Parques Nacionales Naturales de Colombia (Colombian National Park Authority) for 17 years. One of her many initiatives was to bring in a range of uniforms as illustrated which clearly identified parks staff but were not militarised
© Equilibrium Research





A Saint Lucia Forestry Department vehicle with vinyl wrap © Adams Toussaint, FFI

Good practice 6.2

Make ranger vehicles and posts attractive and welcoming.

Like ranger uniforms, infrastructure and vehicles can also appear dominating and unfriendly. Fortress conservation is a conservation model based on the belief that biodiversity protection is best achieved by creating protected areas where ecosystems can function in isolation from human disturbance.[269] 'Conservation castles', specifically imperious park headquarters, have come to symbolise fortress conservation, signifying occupation and intimidating local visitors. An alternative is to create friendly, welcoming, sympathetic designs for infrastructure; ideally using or adapting existing local buildings and styles. It is important to consider disability access, use clear and intuitive signage in local languages, and designate a bathroom for visitors and a comfy place to sit. Utilise soft, warm colours and materials, and natural light to reduce stress and increase feelings of safety.[270]

Likewise, ranger vehicles can often seem like military vehicles. If four-wheel drive vehicles or fast boats are not essential for accessing communities, consider the use of a less intimidating vehicle or mode of transport; slower boats, walking or cycling allows you to wave, stop and talk to people along your route (see good practice 4.2.). In Saint Lucia, the forest department commissioned a 'wrap' for their vehicles which acts as a mobile billboard and encourages people to come and talk to the rangers.

Good practice 6.3

Think about the image rangers present and how this may impact trust building.

Ranger managers and protected area authorities have the agency and opportunities to ensure that ranger imagery is attractive and friendly. For example, any communication materials directed at communities (flyers, posters, etc.) presenting imagery of rangers should be thoughtfully designed. For example, a poster welcoming a community to a 'Meet your local rangers' event should not depict a ranger in military-wear and combat stance with a weapon, consider instead a friendly-looking ranger working in nature or teaching school children. Or when developing interpretation centres do not focus imagery on rangers arresting someone but include more positive ranger and community interactions.

Like any group of people, large groups of rangers can look intimidating even if their actions are peaceful. Consider whether the activities being undertaken require a larger group, particularly if you are on community lands. Smaller groups are less intimidating and community members will be more likely to approach you and cooperate peacefully if you approach them.

Good practice 6.4

Diversify the stereotype of a ranger.

Categorise and clearly identify rangers depending on their roles and responsibilities. Rangers who are responsible for, or carrying out, education or tourism management, for example, should be clearly distinguishable from rangers who are tasked with anti-poaching and law enforcement responsibilities. The IRF and URSA have compiled and described a list of ranger and ranger manager competences that can be drawn upon for differentiating roles within a conservation body.[271] Managers and human resource departments can use the competences as a checklist to help design job specifications, terms of reference and ranger team establishment, and embed the competences into official human resource management frameworks and systems. Perhaps develop new titles for these roles and/or distinguish them using different uniforms or badges (see good practice 6.1.). Posters and other communications materials could introduce rangers in their different roles to local communities and site visitors (see good practice 6.3.).

Good practice 6.5

Inform stakeholders about rangers' work.

Use communications materials such as signs, flyers, social media and SMS (see good practice 3.8.) to communicate about any outreach or community support programmes you are conducting. For example, if you are conducting a 'Walk with a ranger' event, or a school visit, or a livelihoods project or building a new road or path, make sure that the community knows about the good work that rangers are doing and why. Associating rangers and the protected area with benefits for the community will help build goodwill, particularly if you explain why an action is being carried out and how these actions will contribute to the management of the protected area. Research has also shown that the simple act of informing communities that you are trying to build trust with them might make communities more willing to support your work.[272]

Rangers in the Lake District, UK, communicate about their path building via signs along walking trails in the area. When walkers, both local and visitors, see the signs, their understanding of the various roles of rangers becomes clearer. People associate rangers with path building and see themselves as beneficiaries of ranger work.



Visitor communications in the Lake District National Park, UK © Equilibrium Research.



Musa shares a rare moment with his son, Ryan aged three and family in Elangata Enderit village in lower Loita, Kenya © Ami Vitale / WWF-UK

Good practice 6.6

Make ranger work more family-centred.

Make ranger work more family-centred and family-friendly. Rangers are often posted far from their families; in the field they may have no means of contacting them regularly and may be away from them for long periods of time, more than a quarter of rangers see their family for less than five days a month.[273] This is not good for ranger mental health (see good practice 1.10.) and can generate resentment and hostility. Improving ranger connections to their families can improve their mental well-being and soften the image of the ranger. Community members can meet the rangers' families and understand better who their neighbours are.

Ideally, this would mean providing family-friendly accommodation for rangers or moving ranger families into the local community, thereby integrating rangers better into the local community. Alternatively, rangers could be prioritised for posting near to or within their community, ensuring that they stay close to their families. If the above are not options, ensure that rangers are provided with leave and transport to see their families on a regular basis, with extra days embedded for travel if needed, and have means of communicating with their families regularly (e.g. a mobile phone with data or call time). Another recommendation is to design 'Bring your family to work' days for rangers' partners and children to visit the site and see what their family member does for a living.

To help their loved ones understand their roles and responsibilities and build trust in the home, North Luangwa Conservation Project (NLCP), Zambia, organises spouse visits to the park between August and September every year. Each Wednesday, the spouses (usually women) come to NLCP to see the operations and experience the work in different departments to understand their functions. They join in with team exercises, meet with NLCP management and enjoy a game drive to see the wildlife (see good practice 7.2.). It is a great opportunity to engage in discussions around child/family nutrition, household finances and gender issues including self-awareness exercises about their roles, usually, as wives and mothers. These days also give NLCP the opportunity to evaluate if employment benefits are having a trickle-down effect on families and whether livelihoods are improving as intended at the grassroots level. At the end of these visits the women are gifted with a set of reusable/washable period pads which aligns with the NLCP's objective to help combat poverty across the landscape.[274]

Good practice 6.7

Avoid mixed messaging: reduce rangers being involved in both 'hard' crime prevention and 'soft' community engagement work.

Having rangers visit a village as part of a 'hearts and minds' campaign one day and then the same rangers arresting villagers the next day creates confusion for communities and a lack of clarity around ranger roles causing tension and resentment. People may be confused about the role of rangers and become distrustful of their relationship with them. Avoid this mixed messaging by ensuring that individual rangers are not involved in both 'soft' community engagement and 'hard' crime prevention work. If this is not possible, rangers could wear different uniforms to indicate their different roles (good practice 6.1.) or ensure that community members are familiar with and understand these two aspects of the work of rangers. This is especially relevant in sensitive situations where tensions may be running high and where rangers cannot afford to increase mistrust.

Good practice 6.8

Lead by example on local issues such as pollution and litter.

Litter and pollution are becoming an increasing issue worldwide. Rangers can provide leadership in environmental stewardship by setting an example at the local level. All protected area staff including rangers should have basic litter picking equipment (gloves and bags) when travelling around protected and conserved areas. Encouraging good practices such as not littering, picking up litter and recycling litter should extend to local communities and protected and conserved areas visitors. Rangers can also help organise and participate in community clean-up events which serve as tangible actions to address litter issues. Leaders can mobilise volunteers, including local residents, businesses and community groups, to actively contribute to the cleanliness of public spaces. Junior rangers (see good practice 7.5.) are also often vital to help clean up campaigns in protected areas.

In the UK, the Lake District National Park Authority rangers can collect over 300 bags of rubbish in a single weekend, and in 2019, the Peak District National Park Authority spent £37,000 (over US$ 46,000) on removing litter, funds which could have otherwise supported, for instance, a ranger post.



Rangers helping with litter picking at the Vedcha Village, Supa Range, India © Ashish Sinoji

Principle 7

Sharing a love of nature

A better knowledge and love of nature in communities can lead to support for the protected and conserved areas and a greater understanding of the role of rangers. Whilst many people living alongside nature have a good understanding of ecology, some will likely be unfamiliar with the wonderful nature on their doorstep. Empowering them with information about their natural heritage can engender a sense of pride and protectiveness: why this nature is so important and why their support is so needed. All conservationists should hope to inspire and enthuse a generation of biodiversity lovers. Rangers often make excellent facilitators for inspiring and encouraging a love of nature – both for tourists and community members. Ideas for inspiration should focus on fun, education, sharing experiences, building friendships and seeing what rangers are like outside of their day jobs.

Good practice 7.1

Inspire a love of nature through art and creativity.

Music, art, dancing and enthusiasm are always a direct route to people's hearts – rangers may have creative skills they can offer (such as playing musical instruments) and should be encouraged to use these skills to reach the hearts and minds of local people.

Traditional theatre, or folk drama, is an important part of Indian culture. The artform is over 1,000 years old and combines music, dance, poetry and religion. The dramas, often performed in local languages and in community public spaces, reflect cultural practices, customs, traditions and belief systems. Unlike urban theatre, folk drama maintains a close connection to rural life.[275] Indigenous rangers in India are using this public platform to raise awareness about conservation actions and biodiversity issues. In Thailand, rangers are tapping into popular music in the same way (see mini case study 6).



Participatory photography workshop, Nama Pan Village, Nyae Nyae Conservancy and Community Forest, Namibia
© Jason Houston / WWF

Mini case study 6: Winning hearts and minds through music and dance in Thailand



The Big Cat Band entertaining school children © WWF Thailand

In Mae Wong and Khlong Lan National Parks in Thailand, ten musical rangers have formed a rock band to educate communities on the rare and wonderful wildlife and ecological values of the protected areas. Here, local people who legally do not live or utilise natural resources within the park borders have lost touch with their natural heritage – rangers are helping to reverse this.

