



Ranger Graduation Ceremony at Gorongosa National Park. Gorongosa National Park, Mozambique. Photo by Augusto Carlito Bila.

## **TRAINING AND MONITORING BEST PRACTICE GUIDE:**

Rights-Based Training for Rangers in National  
Parks and other Protected Areas

March 2022



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## PREFACE

Starting in FY20, the Joint Explanatory Statements or Statement of Managers accompanying the Appropriations Act began to direct the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to incorporate several new requirements, as applicable, into contracts and assistance awards for programming in national parks and other protected areas. USAID interprets parks and protected areas to include all six International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)<sup>1</sup> categories for parks and protected areas.

1. Strict Nature Reserve/Wilderness Area
2. National Parks
3. National Monument or Feature
4. Habitat-Specific Management Areas
5. Protected Landscape/Seascape
6. Protected Areas with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

This document, along with several others, has been developed to provide guidance to Missions and other USAID operating units to meet the directive from Congress. The four requirements enumerated within the SOM are noted below:

1. Information detailing the proposed project and potential impacts is shared with local communities and the free, prior, and informed consent of affected indigenous communities is obtained in accordance with international standards;
2. The potential impacts of the proposed project on existing land or resource claims by affected local communities or Indigenous Peoples are considered and addressed in any management plan;
3. Any eco-guards, park rangers, and other law enforcement personnel authorized to protect biodiversity will be properly trained and monitored;
4. Effective grievance and redress mechanisms for victims of human rights violations and other misconduct exist.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.iucn.org/theme/protected-areas/about/protected-area-categories>

## INTRODUCTION

USAID is committed to improving the training, transparency, and accountability of protected area park rangers, ecoguards, community guards, and other personnel authorized to protect biodiversity (“rangers”)<sup>2</sup> supported, employed, or managed by USAID’s implementing partners (“partners”). This Training and Monitoring Best Practice Guide (“the guide”) aims to support partners in monitoring and enforcing adherence to the law and protection of human rights in national parks and other protected areas, as required by a congressional directive.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this guide is to ensure that partners adopt a rights-based approach to protected area management—meaning that rangers are cognizant of, and value, the human rights of all people they encounter in the course of their work. “Protected area management” covers a range of activities, including: monitoring biodiversity; managing remote-sensing camera traps; assessing and developing infrastructure such as ranger posts, bridges, tracks, and hides; guiding tourists; supporting scientific researchers; holding community engagement meetings; raising awareness; and conducting patrols. This guide aims to ensure that rangers have the practical training, technical knowledge, and mental preparedness to handle situations in a way that avoids unnecessary conflict or harm.

The sections that follow lay out essential elements of ranger training in the areas of values and standards, code of conduct, rights of rangers; conflict analysis and situation awareness; engagement; de-escalation and detainment; monitoring and evaluation; and accountability.

This guide is grounded in the human rights and civil liberties as described in the United States Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).<sup>4</sup>

Reflecting these two foundational documents, USAID’s Strategy on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (2013) states that human rights “include the right to be free from violations of physical integrity (such as torture, slavery, and illegal detention); the collective rights of all citizens to enjoy political rights and civil liberties; and equality of opportunity and non-discriminatory access to public goods and services.”<sup>5</sup>

This guide is ultimately intended to assist in the proper training and monitoring of rangers to uphold a rights-based approach to securing biodiversity and human well-being.

USAID has zero tolerance for violations of human rights in the context of its activities. This includes work in protected areas by partners and direct beneficiaries, such as rangers and related law enforcement personnel. Violations of human rights can include physical violence and intimidation, gender-based violence

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<sup>2</sup> The term “rangers” includes park rangers, ecoguards, community guards, and other personnel authorized to protect biodiversity.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Congress, House Committee on Financial Services, *Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020*, 116th Congress, 2019, H. R. 1865 SOM Division D, Page 443, and Division G, Page 766, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/1865>.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations. 1948. United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. New York: United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). 2013. *Strategy on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance*. Washington, DC: USAID. <https://www.usaid.gov/democracy/democracy-human-rights-and-governance-strategy>.

including sexual exploitation and abuse, human trafficking, child abuse, exploitation, neglect, or marginalization of beneficiaries by partners, rangers, or related law enforcement personnel.