The rangers of the Big Cat band play guitar, bass, drums, etc. Some of the rangers already played instruments before joining the Big Cat Band but some learned on the job. Others that are less musically inclined join the fun by dressing up as animal mascots and dancing. Mascots dress as tigers but also the main prey of tigers such as the muntjac. The rangers write lyrics about the awe-inspiring waterfalls and the charismatic tigers of the area, and the importance of the management and conservation of these values. The songs also encourage people to visit their natural heritage and the communities often dance and sing along when the band performs in the villages on market days. Twice a month, the Big Cat Band and mascots visit and perform at the Tiger Conservation Network of 35 schools and on market days of the 30 communities within 5 km of the protected area borders. Through these musical interactions, rangers and local people have developed friendships.[278]

Good practice 7.2

Inspire a love of nature through experience: free entry for local people.

video link

When it comes to inspiring a love of nature, nothing beats the first-hand experience of visiting a protected or conserved area: hearing birdsong, the sounds of nature, the smell of the soil or water.[276] For community members, a visit to their local protected area can reconnect them to their natural heritage, reaffirm their support for the conservation of the area and engender a sense of awe and wonder. Experiencing awe in nature fosters a deep connection to and appreciation of the environment, and can have a profound impact on well-being enhancing happiness, reducing stress, and promoting a sense of interconnectedness with nature.[277] In particular, promoting and facilitating access to protected or conserved areas and environmental education for children, women, people with disabilities and other marginalised groups is a good way to create linkages with communities and inspire change-makers.

However, for many lower income communities and households, park entry fees and vehicle costs may prove a barrier for enjoying the protected or conserved area. In Ol Pejeta Conservancy in Kenya, entry fees are waived for people living within a 2 km radius of the park boundaries and rangers and management are collaborating to provide convenient and free vehicles and guides for community groups. Visiting the protected area encourages community members to cherish nature and recognise its intrinsic value beyond utilitarian aspects, ultimately nurturing a more profound sense of environmental stewardship and responsibility.



Taking the conservation message into schools © Armando Di Marino

Good practice 7.3

Inspire a love of nature through education.

Rangers can also engender a love of nature through more traditional, educational fun: nature-based events, clubs or societies for example. Teachers and schools can be good allies for rangers – supporting teachers to develop curriculums around nature conservation and giving local children positive experiences with rangers in protected areas can help make education fun (see also good practice 7.5.).[279]

video link

It is important to combine environmental education with awakening strong emotions and sensations, as opposed to more traditional educational approaches. The best way to do this is to bring teachers and students for walks and expeditions in nature with rangers (see good practice 5.1.).[280] Forest schools can provide much inspiration for activities for children,[281] and pond-dipping parties[282] or bird spotting competitions[283] can engage both children and adults. Engaged students will then relay ecological facts, stories and ideas to their families and elders. In Sri Lanka, community conservation/school awareness programmes run by NGOs ensure rangers are invited to take part, particularly in areas where there are ranger–community disputes.[284]

As Armando Di Marino states (see also Ranger Story 8):

"Changing the minds of kids is important because you can't change the minds of adults. It's one of the main responsibilities. "[285]

Good practice 7.4

Ensure adequate training for rangers who take part in school visits and other community-based activities.

According to national legal frameworks, rangers may be required to undergo training and safety checks in order to facilitate or take part in activities with the public. For example, rangers may need to comply with legal safety checks for interacting with children. In the UK, Disclosure and Barring Service checks must be carried out for anyone who wishes to work with children, the elderly or other vulnerable individuals.[286] These processes help parents and other community members trust the rangers in their role of engaging with school children. Rangers may also benefit from training in effective communication, making presentations, facilitation, collaborative problem solving and how to deal with questions, tensions or conflicts that arise during interactions.[287]

Ranger story 8:
Armando Di Marino: The importance of loving nature[288]
Italy





The Kamishibai, paper theatre, a novel way to pass on the conservation message
© Armando Di Marino

Armando Di Marino worked as a ranger in Italy for 40 years, enthusing and inspiring local people to love nature. To keep students engaged and interested, Armando learnt the ancient Japanese story-telling art of Kamishibai: paper theatre. He travelled around the county on a bicycle fitted with a small wooden theatre, passing on ecological education and communicating conservation messages. Inside the theatre are pictures that Armando runs like a PowerPoint presentation – he uses these to tell his own stories to inspire his audience. In his late sixties, Armando often meets younger people that remember him taking them for walks in the forest, telling them stories and facts about nature. Many have gone on to become vets, agronomists, forestry workers and biologists.

Armando explained: *"I have understood that we can only change people's behaviour if we make them understand that nature must be respected. To develop environmental awareness and reduce our ecological footprint, we need to start with the younger generations! That's why I met pupils aged 3 to 10 to share my experiences and talk about wild nature. I have invested a lot in reaching out to the children in the best possible way and maximising their opportunities to learn about nature. In the end, environmental education became the most important part of my work. And I believe that being in touch with students and teaching them the importance of loving nature, wildlife, the forest and the whole world that harbours us is the most important part of a ranger's job. Ultimately, this is of the utmost importance for saving our planet."*

About his travelling theatre he recalled: *"I have attended many courses and developed techniques to get students actively involved. The best technique is to let them have fun or go for walks in nature, which sparks emotions and sensations. To keep the students engaged and interested, I have adopted an ancient but very effective communication technique called Kamishibai! This is a Japanese communication art that was used by storytellers in the last century. Kamishibai means paper theatre."*

Even though he is now retired, Armando still enjoys educating: *"I still often take school children and people with disabilities through the woods; it's a real pleasure to let them discover the secrets of nature through the song of the birds, the rustle of the leaves, the smell of the soil. We have a lot of fun and build trusting relationships at the same time. I have always done my job with love and put a lot of energy into passing on my knowledge and experience to the younger generation. I think I have been sowing all these years and some seeds are growing."*

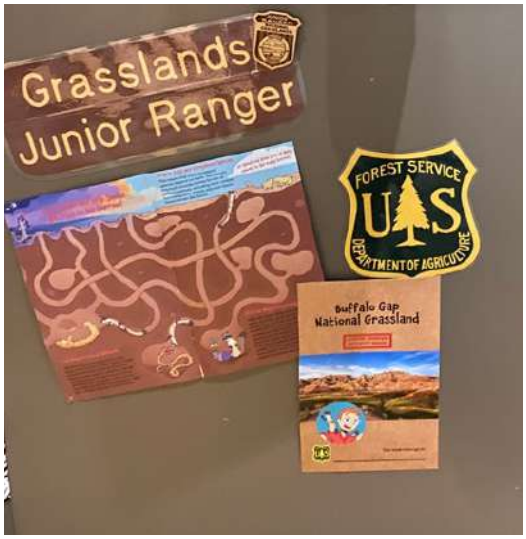
Armando's life's work is about inspiration: inspiring a love of nature through education (good practice 7.3.), art and creativity (good practice 7.1.). But Armando also shows the power of having fun experiences in nature (good practices 8.1. and 7.2.) with communities and letting them see the joyful side of rangers.

Good practice 7.5

Set up junior/youth ranger schemes.

Typically, junior or youth ranger schemes are aimed at children living within or close to the protected area. Activities are adapted to the local context but could be a mixture of education, outdoor sports, park maintenance, visitor management, environmental monitoring, excursions to other locations or parks, and community outreach, all guided by rangers. An exciting junior or youth ranger programme should connect young people to their natural and cultural heritage, educate them on the environment through informal and practical learning, maximise their time spent outdoors and in nature, and be a fun and enriching experience. Such an experience can encourage young people to go home and educate their parents and elders on conservation goals and the roles of rangers. Inspired young people that care about nature are also the future of protected areas, they may one day become guardians, future community leaders, rangers and other conservation specialists themselves.

Several countries run junior ranger programmes, commonly involving young people from 7–18 years old, who work with and learn from professional rangers and help with maintenance tasks and monitoring projects.[289] The EUROPARC Junior Ranger Programme supports protected area authorities to develop junior ranger schemes. Programmes of activities last a minimum of five days throughout the year, but are ideally a one-week camp followed by regular volunteering days once a month throughout the year. Each programme is tailored to fit the specific benefits, challenges and objectives of the protected area. The EUROPARC programme is improving relationships with local communities, integrating the voices of young people into conservation decision-making and inspiring future rangers.[290] There are examples of Junior Ranger Programmes around the world including from Papua New Guinea,[291] USA,[292] Central America,[293] Kenya,[294] among many others.









Junior ranger schemes are found around the world
© Equilibrium Research



Good practice 7.6

Understand local culture and work with local communities to ensure sustainable use.

Many communities living in or near to protected and conserved areas have current practices or traditions of using natural resources. Some harvesting of natural resources can be conducted sustainably. In some instances, rangers will need to work closely with community members to monitor and ensure sustainable use (see good practice 4.14.). In other cases, rangers and communities may need to work closely to innovate and change traditions. In East Africa, hunting lions was the traditional way of proving manhood for the Maasai. But lion numbers have dwindled. In 2008, the Menye Layiok, or Maasai "cultural fathers", had the idea to organise a sports event based on traditional Maasai warrior skills to replace the hunting tradition as a mark of manhood, bravery and prestige. Now well-established, the Olympics are held every two years. Participating villages select teams through a series of tournaments leading up to the finals across six categories: rungu and javelin throwing, high jump, and 200 m, 800 m and 5,000 m races.[295] The Nyishi Indigenous People in Northeast India understand the threats to their culturally important hornbill species and have worked with rangers to come up with innovative conservation solutions (see ranger story 9).

Rangers like Bunty Tao have been working with the Nyishi Indigenous People in Northeast India to understand the cultural importance of the hornbill and create sustainable alternatives like this fibreglass hornbill headdress, called the *Bopya* © Bunty Tao

video link

Ranger story 9:
Bunty Tao: Connecting biodiversity threats to culture
India





Bunty Tao has been working with his communities on connecting sustainably with their cultural-natural heritage © Bunty Tao

Bunty Tao is a proud member of the Nyishi Indigenous tribe – the largest Indigenous tribal community in Arunachal Pradesh in India and he is also a proud state ranger (a State Forest Officer). "*Occupying both roles allows me to communicate between the two groups: communities and conservationists*," Bunty says. Bunty has been working to raise awareness around the importance of conservation. "*I speak to communities around Northeast India about the mammoth and how even this mighty species went extinct. I warn them that, with enough pressure, other species can also disappear. This is important to them as there are many species of cultural importance to local people.*"

Bunty has been instrumental in efforts to reverse the decline of the great hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*) whose populations have been threatened due to habitat loss[296] and traditional hunting. The species has been hunted specifically for its beak, feathers and casque (the helmet-like structure on the bird's head) which are used as decorative elements in the traditional ceremonial headgear known as *Bopya*, a type of cane woven hat.[297] Traditionally hunting was sustainable, with conservation aspects culturally ingrained. But the introduction of sophisticated long-range arms and ammunition led to increased hunting, this was coupled with a sudden population rise and a movement to revive the Nyishi culture. This led to an increasing commercialisation of feathers and beaks sold for traditional use, beaks could each fetch between INR.10,000 and 20,000 (US$ 130–260).

The challenge was to find strategies to protect the hornbill while ensuring the culture and traditions of the local community were preserved and strengthened. In response, Bunty and his colleagues have been working to change perceptions around hornbill use. In 2000, they began fabricating fibreglass replica beaks; this was followed in 2003–2004 by a hornbill conservation programme, started by Arunachal Forest Department in collaboration with the Wildlife Trust of India, to pay for the manufacture and distribution of fibreglass hornbill beaks to the Nyishi People.[298] Bunty alone distributed 100 artificial hornbill beaks in collaboration with the Forest Department and local District administration.

Bunty believes his identity as an Indigenous ranger gave him an advantage in communicating these messages and finding solutions. "*When it comes to sensitive issues like changing cultural traditions, people are more likely to listen to rangers that are from their communities. Indigenous rangers are also more familiar with local bylaws and social norms and can navigate them with care and skill*." Bunty recommends employing Indigenous and local rangers wherever possible, and for non-local rangers to learn as best they can about the connections of local people to nature.

Bunty's passion is in inspiring a love and ownership of nature through education and awareness raising (good practice 7.3.). As a member of the Nyishi tribe, Bunty has an innate understanding of their connection to nature and their use of natural resources and has collaborated with people to ensure sustainable use (good practices 3.5. and 7.6.). It is in this role as an Indigenous ranger that Bunty can have such great impact in building trust and preserving nature (good practice 1.2.).

video link **video link**

To learn more from Bunty, you can watch these videos.

Principle 8

Working and playing together

Rangers can add value to the lives of communities through supporting community work and creating opportunities to have fun together. More frequent, positive and better-quality experiences of working and playing together can underpin feelings of support, reliability, friendliness, generosity and kindness.

As relationships develop and improve with communities, more opportunities for collaboration and two-way learning will present themselves. Taking advantage of such opportunities can improve relationships further, increase transparency and understanding and alleviate the work pressures and responsibilities of both rangers and local people. For example, community members might enjoy and benefit from supporting conservation efforts like wildlife surveys or supporting law enforcement. Opportunities for rangers and communities to work together and through more formal governance structures can also provide opportunities for learning about each other's work and goals and identifying more areas for collaboration.

Lastly, ranger responsibilities can sometimes put them into conflict with community members and may lead to resentment. Providing employment opportunities and support for ex-offenders can ensure there are pathways to rebuild initially negative contacts.

Good practice 8.1

Build friendly relationships through fun, extra-curricular activities.

Activities in nature (see good practices 7.2. and 5.1.), music and dance (see good practice 7.1.), eating and chatting (see good practice 3.4.) can all be good ways to share positive experiences with communities and build good relationships. Sports and games are another avenue for having fun together. Many rangers around the world are finding that mixed sports teams with rangers and community members playing on the same sides are building a sense of team spirit and joyful associations.



video link

Mixed ranger–community football teams are the most common, but volleyball is also played in East Africa. Think about the types of sports and games that local people watch on television or play in schools, etc.; if everyone knows the rules, communities and rangers will be on a more even footing. Consider a women's league or mixed gender sports teams to ensure women rangers and community members are also included. Planning and establishing a tournament can be an excellent way to ensure the team building is long-term and there will be something to celebrate at the finals at the end of the season (see good practice 4.6.).



video link

In Northeast India, Aaranyak rangers have established a football tournament of mixed ranger–community teams. Many Indigenous Boro People join these football teams and through spending time having fun with and getting to know the rangers on their team, community members have now become rangers themselves (see ranger story 10).

Ranger story 10:
Mizing Boro: Footballers to Indigenous rangers
India





Mizing Boro discusses his initiation into the world of rangers through the fun of football, Guwahati, 2023 © Hannah L. Timmins

Aaranyak is a non-profit organisation in Northeast India conserving biodiversity through research, environmental education, capacity building and advocacy for legal and policy reform.[299] The organisation supports government ranger teams to conserve protected areas.

From 2016, Aaranyak, in partnership with the Assam Forest Department and partners including the IUCN, Panthera, Wildlife Conservation Trust and Awely, initiated the Manas Tiger Conservation Project to recover tiger numbers in Manas National Park. The project mainly involved improving park security and implementing novel community interventions. Aaranyak began regularly hosting football matches as a fun platform to connect with local people and raise awareness of the threats to biodiversity, particularly among communities living close to Manas National Park. The tournament teams are mixed ranger–community players and the matches and teams tour between the villages to ensure they connect with as many people as possible. Teams are always on the look-out for talented young footballers from the villages and new recruits to join their rangers.

Mizing Boro was just one of those talented footballers. "*I am from Kumguri village and I began playing in the tournaments from a young age*," Mizing says. He enjoyed playing with the rangers and they developed a strong sense of comradery, "*we were a good team and it was fun!*" When Mizing finished his studies in 2018 and it was time to look for a job, it was only natural for him to want to work in the wildlife conservation sector, "*I wanted to be a ranger like my teammates!*"

Mizing is now on Aaranyak's ranger support team and has undergone training in GPS, mapping and patrols. "*I'm a ranger now, in part because of those football tournaments. Having fun with the rangers and being on the same team as them made me want to become a ranger*." Mizing attributes his career in conservation to the football tournaments which helped him develop positive associations with rangers and conservation. "*I still play in the football tournaments and now I also identify and train new ranger recruits*!"

Mizing's story is one of fun! It demonstrates just how critical the ingredient of fun is to creating positive associations and strong relationships between rangers and communities (good practice 8.1.). Mizing saw the rangers as presenting an image of joy and comradery (good practice 6.3.) and he wanted to become one of them – bringing Mizing onto the team further connected the rangers to local people (good practice 1.2.).

To learn more from Mizing, you can watch this video.

video link

"I'm a ranger now, in part because of those football tournaments. Having fun with the rangers and being on the same team as them made me want to become a ranger."

Good practice 8.2

Actively work with local people in formal and informal reserve and wildlife monitoring and surveys.

Citizen science, in which members of the public contribute to ecological data collection for protected and conserved areas, is an increasingly acknowledged approach.[300] Citizen science makes people feel useful: community members may want to provide helpful data to support conservation and by doing so they feel more engaged in the rangers' work and the protected area. Promoting ways for people to participate actively in conservation engenders a feeling of meaningful contribution, it is something people tell their friends about (thus potentially creating an exponential growth in support of and goodwill towards rangers).[301]

Indigenous peoples and local communities often already play an important role in observing and documenting natural processes of lands and waters. They are often the first people to observe environmental changes or the cumulative impacts of resource use. Thus their contributions to monitoring may be disproportionate.[302]

Community members can contribute to biodiversity research, land cover assessments, forest health monitoring, marine pollution surveys, etc. Rangers and ranger managers can design and facilitate joint activities like joint camera trapping or a Bioblitz.[303] These can encompass finding and identifying as many species as possible in a discrete area and time (like a Bioblitz) or focus on an individual species like the annual tamaraw (an endemic small buffalo) count in Mts Iglit–Baco Natural Park in the Philippines which involves rangers, Indigenous community members, students and biologists all working in teams together.[304] It is important that the citizen science project is focused on conservation needs and results are fed back to those who participated and ideally into conservation practice.[305]

In southern Tanzania around Ruaha National Park, there has been hostility between the protected area and local people. Meeting rangers and seeing wildlife is very important, for example through engaging local people through park trips, where they meet protected area staff and learn about the role of the park. The most effective development, however, has been through an innovation called community camera-trapping. Villagers are trained and employed to place camera-traps on their land and receive points for each sighting. Those points are then translated into additional community benefits. Benefits are agreed depending on local priorities, which are usually related to healthcare, veterinary medicine and education. The villages with the most points are awarded the additional benefits and are celebrated each quarter. The project works only on village land but shows a very clear benefit to conserving the wildlife that comes from the park, so makes those areas seem more beneficial to local people.[306]

Good practice 8.3

Train local guides in ecology and nature conservation.

Rangers have a wealth of knowledge that could greatly support local nature guides and tourism businesses. Host a gathering of tourism operators and guides to share knowledge, resources, skills and generate a tourism network. Key themes to discuss should include how to identify and locate flora and fauna of interest to visitors and interesting facts and stories on natural and human history to engage visitors. A field trip could be incorporated into the meeting to create a practical opportunity to share experience (see good practices 7.2. and 5.1.). Rangers can also support tourism staff in learning about sustainable tourism good practices.[307]

Dusty Vaughn from the Stanislaus National Forest, USA, began attending local business meetings and 'mixers' in the neighbouring communities, dependent on the tourism generated by the bordering National Forest as well as Yosemite National Park. A chamber of commerce is typically composed of local business owners in the community. Members of the chamber of commerce would take turns to host informal social mixers to encourage connecting with one another, collaboration and communication for the collective benefit of the community. The Groveland Ranger District of the Stanislaus National Forest saw an opportunity to collaborate with local business owners and community members. In attending these mixers, the Recreation Program provided information to local business owners on openings and closures of recreation sites, updates around closures, information on projects, and highlighted various programmes, all important information particularly for the business and tourism operators who were able to share with their customers and visitors to the area. The Ranger District would also host a mixer each year.[308]

Good practice 8.4

Support environmental defenders from the community.