USAID’s programs are committed to the “do no harm” principle, meaning that USAID’s efforts “should not inadvertently reinforce or strengthen discriminatory practices or place anyone at risk.”<sup>6</sup>

This guide provides an overview of key components of a rights-based approach to ranger training and supervision that can help minimize the chances of human rights violations.

The guide begins with an overview that emphasizes the importance of having a clear code of conduct based on values and standards and the essential role of situational awareness. The sections that follow address the various stages of engagement, de-escalation, and detainment. Finally, recommendations for monitoring, evaluation, and accountability are outlined. Partners are encouraged to manage, monitor, and evaluate ranger activities, with a focus on the protection of human rights for all people.

### **THIS GUIDE’S RELATIONSHIP TO USAID AWARDS**

This guide was drafted to provide guidance to USAID activity managers, Agreement and Contracting Officer’s Representatives (AOR/COR), and partners, as applicable. The information contained herein reflects good practices and is intended to function as a reference document and job aid for designing and implementing activities involving rangers in parks and protected areas. Partners are encouraged to consult this guidance in carrying out the activities described in their USAID award, but this document does not, in and of itself, impose binding obligations on any party unless incorporated into an award. The training of rangers, while informed by the principles presented herein, is ultimately the responsibility of host government officials, and each partner engaging in such activities under a USAID award is governed by the terms and conditions specified in the relevant contract or assistance award.

### **GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

Gender-based violence is an umbrella term used to describe any harmful threat or act directed at an individual or group based on actual or perceived biological sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or lack of adherence to varying socially constructed norms around masculinity and femininity.

Gender-based violence is typically characterized by the use or threat of physical, psychological, sexual, economic, legal, political, social, and other forms of control or abuse. Gender-based violence is a human rights violation.

Source: [Unites States Strategy to Prevent Gender-Based Violence Globally](https://www.usaid.gov/democracy/justice-and-human-rights)

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<sup>6</sup> U.S. Agency for International Development. 2021. *Protecting and Promoting Justice and Human Rights*. <https://www.usaid.gov/democracy/justice-and-human-rights>

## SECTION I: VALUES AND STANDARDS, CODE OF CONDUCT, RIGHTS OF RANGERS

### PURPOSE

Rangers operate in a hybrid world of criminal justice and community relations. They are required to engage in a broad spectrum of activities, ranging from liaising with local communities to fighting heavily armed assailants. Given the complex nuances of the rangers' operating environment, there is no "one size fits all" code of conduct that can be applied from either police or military examples. When rangers fall under another law enforcement agency in the country, they can take their cues for a code of conduct from those other agencies. Even so, rangers may need a contextualized code of conduct that is unique to the work they do. A

code of conduct should establish foundational values and standards on which the other expectations in this guide are based. Values-based ranger training and ethical ranger behavior begins with a commitment to shared principles and practices. It also begins with rangers having a clear understanding of their own rights. By understanding and appreciating their own rights, rangers are more likely to respect the rights of others.

#### REMINDER FOR USAID STAFF: VETTING IS REQUIRED!

The Leahy Law prohibits the provision of foreign assistance to law enforcement personnel, including most Rangers, if they have committed human rights violations. Individuals or units with law enforcement authority and intended to receive assistance must be appropriately vetted to confirm no record of derogatory information regarding human rights. Vetting requests must be submitted to the State Department through the Leahy point of contact at post well before providing any training or other assistance and reach out to your regional legal officer or General Counsel with any questions.

### TRAINING EXPECTATIONS

Ranger training should begin with an understanding of the values, standards, code of conduct, and rights of rangers for the organization. As rangers operate in a unique theatre, their code of conduct must likewise be unique. Inspiration can be taken from existing principles for law enforcement found in international documents, such as the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials,<sup>7</sup> the Sanremo Handbook on Rules of Engagement,<sup>8</sup> the International Committee of the Red Cross *Roots of Restraint in War*,<sup>9</sup> and other codes of conduct employed by ranger organizations. The code of conduct should define the behavior of those with enforcement responsibilities and their relationship to those whom they are charged to serve and protect.