There are ongoing debates about the definition, adequacy and usefulness of the term 'environmental defenders', for our purpose, this umbrella term lumps together activists, movements, community leaders and others working to protect nature and environmental human rights in a personal (not professional) capacity.[309] Needless to say, there are likely to be some conservation-sympathetic members of the community, and as relationships develop and improve, more community members may come to understand the importance of biodiversity. Rangers can use this opportunity to identify active and potential environmental defenders and promote solidarity with these individuals. Hosting a training or volunteering activity with environmental activists and conservation sympathisers can create shared positive experiences, stronger one-to-one relationships and remind community members and rangers of a shared goal to protect and restore the environment. In many cases, unfortunately, environmental defenders and all those working in conservation are increasingly under threat, so the consequences of engagement need to be fully understood.[310]

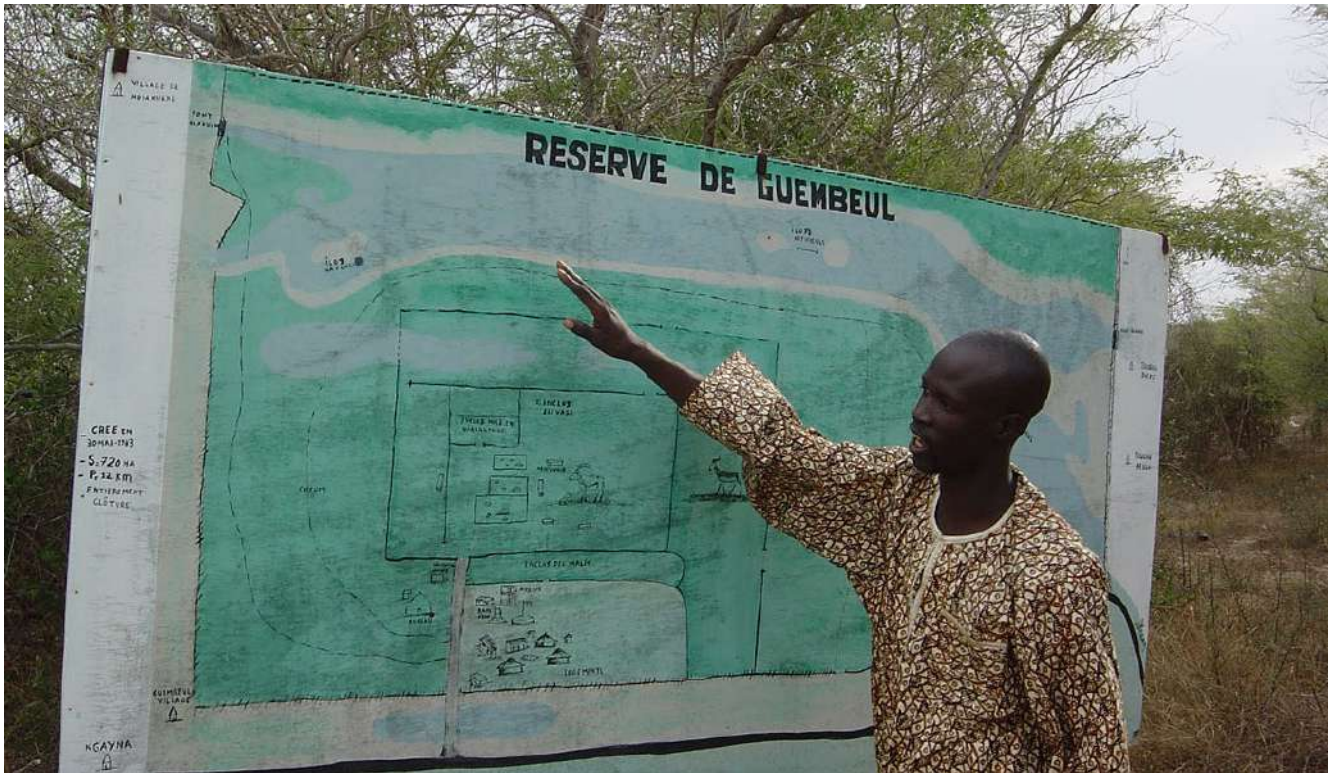
Good practice 8.5

Encourage community engagement in crime prevention.

Where it is safe to do so, engaging communities in conservation is often crucial for addressing wildlife crime, with many anti-poaching rangers reliant on intelligence shared by local people. Local people that provide information often have trusted relationships with rangers; interact regularly with community outreach rangers (either formally through community programmes or informal socialising); and believe that the protected area benefits them and their community.[311]

Rangers embedded in communities surrounding the protected and conserved areas can create strong relationships with local people and their unique ability to engage people can underpin the solutions to wildlife crime. However, these close relationships can create both opportunities and challenges in wildlife crime prevention and associated ethical issues must be addressed.

Various types of rangers in Pu Mat National Park, Viet Nam, work closely with local communities. These rangers are diverse in their roles, affiliations and responsibilities, and include official Forest Protection Department rangers, community conservation team rangers and rangers employed by the NGO Save Vietnam Wildlife. Rangers conduct joint enforcement efforts with the army and police and garner information from communities. Rangers here are mindful of complex social dynamics in being relationally, socially or informationally closer to some actors than others.[312]



Community ranger in Senegal © Nigel Dudley

Ranger story 11:
Rebeca Quirós: Conservation is everybody's responsibility
Costa Rica



Rebeca Quirós is president of the Association of Naturalist Guides of Drake Bay,[313] based on the 1,800 km^2 Osa Peninsula on the southern Pacific coast of Costa Rica. The area is exceptionally rich in biodiversity and contains two significant protected areas. Many local people are involved in a thriving ecotourism business. However, there is also poaching and other environmental crime.

Frustrated by slow government responses to illegal hunting trips in the area, which intensified during the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2021 Rebeca revived the Natural Resources Surveillance Committees, COVIRENAS. COVIRENAS are groups of people from civil society who have organised themselves to assist in the surveillance and protection of natural resources. These committees are registered with the Ministerio de Ambiente y Energia (MINAE) Environmental Controller and members are appointed and accredited voluntary environmental inspectors.

The COVIRENAS had been proposed earlier but the idea had been rejected by the Osa Conservation Area. This time, faced with mounting problems and budget cuts, the Minister reacted enthusiastically, arranging training programmes for volunteers, providing transport support and helping to form local groups. At the last report, there were over 70 certified voluntary inspectors in Alto Laguna, Pejeperro, Puerto Jiménez, Rancho Quemado, the Térraba-Sierpe Wetland and Drake Bay.

Rebeca explains: "*we have encouraged people to report. … Now we are receiving audios and private messages all the time. ... People are now also using official reporting channels…Several people and organizations have donated money, and with that we have bought equipment, t-shirts, insurance, food and transportation. All the positive comments we've received on social media have been a huge motivator … I feel that the greatest achievement is the change in community mentality. … natural resources provide food and work for all of us, so it is everyone's responsibility to take care of them. Our impact has been that people in the communities are waking up*."[314]

Rebeca's story highlights the importance of identifying local environmental defenders (good practice 8.4.) and training and equipping them as volunteers supporting ranger work (good practice 1.7.). The rangers and the COVIRENAS worked together to identify the benefits that local people derive from the area (good practice 5.2.) and are collaborating to monitor illegal hunting (good practice 8.2.) and prevent environmental crime (good practice 8.5.).

… I feel that the greatest achievement is the change in community mentality. … natural resources provide food and work for all of us, so it is everyone's responsibility to take care of them. Our impact has been that people in the communities are waking up.

Good practice 8.6

Support and employ ex-poachers and wildlife crime offenders.

Ex-poachers often have excellent wildlife tracking skills, behavioural and landscape knowledge, and implicit knowledge of wildlife trafficking networks. In leaving behind their poaching livelihood, they may struggle to provide enough income for themselves or their families. Employing ex-poachers might provide a solution to strengthening ranger capacity and removing the temptation to return to wildlife crime. For example, in Uganda where poverty is a driver for poaching activities, rangers believed that employing ex-offenders not only helped develop rapport with villagers but also reduced poaching.[315] Alternatively, ex-poachers can be hired as 'casual labourers' for a variety of basic jobs (e.g. grass-cutting). Recruiting ex-poachers is now enshrined in the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association.[316]

Rangers can reach out to ex- or even repeat offenders to understand the reasons for illegal behaviour. Perhaps they have a challenging financial or family situation that rangers can help with. These linkages can help strengthen one-to-one relationships, turning initially negative contacts into positive ones and demonstrate the employment benefits of conservation for local people.

Officials in Periyar National Park, Kerala, India have developed methods to work with poachers. After arresting a group of 23 wildlife poachers, the Forest Department started a rehabilitation initiative to help ensure these individuals did not re-offend. They set up an eco-development committee called Vidiyal Vanapathukappu Sangam to re-employ the poachers as rangers. The group all went through a three-month training period and carried out patrols and anti-poaching activities as well as participating in the local tourism industry through safaris, bamboo-rafting and as tourist guides. If any of the individuals involved are found to be carrying out poaching activities, they are expelled from the group indefinitely. Of the original group of 23, six have either left or been expelled. The remaining 17 have found stability through the project and many have been able to send their children on to further education as a result. The group has also facilitated the arrest of over 230 gang members engaged in poaching and smuggling in the park and they have transformed the Marayoor Sandalwood reserve into a poaching-free zone.[317]

Good practice 8.7

Facilitate democratically elected positions of reserve–community liaison.



video link

Facilitate communities to democratically elect representatives to liaise and collaborate with reserves and rangers. If community electoral mechanisms and structures already exist, it is ideal to utilise these and avoid creating less sustainable, parallel structures. These positions could be organised into environmental sub-committees within existing community governance structures. They can promote positive changes within the community in favour of the environment, facilitate a collaboration with the protected area, and work alongside rangers to reduce conflicts with the community.