### CODE OF CONDUCT

A rangers' code of conduct includes values and standards that align with human rights law and should be informed by governance and management arrangements, international and national laws, awareness of differences in access to justice, and the capacity of rule of law institutions (especially in rural areas).

Partners should promote the development and use of a rangers' code of conduct in collaboration with national ministries, wildlife authorities, and other partners and stakeholders as necessary. A rangers' code

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. 1979. *Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officers*. New York: United Nations. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/LawEnforcementOfficials.aspx>.

<sup>8</sup> International Institute of Humanitarian Law. 2009. *Sanremo Handbook on Rules of Engagement*. Sanremo, Italy: International Institute of Humanitarian Law. <http://www.iihl.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ROE-HANDBOOK-ENGLISH.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross. 2020. *The Roots of Restraint in War*. Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross. <https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/4352-roots-restraint-war>.

of conduct should address the recommended core human rights issues, but contextualizing the code of conduct by including additional local issues and matters specific to the partner often adds value.

Illustrative rangers' code of conduct<sup>10</sup>:

- Rangers are expected to carry out their roles in ways that are compliant with human rights standards. In particular, rangers should treat all persons humanely and respect their rights to dignity, privacy, safety, and security; the right to life; and the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhumane, and degrading punishment.
- Rangers must respect the rights of *all* persons with whom they interact, including those suspected of committing illegal activities. People retain their human rights even when they have committed crimes.
- Rangers may only perform duties for which they are legally authorized, may only operate in geographic areas where they have jurisdiction, and may only carry weapons for which they have legal authorization.
- Rangers must have clear rules regarding the use of force, based on principles of necessity and proportionality.
- Rangers must have clear rules about the treatment of persons whom they search, arrest, or detain. These rules should ensure that the human rights and dignity of subjects are respected. Rules on confiscation of items should be included in this procedure.
- There is an absolute prohibition on torture and cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment.
- Rangers must not discriminate on the grounds of race, color, tribe, clan, 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.
- Rangers may not kill, except in the most extreme of circumstances, as determined by relevant national laws. Even in those limited circumstances, correct steps must be followed. If a person has been killed by or suffered injury from a ranger, an investigation must be held into the circumstances of the death or injury. Should it be found that the killing or bodily harm was unlawful, disciplinary action must be taken.

#### **EXAMPLE: INTERNATIONAL RANGER FEDERATION—RANGER VALUES<sup>10</sup>**

Rangers should act as role models and ambassadors for their profession, the environment, and the people who depend on these resources. Often, they are the “face” of nature. They should be proud, dedicated, and passionate about their vocation; ready when duty calls; and compassionate toward nature and the people with whom they interact.

Rangers should strive to uphold the following values in their work and personal life:

- Natural and cultural values
- Principles and accountability
- Excellence
- Collaboration, loyalty, and leadership
- Respect
- Safety
- Fortitude

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<sup>10</sup> The International Ranger Federation's Ranger Code of Conduct, Code of Conduct: Guidelines for Implementation and other useful resources are available at the Universal Ranger Support Alliance resource page. <https://www.ursa4rangers.org/ursa4rangers-resources/#Guidelines>



For those operating in areas affected by war and armed conflict, including from across international borders, the code of conduct should include additional training on the humanitarian principles of the Geneva Conventions.<sup>11</sup>

### **Examples of rangers' rights:**

- The right to life, including their right to personal safety and security if their lives are threatened.
- Employment rights, such as working conditions, standard of living, and compensation scheme, including life insurance, pensions, disability, etc.
- The right to adequate training to ensure that they are properly prepared and equipped to carry out their role.
- The right to be able to work free from sexual harassment or discrimination. The impingement of this right is a particular issue for female rangers.
- The right to healthcare, including rights to first aid, emergency care and rehabilitation associated with injuries sustained on the job, including physical and mental trauma.
- The right to support from the chain of command; it is the responsibility of managers and supervisors to support their rangers.
- The right to raise concerns in regard to upholding these rights without fear of reprisal or retaliation.

### **Examples of rangers' responsibilities:**

- Fair and equitable treatment of all
- Respect for the sanctity of life
- Protection of the vulnerable (e.g., women, children, elderly, disabled)
- Duty to provide medical first aid
- Duty to report misconduct
- Zero tolerance for gender-based violence, sexual assault or exploitation, child abuse, exploitation, or neglect

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<sup>11</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross. n.d. The Geneva Conventions and their Commentaries. <https://www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions>.

## EXAMPLE OF A CODE OF CONDUCT: UN CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS

Adopted by General Assembly resolution 34/169 of 17 December, 1979

### Article 1

Law enforcement officials shall at all times fulfil the duty imposed upon them by law, by serving the community and by protecting all persons against illegal acts, consistent with the high degree of responsibility required by their profession.

### Article 2

In the performance of their duty, law enforcement officials shall respect and protect human dignity and maintain and uphold the human rights of all persons.

### Article 3

Law enforcement officials may use force only when strictly necessary and to the extent required for the performance of their duty.

### Article 4

Matters of a confidential nature in the possession of law enforcement officials shall be kept confidential, unless the performance of duty or the needs of justice strictly require otherwise.

### Article 5

No law enforcement official may inflict, instigate or tolerate any act of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, nor may any law enforcement official invoke superior orders or exceptional circumstances such as a state of war or a threat of war, a threat to national security, internal political instability or any other public emergency as a justification of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

### Article 6

Law enforcement officials shall ensure the full protection of the health of persons in their custody and, in particular, shall take immediate action to secure medical attention whenever required.

### Article 7

Law enforcement officials shall not commit any act of corruption. They shall also rigorously oppose and combat all such acts.

### Article 8

Law enforcement officials shall respect the law and the present Code. They shall also, to the best of their capability, prevent and rigorously oppose any violations of them. Law enforcement officials who have reason to believe that a violation of the present Code has occurred or is about to occur shall report the matter to their superior authorities and, where necessary, to other appropriate authorities or organs vested with reviewing or remedial power.

Source: [United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. 1979. Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officers. New York: United Nations.](#)

## IMPACT AND IMPORTANCE

The values, standards, rangers' rights, and code of conduct that permeate an organization help ensure higher standards of behavior among individual rangers. Strong, clear principles help guide the behavior of rangers and professionalize the industry. Codes of conduct that promote a culture of rule of law, respect for human rights, and equitable and fair treatment of all people reduce the risk of ranger misconduct and the likelihood of abuse. Whether partners are nongovernmental organizations or government entities, all are expected to implement internal accountability approaches in order to ensure compliance. As discussed in more detail in Section 6, partners should avail themselves of neutral third parties from civil society to monitor behavior. But partners must also demonstrate a commitment to comply with local laws and allow rangers to be held accountable by the justice system of the host country.

## SECTION 2: CONFLICT ANALYSIS AND SITUATION AWARENESS

### PURPOSE

To engage effectively in protected area management and anticipate appropriate response during such engagement, partners and rangers will be expected to understand the context in which they will be operating and the people they will likely encounter.

Partners are encouraged to conduct “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, other armed services, etc. In the absence of such a conflict analysis, protected area managers often fail to take preemptive measures to address simmering tensions and potential conflict. Partners thus have a responsibility to develop their own situation awareness and use it to provide better training to rangers. Situation awareness is defined as “the ability to perceive and process all potential threats in the environment.”<sup>12</sup> In a security context, the term is used to denote “the up-to-the-minute cognizance or awareness required to move about, operate equipment, or maintain a system.”<sup>13</sup>

It is important for rangers to have situation awareness to minimize the chances of reacting improperly and escalating conflict. Ideally, rangers will have received some of their initial training in the location where they will subsequently work. If not, then situation awareness plays an even more important role. It is assumed that all partners will engage rangers who speak the local language.