In Ol Pejeta Conservancy, Kenya, rangers work with community members who run for election to represent the communities within the park governance and the park within community governance structures. These positions are entirely voluntary but community members perceive these to be positions of prestige with the potential to make positive changes. Communities can also elect community rangers (see mini case study 7) to work within ranger teams. These may or may not be paid positions. Working together, community and park rangers can foster deeper bonds, relying on one another, collaborating and sharing positive experiences. Ranger managers should ensure that community rangers are respected and valued as essential members of the team.

Mini case study 7: Locally elected community rangers in Mongolia

Several protected areas in Mongolia have had success in using locally elected rangers. The Snow Leopard Conservation Foundation (SLCF) in Mongolia has been working in Tost (Tosonbumba Nature Reserve) to support local people to conserve their livelihoods.[318] Tost was declared a State Nature Reserve in 2016, since then SLCF has been assisting local herding families to organise into seven conservation communities, each community having a clearly mapped-out Community Responsible Area (CRA) where they are responsible for conservation and protection. These are delineated and mapped with the participation of communities, based on traditional resource use and grazing patterns, and are approved by the local government. Community rangers are elected by their fellow herder community members and are chosen because of their known interest in, and knowledge of, nature and their physical ability to conduct the work. At each community meeting, held twice a year, the community rangers report on their work to their community members and to the Nature Reserve administration. The seven community rangers patrol their CRAs monthly to conduct wildlife monitoring surveys, as well as to check any illegal activities taking place.[319]

Similarly, in Ikh Nart Nature Reserve, at the edge of the Gobi Desert, community rangers are elected by the community, ensuring that they have high social standing and respect. They live full time within the reserve and help to arbitrate conflicts relating to human–wildlife conflict, poaching and natural resource use. Individual community members also take responsibility for the protection of particular vulture nests, thus helping turn around a long-term decline in these birds.[320,321] Interactions like these are critical to good long-term management but take time and patience to develop.



Community rangers in Ilkh Nart Nature Reserve, Mongolia
© Equilibrium Research

Ranger story 12:
Anandpurev Tumurbaatar and Gana Wingard: Locally elected rangers
Mongolia



Anandpurev Tumurbaatar is the Director of Ikh Nart Nature Reserve in Mongolia. He was originally hired by researchers as a local horseman for wildlife capture work and has progressed from ranger to director over the past 20 years.

Ikh Nart Nature Reserve is on the northern edge of the Gobi Desert ecosystem, where steppe transitions into desert habitats. About 150 families live as transhumant pastoralists in and around the reserve.[322] Humans have inhabited the region for millennia balancing livestock raising (mostly sheep, goats and horses) with the protection of native wildlife such as argali sheep (*Ovis ammon*).[323]

Science-based community engagement has been one of the major reasons for the success of Ikh Nart's conservation efforts.[324] Under Mongolian law, local governments have management authority over nature reserves and national monuments. In Ikh Nart, the local Dalanjargalan Soum Administration hires local pastoralists as rangers. The reserve has four Community Based Organisations (CBOs), one of which is a women's cooperative and three of which are focused on conservation. Each CBO elects its own rangers/leaders.

As Anandpurev explains, having locally elected rangers ensures that: "*Rangers represent them [the community] and work with them – which is why the management and research activities are very successful.*" But more than that … "*it is not just rangers that protect nature, we want every person, every herder, every individual involved in the conservation in Ikh Nart*".



Gana Wingard
© Equilibrium Research

Gana Wingard, Curator for Conservation-Mongolia at the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens in California, who has led much of the research work in Ikh Nart through the Mongolian Conservation Initiative, points out that building support is an active process. There are for instance "*Ger to Ger*[325] *visits, where every Ger is visited to share research information. We also involve school children, every year we host 200 school children to Ikh Nart to share knowledge, and we also work with school teachers to share information.*"

The most important lesson from Anandpurev's story is the success of locally elected rangers representing the community and liaising with the protected area (good practice 8.7.). Gana also underscores the importance of visiting communities at their convenience (good practice 4.3.) and inspiring a love of nature through school visits to the protected area (good practices 7.2. and 7.3.).

video link

For over 20 years, scientist Gana Wingard has been working to conserve Mongolia's Ikh Nart Nature Reserve and empower local communities to participate in this work. Listen to her here.

"Rangers represent them [the community] and work with them – which is why the management and research activities are very successful." But more than that … "it is not just rangers that protect nature, we want every person, every herder, every individual involved in the conservation in Ikh Nart".

Good practice 8.8

Encourage communities to include rangers in local governance structures and work with local governance bodies.

Governance structures vary widely around the world, but if appropriate including rangers directly in governance structures or developing formal interface with rangers on key projects is helpful to building trusting relationships. Instead of creating new mechanisms, this avenue for coordination demonstrates that rangers are a part of the community, not separate from it. Rangers can ensure the interests of protected areas are represented in local governance, particularly in meetings where environmental/conservation issues are discussed, whilst brokering lines of communication from communities back to park authorities. Engaging with local governance bodies also provides rangers with more opportunities to communicate with local leaders about their work, projects, objectives and challenges. However, communities should be made aware that they have the option to ask rangers not to attend certain meetings should they wish to discuss any sensitive issues.

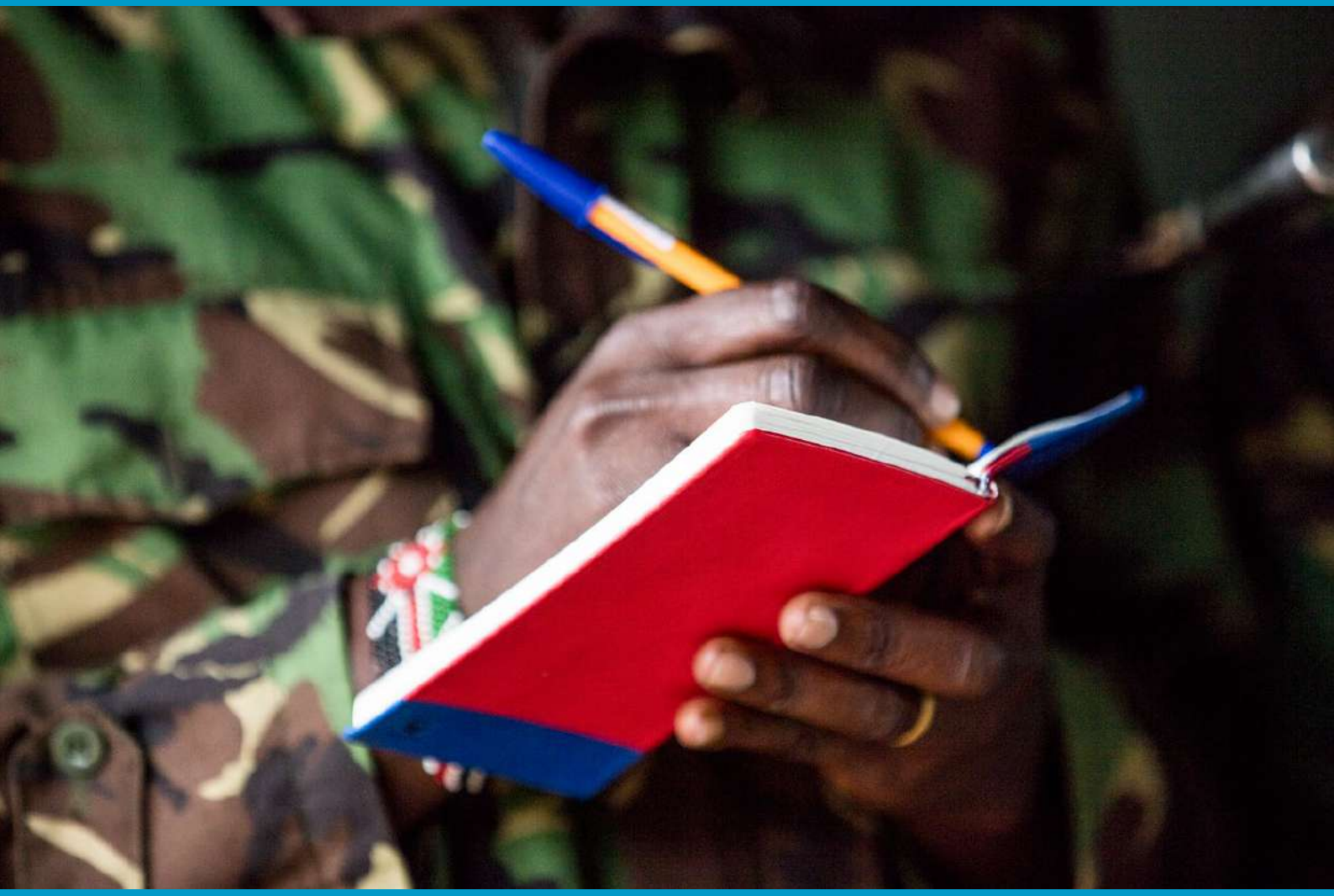
Rangers could also participate in or host local chambers of commerce, local business meetings or tourism bureaus. Rangers could give presentations on their programmes to raise awareness and generate more opportunities to identify areas of potential collaboration.

The National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP) works with landowners in the state of Oaxaca in the southeastern region of the Mexican Pacific to develop Areas Voluntarily Designated for Conservation (Áreas Destinadas Voluntariamente a la Conservación). In terms of building trust between the local communities and CONANP rangers, one of their most important lessons has been for the CONANP rangers to work with the internal organisational structures of the communities, and from there strengthen capacity for territory management, vigilance and monitoring. This has been a far more effective approach than inventing internal structures that have nothing to do with the community and employing people who do not know the territory. CONANP rangers thus participate on a daily basis in community decision-making bodies, such as local assemblies and in building the capacity of '*vigilantes comunitarios*' (volunteer local rangers) in conservation skills.