### TRAINING EXPECTATIONS

**Conflict analysis:** Partners are encouraged to conduct an analysis of the social, historical, and political dynamics of the broader area of operations (sometimes referred to as a “Landscape Approach”),<sup>14</sup> including the rural communities, as well as the impact on the social and security dynamics presented by rangers and of protected area management itself.

Conflict analysis focuses on human/human conflict, as opposed to human/wildlife conflict. It should be multidimensional to include access to resources, competition over these resources, influence of (corrupt) officials and authorities, and where rangers and other armed groups sit within this dynamic and within the national security architecture. This analysis should also ascertain any key issues that may be trigger points for human/human conflict as well as identify areas in which the development of trust with local communities will improve relations. Partners are expected to engage with other nongovernmental organizations, civil society, and local and traditional authorities to develop better working practices, facilitate knowledge sharing, and ensure that their situation awareness is kept up to date and accurate.

**Situation awareness:** Rangers should be aware of all elements of the situation needed for both short- and long-term risk management. Rangers should be aware of the static elements of the protected area, such as terrain, proximity to communities, and perennial animal species. Rangers are also encouraged to gather the latest information from those in the field, centralize the intelligence, and then conduct regular briefings to provide updates on any dynamic components such as incidents of conflict, sightings of poachers or threatened species, weather patterns, etc. Staying current on daily changes in risk assessment factors for

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<sup>12</sup> College of Policing. 2020. *Conflict Management Using De-escalation, Communication and Negotiation*. <https://assets.college.police.uk/s3fs-public/2020-09/Conflict-management-guidelines.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> National Research Council. 1998. “Chapter 7: Situation Awareness.” In *Modeling Human and Organizational Behavior: Application to Military Simulations*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press. <https://www.nap.edu/read/6173/chapter/9>.

<sup>14</sup> Sayer, Jeffrey, Terry Sunderland, Jaboury Ghazoul, Jean-Laurent Pfund, Douglas Sheil, Erik Meijaard, Michelle Venter, et al. 2013. “Ten Principles for a Landscape Approach to Reconciling Agriculture, Conservation, and Other Competing Land Uses.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 110 (21): 8349-8356 <https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/110/21/8349.full.pdf>.

the immediate situation will be crucial preparation for rangers as they engage in protected area management.

In addition to being knowledgeable about their terrain, rangers should also work to clearly understand the boundaries of protected areas and communicate these boundaries with local communities as well as foster dialogue when disputes arise. Rangers are expected to be well-informed about zones, restrictions, and permitted uses within their area of responsibility. Conflicts arise when boundaries and use are not clearly marked and well-communicated. By engaging in ongoing dialogue and consultation with communities on this topic, rangers can help ensure a clear understanding of rights of use and restrictions of access. As discussed in more detail in the next section, engagement with area residents is also vital to provide feedback on community concerns.

Situation awareness should comprise the following elements:

- First, rangers must 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?<sup>15</sup> 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 area 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 marginalized groups?
- Second, 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?
- Third, 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, organized 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?
- Finally, 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?

## IMPACT AND IMPORTANCE

Rangers and partners must gain a thorough understanding of not only the physical terrain but also the social context in which they are operating. The social context includes the gender and social norms, cultural makeup of communities, Indigenous Peoples, local governance structures, customary systems, and power structures, particularly in the context of marginalized and vulnerable groups.

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<sup>15</sup> International Union for Conservation of Nature protected area categories: <https://www.iucn.org/theme/protected-areas/about/protected-area-categories>

This understanding will prepare rangers mentally for the real-life encounters they are most likely to face. Conflict analysis and situation awareness will enable partners and rangers to respond in an informed manner and with engagement tactics suited to the situation and the people with whom they are interacting. For example, rangers who know whether they are more likely to meet armed poachers, local female villagers, local male traditional leaders, or tourists can contribute greatly to a proportionate response and avoid or minimize the likelihood of a violent confrontation.

## SECTION 3: ENGAGEMENT

### PURPOSE

After rangers understand the operational environment, the next step is to consider likely interactions with the range of different people they will encounter to help minimize the possibility of conflict or violation of human rights. Rangers interact with an array of individuals and groups in and near protected areas that are privately or government supported, so it is important that they perform their duties within a continuum—a consistent and respectful sequence—of care and service. Interactions can range from mild social contact on one end to authoritative enforcement actions on the other, including detention, use of force, and arrest.

To ensure that these interactions include necessary social safeguards for appropriate engagement with communities, the following expectations are provided as a guide.

### TRAINING EXPECTATIONS

As part of conducting engagement training, best practice is to include regular instruction to rangers on how to be both effective in their duties and respectful of those in and near their areas of responsibility. Rangers should be exposed to and educated in human rights practices, including the prevention of gender-based violence, with a focus on the impact that their actions have on the communities they serve and the ultimate goal of conservation. Ranger training should be crafted to include specific instruction and guidelines for interactions with local community members that recognize the gender and cultural diversity of those communities; interactions should foster respectful ongoing engagement while supporting the core intent of conservation in their areas of responsibility. At all times, partners are expected to mitigate against and refrain from engagement in any activities that could cause personal injury to any community member through the course of conducting lawful enforcement activities. Reporting protocols to call attention to any such activities should be put in place through appropriate authorities. Ranger command structure, along with partners, should be empowered to adjudicate discipline with respect to proven infractions.

As part of the engagement training of rangers, best practice includes the following measures:

**Establish public service as the starting point:** Human and animal protections are vital for effective ranger operations. Safeguarding both are core expectations for ranger engagements. Rangers are expected to be instilled with the understanding that their role, first and foremost, is to ensure the safety of humans and the protection of the full park or conservation area where they have responsibility, and to take into account how any and all of their actions could impact that safety and human rights. Rangers should take optimal care to reduce or eliminate any negative impacts from actions within the ranger corps and those done by suspects or others. With these guidelines in mind, rangers should operate within the confines of enforcing the law while never acting in a manner that places them above the law.

### **Observe human rights as a rule of engagement:**

Rangers should be exposed to and fully educated in human rights practices, with a focus on the impact that their actions have on the communities they serve and the ultimate goal of conservation.

Communities in proximity to protected areas often rely on these reserves for daily sustenance. If situation awareness has been implemented effectively and robustly, then partners will have ensured that rangers have a keen understanding of the rules associated with access to reserves and use of their resources, and will thus interact with community members accordingly. In some cases, the right to life-sustaining resources and freedom of movement, as regulated by appropriate authorities, should be taken into consideration.

**INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES**  
Partners should also confer with Indigenous communities regarding ranger actions in order to secure their voluntary involvement or consultation for actions that affect their immediate surroundings or impact the wider area where they reside and travel.

**Develop parameters for interactions with suspects of illicit activity:** As suspects of illicit activity are identified through patrol, investigation, protected area management, or other means, partners should ensure that rangers operate under the same human rights rules of engagement as with area residents and others. Guidelines for armed and unarmed interventions should include clear parameters based on rule of law regarding questioning or detaining suspects and all other interactions up to the point of arrest, at which point further criminal enforcement and judicial policies may then take precedence. Guidance should include establishment of a decision-making process for moving from actions such as questioning and observation to arrest.

**Formulate guidelines for providing aid if injuries occur:** Ranger activity can sometimes result in injury to suspects and community members, in addition to injuries potentially sustained by rangers. Ranger training and practices should include directives to provide initial first aid onsite for injuries incurred during ranger actions and, when feasible, transport of injured parties to an appropriate facility. Effective ranger training includes initial instruction and ongoing refresher courses in first aid and casualty evacuation. The duty of enforcement authorities to render aid to those injured as a result of law enforcement activity is an internationally recognized practice. Rangers should be well-acquainted with this practice, and it should be embedded in their training.

**Develop proactive prevention strategies through community engagement:** Rangers should be trained on proactive crime prevention efforts that involve engaging and educating the surrounding communities in conservation and anti-poaching efforts. These strategies have a demonstrated impact on reducing poaching and incursions.<sup>16</sup> Understanding the reasons that local communities may engage in illegal hunting activities, such as addressing basic needs (hunger, income generation), can help identify and develop alternatives to supporting local needs, ultimately reducing the need to draw resources from protected areas and increasing commitment to broader conservation goals.