In Papua New Guinea one community worker identified the wife of the community head as a person with influence who could facilitate women being more involved in conservation work. Women in positions like these can also spread messages on preventing gender-based violence through mitigation and response measures. Identifying and working with sympathetic people in influential positions can help rangers to generate more change in a community. Religious leaders can also play an important role. Specific projects involving women in ranger roles relevant to their traditional skills can also be a useful entry point, such as the *Rokrok Meri*s (frog women: *Rokrok* is pidgin English for frog and *Meri* means women) of the Torricelli Range of Papua New Guinea. Women are the traditional hunters of frogs for food in the region and are being trained by the Tenkile Conservation Alliance initially to monitor frogs through a mobile phone app, but with plans to expand women's involvement, and their traditional knowledge and wisdom, in monitoring and management more generally.[326]

Section 3.

Using the good practices: A modular approach



Maasai Mara National Reserve, Kenya © WWF-US / James Morgan

This good practice guideline has been developed for and with rangers. The underlying theory of change is that by implementing these good practices rangers and local communities will build shared values and will understand, encourage and incorporate local knowledge in PCA management. Thus ranger skills and authority can be encouraged to be local support systems for conservation and local communities. Through these actions along with developing governance and honest and open communications, the aim is to improve conservation outcomes for biodiversity and people.

The material presented can be used in a variety of training and capacity building scenarios. In this section we suggest a range of simple assessments and tools and approaches that can be used to implement and socialise the good practices. The focus is on understanding knowledge gaps (both in individuals and in ranger management structures) and identifying ways to fill them. The guidance here can thus be used either by individual rangers or ranger managers. Although, as noted in the introduction, in some places there may be a need for major changes in how conservation is carried out, which will need legislation or policy change, these guidelines have been written with individual rangers in mind. As has been stressed, identifying even small actions to improve community relationships can make a big difference in developing trusting relationships.

More generally, it should be noted that URSA has included some basic standards around training for rangers that all members of the International Labour Organization are encouraged to adhere to.[327]

Four key elements are discussed below: understanding the situation; understanding trust; what good practices can we use to build trust; and making an action plan. We have complemented this with a brief section on capacity building with some hints and tips on ranger training.

1. Understanding the situation

Building capacity around these good practices will depend on local circumstances. Spending a little time assessing the current relationships between rangers and Indigenous and local communities will help identify next steps.

A simple situation analysis should consider:

1. **Current state of relationships:** Review the current state of relationships between rangers and local people. Are they positive, neutral or strained? Identify any existing tensions, conflicts or areas of cooperation.
2. **Communication:** Assess the communication channels between rangers and local communities. Effective communication is crucial for understanding each other's needs, concerns and expectations.
3. **Community involvement:** Analyse the extent to which Indigenous peoples and local communities are involved in decision-making processes related to conservation initiatives. The results of any recent management effectiveness assessments can be useful here.
4. **Understanding both active and passive relationships:** Are there very active rangers/community members who can act on these good practices, and conversely are there passive rangers/community members who need more assistance to encourage involvement.
5. **Understanding local needs:** Investigate how well rangers understand the needs and aspirations of local communities. Aligning conservation efforts with local priorities can lead to more sustainable outcomes.
6. **Diversity of workforce:** In terms of gender, ethnicity, whether locally based, etc. Evidence suggests that the higher the diversity the more effective the rangers.[328]
7. **Skills availability and gaps:** Consider what skills and training rangers have and where potential gaps are.
8. **Conflict resolution mechanisms:** Identify the existing mechanisms for resolving conflicts between rangers and local people.
9. **Cultural sensitivities:** Examine how culturally sensitive the approaches of rangers are towards the local communities. Understanding and respecting local customs and traditions is crucial for building positive relationships.

Looking at issues like these can help build a problem statement which outlines where problems exist and can help develop a pathway towards building better relationships.

2. Understanding trust

In section 1 of these good practices, we outlined definitions and types of trust (see Table 1). Using this information to better understand the blockages to trust can be a good starting point to deciding what type of actions are needed to build or rebuild trust (see Table 3).

Table 3: Understanding the blockages to trust

Type	Definition/basis	Examples of good practices which could help build trust
Disposition	The general tendency or predisposition of a person to trust or distrust another person or entity. This tendency is often context specific.	1.2. Employ local rangers from a broad spectrum of the community. 2.10. Encourage understanding, collaboration and peacebuilding. 6.6. Make ranger work more family-centred. 7.5. Set up junior/youth ranger schemes.
Rational	Trust based primarily on a personal calculation of the consequences of placing one's trust in a person or entity.	2.2. Think about how individuals react to having authority when rangers are employed or deployed. 2.8. Ensure rangers understand the application of law and order and traditional approaches to conflict resolution are used when appropriate. 3.5. Take time to learn from communities about their sense of place, traditional knowledge on the use of resources and relationship with the area.
Emotional	Trust is based primarily on an emotional judgement of the qualities of the potential trustee.	1.6. Employ rangers who speak the local languages/dialects. 3.3. Do not overpromise and under-deliver and be honest when answering questions. 3.9. Do not consider silence as consent to ranger/management actions. 3.12. Identify and empower individual rangers who can broker lines of communication. 4.13. Ensure community appeals for help are responded to promptly and positively. 5.4. Take time to understand different communities' 'world views' and their governance structures, beliefs and influences. 6.3. Think about the image rangers present and how this may impact trust building. 8.1. Build friendly relationships through fun, extra-curricular activities.
Procedural	Trust in procedures or other systems that decrease vulnerability, enabling trust in the absence of other forms of trusting relationship.	1.1. Make long-term professionalisation and employment commitments to rangers. 1.11. Ensure rangers are aware of the IRF ranger code of conduct. 1.12. Provide basic human rights training for rangers. 2.3. Ensure that policies and processes are in place to mitigate corruption and misconduct. 2.5. Develop safe, secure, functioning and independent incident logs and grievance redress mechanisms for local communities. 2.6. Ensure disciplinary procedures are transparent and fully implemented. 3.8. Use appropriate messaging services to reach community members. 4.3. Hold consultation meetings in communities and at the convenience of local people in a setting of their choosing. 8.7. Facilitate democratically elected positions of reserve–community liaison. 8.8. Encourage communities to include rangers in local governance structures and work with local governance bodies.

3. What good practices can we use to build trust

This good practice guideline is made up of a list of ideas, all are sourced from rangers or local communities who interact with rangers and all have been used in at least one place, and often in many places around the world. The guidelines range from simple ideas which help build community and ranger relations, to detailed good practices, mainly related to professionalisation, where policies or operational planning may need to be adapted.

As a first step to implement and socialise the good practices, a simple assessment form has been developed (see table 4 and appendix 1 for a blank form to copy). All the good practices are listed. Rangers/managers can scan these and simply tick as appropriate one of five options.

1. **Not relevant:** In a few cases the good practices may not be relevant to the specific site being assessed.
2. **Doing it already:** Something that is being done already (e.g. regular meetings with communities).

3. **Do now:** Not doing but can be implemented immediately. This will be the case for the good practices that any ranger can implement without permission or training (e.g. driving carefully through villages).
4. **Do with permission:** Rangers may need permission from lead/head rangers, managers, etc. before they can be implemented (e.g. spending work time talking with community members to help build trust).
5. **Do with training:** In addition to needing permission to implement, some good practices may require additional training to implement (e.g. arrange a regular slot on a local radio station).

Table 4: Good practice assessment form

Good practice	1. Not relevant	2. Doing it already	3. Do now	4. Do with permission	5. Do with training	6. Actions
1.1.						
1.2.						
1.3.						
etc.						

Once the assessment has been made the actions column can be completed to plan and follow up as required.

4. Making an action plan

Creating an action plan involves outlining specific steps and tasks to achieve your goal or objective. If rangers or managers have followed the steps outlined here a simple situation analysis should have identified the problem, the exercise to identify the building blocks of trust will have helped identify the type of actions needed to build trust (e.g. procedural, emotional, etc.) and the quick assessment of the good practices will hopefully identify actions that can either be taken immediately, taken with permission or need to be subject to specific capacity building. The action plan should be a simple document which outlines next steps and should consider:

1. Define your goal/objective.
2. Identify stakeholders and rightsholders.
3. Allocate resources (which could be either financial, linked to capacity building or related to working with knowledge-keepers, enablers, brokers, etc.).
4. Create a timeline.
5. Establish indicators and monitor and adjust as needed.

5. Capacity building tools and approaches

Building capacity, implementing and socialising the good practices can take many forms. A list of options is given below.

- Individual rangers making a change to their working practices.
- Awareness raising, such as communicating/translating the key sections outlined in this guideline and using the associated videos to sensitise rangers to good practices.
- Workshops and training sessions.
- Role-playing scenarios.
- Production of further system/site-specific guidelines.
- Webinars and online courses.
- Social media campaigns.
- Community and ranger forums.
- Ranger exchange visits.

As an aid to this process a series of videos of rangers explaining their good practices has been developed.