## **IMPACT AND IMPORTANCE**

Educating rangers about the purpose and function of a protected area, including how different people interact with the park in different ways, is critical. It is particularly important for rangers to understand that specific populations (e.g., men, women, Indigenous Peoples, marginalized populations, cultural groups) may have unique needs, priorities, access, and social standing when interacting with the park and its resources. Incorporating these concepts into training can create a sense of stewardship and ensure that all categories of local community members are treated with fairness and respect and are able to benefit from the

<sup>16</sup> Lotter, W.D., K. Roberts, R. Singh, K. Clark, C. Barlow, R. de Kock, K. Steiner, D. Mander, M. Khadka, and J. Guerrero. 2016. *Anti-Poaching in and Around Protected Areas: Training Guidelines for Field Rangers*. International Ranger Federation. [http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/anti\\_poaching\\_in\\_around\\_protected\\_areas\\_training\\_guidelines\\_for\\_field\\_rangers.pdf](http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/anti_poaching_in_around_protected_areas_training_guidelines_for_field_rangers.pdf).

protected area through legal means. This will improve outcomes for the protected areas, enhance ranger safety and effectiveness, and lower incidents of human rights violations and loss of life.

Adherence to the above-noted principles and expectations should result in fewer instances of activities that could cause personal injury to members of the communities in or near protected areas. Abiding by these principles should also reduce violations of human rights, incidents of gender-based violence, and negative outcomes related to conservation goals. As part of community engagement training, initial and ongoing ranger training should include instruction on both refraining from engagement in human rights violations and how to proactively mitigate against them, as well as reporting protocols to call attention to any such activities through appropriate authorities and with the direction of partners and the ranger command structure.

For the greatest positive impact, ranger training should be well-crafted, and training principles should be applied in the field with specific instructions and guidelines for interactions with local communities. The overarching goal of rangers' community interactions should be to foster respectful ongoing engagement while supporting the core intent of conservation in their areas of responsibility.



## SECTION 4: DE-ESCALATION AND DETAINMENT

### PURPOSE

Assuming that rangers have followed the correct engagement protocols, the next hurdle is to prevent a situation from unnecessarily escalating. While some situations will legitimately require escalation, including use of force, to properly foster just and lawful outcomes, it is incumbent on rangers—individually and collectively—to also ensure that de-escalation practices are used to the fullest extent in situations that call for minimal or no use of force. De-escalating tensions during an encounter is generally far more difficult than escalating them. Partners are expected to train rangers in tactics and techniques that can resolve encounters without force where feasible. Best practices in ranger training of this nature reveal that the most effective method includes both theory and practice—classroom instruction as well as practical learning exercises—along with regular refresher courses and assessments to ensure continued adoption and use of training curricula instruction. Partners are encouraged to employ these components as a foundation for ranger de-escalation and detainment training.

### TRAINING EXPECTATIONS

De-escalation and detainment training for rangers operating in and near protected areas is crucial to the safety of nearby communities, wildlife, and the rangers themselves. Such training must fit within the legal parameters of the country and the rangers' authorization for use of force. Commensurate with this premise, ranger instruction should include effective tactics that remove the prospect for cruel, inhumane, and degrading conduct, corruption, and gender-based violence; proper ranger training can also lower the risk of injuries or fatalities during enforcement encounters. Training should provide instruction on clear means of legally permissible detention of suspects without applying undue force during questioning and arrest actions. Thus, as part of the de-escalation and detainment training, instruction on the following concepts should be included.