Videos can be accessed by clicking on this video icon

Mini case study 8: Building the capacity of rangers and communities in and around protected areas in Uganda

In Murchison Falls National Park in Uganda, ranger workforce activities taken to build community and ranger trust focused on:

- Rangers' ability to foster trust and collaboration largely depends on their professionalism, ability to empathise with the specific local situation, and their ability to choose and implement conflict management strategies.[329]
- Training in issues such as conflict resolution and community engagement to help build their social skills and sense of pride and professionalism and improve their interactions with local communities.
- Taking community members to different areas of the park and surrounding area widened their understanding of conservation.[330]

In addition, community volunteers (known as wildlife scouts) were engaged to help protect farms from crop raiding by wild animals, the lessons learned included:

- Wildlife scouts' training taught members skills in controlling wild animals that stray from the park using different interventions. This has helped to improve community relations with the management authority.
- Wildlife scouts were taught the behaviours of wild animals with knowledge transferred to the community members. This has helped improve the tactics of communities in chasing away the animals without causing them harm, thus decreasing conflicts and accidents.
- First aid training equipped wildlife scouts with knowledge on handling problems such as fractures and sprains, which then provided a community-wide resource.[331]

6. Hints and tips for ranger training

There is an increasing interest around training rangers in issues such as human rights, codes of conduct and developing trusting relationships. Each context will be different, and training should be developed in a context specific manner. The notes and mini case study below therefore offer some general guidance to trainers, rather than a specific curriculum, for ranger training on these issues. Although focused specifically on human rights training for rangers, the manual developed by the Wildlife Conservation Society for Central Africa also contains many useful training tips and hints.[332]

6.1. Planning training sessions

When planning a training programme, it is important to:

- Create a safe space in which rangers and Indigenous and local communities can discuss issues and resolve problems.
- Consider any incidents with communities and gather as much information as you have on the rangers and tailor the training (emphasise certain good practices, etc.).
- Understand what the ranger participants' training backgrounds are, review their core competencies and standard operating procedures.
- Understand what department the rangers are in, their roles and responsibilities, etc.
- Tailor the trainings to the above findings (e.g. rangers from a Problem Animal Management Unit will find scenarios and good practices that apply to human–wildlife conflict most useful).
- If there are different types of rangers in the room ask them to stand up in their groups and explain what training they have had so far, ask them to each acknowledge the lessons they can gather from one another.
- Some guidance and good practices might be difficult to listen to or discuss for rangers, particularly if there have been any difficult incidents with communities. To be receptive to the training, the rangers themselves need to trust the trainer. Ensure that you are approaching the training with a sense of kindness, curiosity, non-judgement and fun.
- During scenario role play, first act out the scenario with a co-facilitator, you as the ranger and them as the community member. Perform the role play twice: once with rangers following good practices and another with bad practices. Think about body language, tone and volume of voice, etc. Work with ranger management to ensure you follow procedures but show how this interaction can be done well and badly. Ask the rangers how they view the differences between performances.



Park rangers employed by the National Service of Natural Are Lau Ching Fong of Perak State Parks, Malaysia, presents his team's good practices for building trust between communities during a workshop at the inaugural Asian Ranger Forum. © Hannah L. Timmins as Protected by the State (SERNANP), Peru © Pamela Vivar / WWF-Peru

- If senior management are in the room, sit with them and work with them throughout the training to ensure the guidance provided is compatible with their procedures and policies. For example, do rangers need to be holding a weapon at all times or can they leave it at their office while they visit communities.
- Develop a feedback form for the end of the training to collect feedback on the training from participants.

6.2. Potential activities for training sessions

- Group brainstorm: What does trust mean to you as a ranger, as a friend, in your families?
- Group brainstorm: Describe the consequences of a lack of trust with local people for your work, for local people, for biodiversity conservation?
- Group brainstorm: Describe the ideal situation and relationship with local people; what are the benefits for you and your work, for local people, for biodiversity conservation?
- Pre-planned scenarios: Develop pre-planned scenarios of issues with communities and have ranger groups solve problems and build trust by applying good practices. Teams should then present their ideas to the larger group and ask for more suggestions.
- Group brainstorm: Ask rangers for their own scenarios, what situations have they been in where trust could have been built with communities or where trust was lost?
- Role plays: Ask groups of rangers to choose one of the challenging scenarios from the activity above and develop a list of good practices to improve the situation. Ask them to develop a role play and perform this to the larger group to show how they would apply the good practices (some of the rangers will play community members). Ask the audience to provide suggestions or say what they thought went well – keeping criticism constructive and friendly.
- Group brainstorm: Ask rangers what they need in order to apply these good practices? What are their blockages?

Mini case study 9: Kenya Wildlife Service rangers in Tsavo – socialising good practices



Kenya Wildlife Service rangers, ZSL and Equilibrium Research staff at the end of the socialisation in Tsavo © Hannah L. Timmins

In early 2023, Kenya Wildlife Service rangers working in Tsavo West National Park were struggling with community relationships. A villager had recently been killed by a rogue male elephant that they had been asking KWS rangers to remove for several days. When the rangers drove to the village to support the police in retrieving the body, tensions built to a village demonstration against the rangers, the wildlife and the protected area.

Given the country's history of poaching and illegal wildlife trade, the KWS rangers are essentially trained as anti-poaching law enforcers. As poaching has decreased in Kenya, a wildlife recovery and an expanding human population is now leading to an increase in human–wildlife conflict (HWC). Anti-poaching-trained rangers are now seconded to the HWC department and are having to adapt to this new role without the training required. KWS rangers are essentially transitioning from soldiers to guardians or stewards as they shift from focus on anti-poaching to HWC. KWS rangers and their curriculums are catching up on this shift.

In response, the KWS authorities and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) arranged a socialisation of the *Building Trust between Rangers and Communities* scoping study findings and good practices (a precursor to this guide). HWC, like the situation in Tsavo, can often lead to high-conflict situations between rangers and communities. As such, this socialisation was targeted to KWS rangers embedding trust-building into a HWC and de-escalation context, rather than focusing on the trust building they could do outside of conflict.

Much of the socialisation discussions focused on achieving a balance between authority and friendliness – it is important that the rangers know that they can do both and how to balance the two. The role-play exercises generated tangible examples of this challenge: if rangers find someone illegally grazing their goats in the park, according to procedure, they must arrest this person, how can they do this whilst building trust? Rangers discussed the possibilities of showing humanity whilst following procedure, such as by providing them with water, asking how they are and what difficulties they are facing, offering support/advocating for their early release by the police.

Appendix 1: Simple assessment of ranger good practices

Good practice	1. Not relevant	2. Doing it already	3. Do now (or schedule)	4. Do with permission	5. Do with training	6. Actions
Principle 1: Diversity, equity and professionalisation						
1.1. Make long-term professionalisation and employment commitments to rangers.						
1.2. Employ local rangers from a broad spectrum of the community.						
1.3. Ensure gender diversity when employing rangers.						
1.4. Ensure workplace equity.						
1.5. Recognise different educational experiences to promote diversity.						
1.6. Employ rangers who speak the local languages/dialects.						
1.7. Train and effectively equip local people as volunteer rangers.						
1.8. Explore opportunities for mentoring and knowledge sharing for young rangers.						
1.9. Pay attention to ranger concerns about their safety and security.						
1.10. Understand and support the well-being of ranger mental health.						
1.11. Ensure rangers are aware of the IRF ranger Code of Conduct.						
1.12. Provide basic human rights training for rangers.						
1.13. Ensure good succession planning when rangers retire or change jobs.						
Principle 2. Respect, cooperation and peacebuilding						
2.1. Seek to promote community cohesion through understanding tensions.						
2.2. Think about how individuals react to having authority when rangers are employed or deployed.						
2.3. Ensure that policies and processes are in place to mitigate corruption and misconduct.						
2.4. Develop mechanisms for rangers to feel safe when whistleblowing.						
2.5. Develop safe, secure, functioning and independent incident logs and grievance redress mechanisms for local communities.						
2.6. Ensure disciplinary procedures are transparent and fully implemented.						

Good practice	1. Not relevant	2. Doing it already	3. Do now (or schedule)	4. Do with permission	5. Do with training	6. Actions
2.7. Ensure rangers' team structure and actions are coordinated and focused on de-escalation.						
2.8. Ensure rangers understand the application of law and order and traditional approaches to conflict resolution, including restorative justice, are used when appropriate.						
2.9. Practise non-violent communication when in a disagreement with community members or colleagues.						
2.10. Encourage understanding, collaboration and peacebuilding.						
2.11. Share good practices on rangers working and building trust with communities.						
Principle 3: Connecting, listening and learning						
3.1. Base communications between protected and conserved area staff and local communities on principles of equity, transparency and participation.						
3.2. Ensure rangers, and all staff, have the time to engage with local communities as neighbours.						
3.3. Do not overpromise and under-deliver and be honest when answering questions.						
3.4. Drop in and share a drink or a meal as part of regular interactions with communities.						
3.5. Take time to learn from communities about their sense of place, traditional knowledge on the use of resources and relationship with the area.						
3.6. Work with village elders (men and women) and younger members of the community to walk boundaries.						
3.7. Work with village elders (men and women) and younger members of the community to mark out trails.						
3.8. Use appropriate messaging services to reach community members.						
3.9. Do not consider silence as consent to ranger/management actions.						
3.10. Employ a range of tools to help understand the equity and governance issues.						
3.11. Avoid imposing outside ideals or values that go against the culture of the community.						
3.12. Identify and empower individual rangers who can broker lines of communication.						

Good practice	1. Not relevant	2. Doing it already	3. Do now (or schedule)	4. Do with permission	5. Do with training	6. Actions
Principle 4. Being a good neighbour						
4.1. Be alert to current/rising issues in communities.						
4.2. Do not travel fast and aggressively through communities.						
4.3. Hold consultation meetings in communities and at the convenience of local people in a setting of their choosing.						
4.4. Locate ranger outposts in or near villages.						
4.5. Try to source ranger rations from local communities.						
4.6. Take part, and assist where possible/ appropriate, in local celebrations and events.						
4.7. Use ranger resources to protect the property and rights of the community from outside threats.						
4.8. Ensure rangers have the training, equipment and mandate to provide emergency services and have clear protocols for those services.						
4.9. Ensure rangers have the capacity to act as first responders after natural disasters.						
4.10. Train rangers in first aid to help rangers become community first responders.						
4.11. Consider how rangers trained in treating injured wild animals can be first responders in community animal husbandry emergencies.						
4.12. Encourage rangers to support or volunteer for local response units.						
4.13. Ensure community appeals for help are responded to promptly and positively.						
4.14. Direct rangers' monitoring efforts to problems that also support local communities.						
4.15. Consider the role of rangers in supporting peace and security in conflict areas.						
Principle 5. Finding common ground						
5.1. Walk and talk together to solve problems.						
5.2. Develop and collaborate with groups and/or projects that benefit from nature.						
5.3. Consider trade-offs between conservation and community well-being.						
5.4. Take time to understand different communities' 'world views' and their governance structures, beliefs and influences.						

Good practice	1. Not relevant	2. Doing it already	3. Do now (or schedule)	4. Do with permission	5. Do with training	6. Actions
Principle 6. Presenting the right image						
6.1. Wear casual or non-military uniforms for community visits and interactions.						
6.2. Make ranger vehicles and posts attractive and welcoming.						
6.3. Think about the image rangers present and how this may impact trust building.						
6.4. Diversify the stereotype of a ranger.						
6.5. Inform stakeholders about rangers' work.						
6.6. Make ranger work more family-centred.						
6.7. Avoid mixed messaging: reduce rangers being involved in both 'hard' crime prevention and 'soft' community engagement work.						
6.8. Lead by example on local issues such as pollution and litter.						
Principle 7. Sharing a love of nature						
7.1. Inspire a love of nature through art and creativity.						
7.2. Inspire a love of nature through experience: free entry for local people.						
7.3. Inspire a love of nature through education.						
7.4. Ensure adequate training for rangers who take part in school visits and other community-based activities.						
7.5. Set up junior/youth ranger schemes.						
7.6. Understand local culture and work with local communities to ensure sustainable use.						
Principle 8. Working and playing together						
8.1. Build friendly relationships through fun, extra-curricular activities.						
8.2. Actively work with local people in formal and informal reserve and wildlife monitoring and surveys.						
8.3. Train local guides in ecology and nature conservation.						
8.4. Support environmental defenders from the community.						
8.5. Encourage community engagement in crime prevention.						
8.6. Support and employ ex-poachers and wildlife crime offenders.						
8.7. Facilitate democratically elected positions of reserve–community liaison.						
8.8. Encourage communities to include rangers in local governance structures and work with local governance bodies.						

Appendix 2: Resources for the professionalisation of rangers worldwide

The International Ranger Federation and the Universal Ranger Support Alliance have prepared a range of standards and guidance to advance the professionalisation of rangers worldwide. A summary of the main outputs is provided below.

Table 5: Ranger resources

Name and description	Link for more information
The Global Code of Conduct prepared by the International Ranger Federation with inputs from over 1,000 rangers and available in multiple languages with guidelines for their adaptation and adoption by employers according to local social and legal contexts. Reference: International Ranger Federation (2021). *Code of Conduct for Rangers*. International Ranger Federation.	Code of Conduct. https://www.ursa4rangers.org/download/619/?tmstv=1691380384 Supporting materials and guidance. https://www.ursa4rangers.org/download/827/?tmstv=1700105378
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Author profiles

Sue Stolton set up Equilibrium Research with Nigel Dudley in 1991. Between them Sue and Nigel have authored well over 200 books and reports, worked in over 90 countries worldwide and with over 70 different organisations. Sue is a member of WCPA and the Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP), is an Honorary Fellow of the UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre and the Institute for European Environmental Policy.

Hannah L. Timmins is an ecologist and member of Equilibrium Research with an interdisciplinary background in landscape-level conservation planning and management and experience working in SE Asia, East Africa, eastern Europe and the middle East. She has worked on many topics including most recently conflict conservation; forests, inland waters and grasslands; rangers-community relations; GBF Target 3; engaging civil society in conservation; covert wildlife releases, and many more topics.

Nigel Dudley works in partnership with Sue Stolton and Hannah Timmins in Equilibrium Research. He has collaborated with NGOs, UN agencies, international donors and governments in over 70 countries and has written many papers, reports and books. Nigel has been an Adjunct Fellow at the University of Queensland and a member of the steering committee of WCPA; he is currently co-editor of WCPA publications. He is an Honorary Fellow of the UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre and the Institute for European Environmental Policy.

Mike Appleton is an author of the widely used IUCN guide to competences for protected area staff and serves as vice chair for capacity development in WCPA. His current role is Senior Adviser on Protected and Conserved areas with Re:wild and he holds an M.Sc. in Protected Landscape Management from the University of Greenwich, and a B.Sc. in Ecology from the University of East Anglia, UK. Mike is Chair of the URSA Steering Committee.

Mónica Álvarez Malvido is the Federation Development Officer for the IRF and has over 10 years of experience leading conservation initiatives in Latin America. Most recently she worked at the National Commission for Protected Areas in Mexico as Interinstitutional Affairs Coordinator and Focal Point for RedParques. She has a B.Sc. in International Relations at the Universidad Iberoamericana and an M.Sc. in Environmental Management from the University of Queensland sponsored by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID).

Rohit Singh is the WWF-US Director for protected and conserved area governance and management and is vice-president of the International Ranger Federation. The kfW-Bernhard-Grzimek-Preis 2022 was awarded to him for his leadership in ranger work.

Bunty Tao is the President of the Rangers Federation of Asia and has worked with the Arunachal Forest Department for 30 years. He belongs to the Nyishi Indigenous tribe, the largest Indigenous tribal community in Arunachal Pradesh, and has been particularly engaged with a project to substitute hornbill beaks for sustainable artificial ones within the Indigenous communities. Bunty is a graduate in Tribal studies and has a M.Sc. in History.

Olga Biegus is an Environmental Crime and Policy specialist with over five years' experience in conservation research and policy development and more than 13 years in international grant and programme management, supporting conservation organizations in developing effective projects and programme for improved results. She holds Master Degree in Sociology and MPhil in Criminology.

William Moreto is an associate professor at the University of Central Florida's Department of Criminal Justice. His research interests include environmental criminology, policing, crime analysis, crime prevention, geographic information systems, crime science, wildlife crime, and qualitative methods. William has a Ph.D. in Criminal Justice from Rutgers University, Newark and a B.A. in Criminology from Simon Fraser University.

Steve Itela is the team leader at the Conservation Alliance of Kenya (CAK) with over 25 years of experience in leadership roles for non-profits in positively impacting the conservation of the environment and biodiversity. Steve has an M.Sc. in Project Planning and Management and a B.Sc. in Commerce, Accounting and Business Management.

Patricia Mupeta-Muyamwa is a natural resource governance specialist, with 25 years of experience in natural resource governance, human rights, environmental and social safeguards, Indigenous and community led conservation, protected area management, and rural development. She has worked for TNC since 2011 and holds the role of the Global Director of Human Rights in Conservation. Patricia has a doctorate degree from the University of Florida, School of Natural Resources and Environment.



Park rangers in Colombia
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PROTECTED AREA AND OECM DEFINITIONS, MANAGEMENT CATEGORIES AND GOVERNANCE TYPES

IUCN defines a protected area as:
A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.

The definition is expanded by six management categories (one with a sub-division), summarised below.

Ia Strict nature reserve: Strictly protected for biodiversity and also possibly geological / geomorphological features, where human visitation, use and impacts are controlled and limited to ensure protection of the conservation values.

Ib Wilderness area: Usually large unmodified or slightly modified areas, retaining their natural character and influence, without permanent or significant human habitation, protected and managed to preserve their natural condition.

II National park: Large natural or near-natural areas protecting large-scale ecological processes with characteristic species and ecosystems, which also have environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities.

III Natural monument or feature: Areas set aside to protect a specific natural monument, which can be a landform, sea mount, marine cavern, geological feature such as a cave, or a living feature such as an ancient grove.

IV Habitat/species management area: Areas to protect particular species or habitats, where management reflects this priority. Many will need regular, active interventions to meet the needs of particular species or habitats, but this is not a requirement of the category.

V Protected landscape or seascape: Where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced a distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.

VI Protected areas with sustainable use of natural resources: Areas which conserve ecosystems, together with associated cultural values and traditional natural resource management systems. Generally large, mainly in a natural condition, with a proportion under sustainable natural resource management and where low-level non-industrial natural resource use compatible with nature conservation is seen as one of the main aims.

The category should be based around the primary management objective(s), which should apply to at least three-quarters of the protected area – the 75 per cent rule.

The management categories are applied with a typology of governance types – a description of who holds authority and responsibility for the protected area. IUCN defines four governance types:

Type A. Governance by government: Federal or national ministry/agency in charge; sub-national ministry or agency in charge (e.g. at regional, provincial, municipal level); government-delegated management (e.g. to NGO).

Type B. Shared governance: Transboundary governance (formal and informal arrangements between two or more countries); collaborative governance (through various ways in which diverse actors and institutions work together); joint governance (pluralist board or other multi-party governing body).

Type C. Private governance: Conserved areas established and run by individual landowners; non-profit organisations (e.g. NGOs, universities) and for-profit organisations (e.g. corporate landowners).

Type D. Governance by Indigenous peoples and local communities: Indigenous peoples' conserved areas and territories – established and run by Indigenous peoples; community conserved areas – established and run by local communities.

The Convention on Biological Diversity defines an "other effective area-based conservation measure" (OECM) as:
A geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and, where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socioeconomic, and other locally relevant values.

This covers three main cases:

1. **Ancillary conservation** – areas delivering in-situ conservation as a by-product of management, even though biodiversity conservation is not an objective (e.g. some war grave sites).
2. **Secondary conservation** – active conservation of an area where biodiversity outcomes are only a secondary management objective (e.g. some conservation corridors).
3. **Primary conservation** – areas meeting the IUCN definition of a protected area, but where the governance authority (i.e. community, Indigenous peoples' group, religious group, private landowner or company) does not wish the area to be reported as a protected area.

For more information on the IUCN definition, categories and governance types, see Dudley (2008). *Guidelines for applying protected area management categories*, which can be downloaded at: https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2008.PAPS.2.en

For more on governance types, see Borrini-Feyerabend et al. (2013). *Governance of Protected Areas: From understanding to action*, which can be downloaded at https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/29138.

For more information on OECMs, see Jonas et al. (2023) *Site-level tool for identifying other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs): first edition*, which can be downloaded at: https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/51296



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