**De-escalation options:** Rangers often find themselves in less than fully defined situations, in which some activities in protected areas may be allowable by local, national, or regional rules, or, conversely, in which some activities fall under the banner of encroachment or poaching. The presence of individuals in protected areas, as well as their activities, do not always clearly align with categorized permissible or illicit actions, so rangers must consider human rights as a guiding factor at all times. Understanding the level of force needed across a range of encounters is a critical function of de-escalation. 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<sup>17</sup>. Partners should ensure that rangers have a clear understanding of both their authority and their obligations in all matters of engagement, and that a range of options and techniques are provided to them through classroom and practical exercise training such that they can manage situations within the confines of each encounter's needs. The training should offer options from complete disengagement for situations determined not to be enforceable in nature to those in which criminal arrest is clearly warranted—and all gradations in between. If a ranger comes across activities that are, through respectful inquiry, deemed to be wholly permissible, then the encounter should be discontinued—thus, a complete disengagement. Conversely, if illicit activity is uncovered, arrest may be warranted. In between these two outcomes sits a range of prospective encounters, all of which are expected to be addressed humanely, using an appropriate option for the situation.

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<sup>17</sup> De-escalation and alternative tactics: When circumstances reasonably permit, officers should use nonviolent strategies and techniques to decrease the intensity of a situation, improve decision-making, improve communication, reduce the need for force, and increase voluntary compliance (e.g., summoning additional resources, formulating a plan, attempting verbal persuasion). <https://www.lexipol.com/resources/blog/de-escalation-a-commonsense-approach/>.

**De-escalation tactics:** 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. Tactics such as reducing the level of overt stress during an incident by remaining composed, or, for example, by creating distance as a means to reduce angst or the level of perceived threat, should be included in ranger tactical de-escalation training. Information about a ranger action in which force was applied will very likely travel to and among the communities that were affected by or witness to an enforcement action; therefore, rangers should also work to de-escalate potential tensions with communities through post-incident engagement.

**Use of force standards:** Legally authorized force is an ever-present prospect with any law enforcement encounter. Ranger training should provide definitive—and locally, nationally, or regionally applicable—instruction on use of force standards in relation to ranger authority. These standards should provide direction to rangers regarding management of proportionality with use of force and appreciation of foreseeable outcomes related to the actions they might take in various circumstances. A foremost principle of such criteria is that they comply with human rights standards and align with what is necessary to protect life from imminent or immediate danger. These standards should also be embedded in ongoing ranger training and evaluation to ensure that they are constantly updated as warranted and consistently adhered to throughout a ranger's tenure.

**Detainment and arrest procedures:** These are perhaps the two most decisive potential end results of ranger actions in enforcing rule of law in protected areas. Partners should ensure that ranger training includes specific modules on locally, nationally, or regionally applicable procedures associated with questioning, searching, detaining, and arresting those suspected of criminal activity within the jurisdictions of their authority. As these activities can amount to a continuum of actions, such training should ensure that the legal rights of individuals are protected throughout the process and that those involved are made aware of the nature of the ranger encounter. Further, for female detainees, female ranger personnel should conduct any searches of female detainees unless circumstances in the field dictate otherwise (e.g., no reasonably available female personnel). These activities can also be features of an investigation, which can lead to adjudication in a court system. Thus, training on collection and maintenance of evidence should also be taken into consideration, as should the rights of individuals with regard to property seizure according to relevant laws.

**Gender-based violence safeguarding measures:** Gender-based violence is among the most prevalent human rights violations perpetrated by rangers and security personnel. Critical to preventing and responding to gender-based violence is understanding the harmful gender norms that can dominate many of the contexts in which rangers work and the power dynamics between rangers (mostly men) and local communities (particularly women and girls). 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, such as power dynamics among different groups.<sup>18</sup>

## IMPACT AND IMPORTANCE

Ranger activities in and near protected areas bring them into contact with both area residents and those suspected of illicit activity. Encounters can range from essentially benign interactions up to and including near combat-like settings. Further, the authority bestowed upon rangers is not always clear to those whom they encounter in the performance of their duties. For these reasons, introducing force into encounters is always a difficult decision and sometimes an unwarranted undertaking. To ensure that outcomes serve and

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<sup>18</sup> Strengthening Safeguards: Strategies for Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Environmental Projects. 2021.

[https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/iucn\\_strengthening\\_safeguards\\_ed.1.pdf](https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/iucn_strengthening_safeguards_ed.1.pdf)

USAID Action Alliance for Preventing Sexual Misconduct toolkit: <https://www.usaid.gov/PreventingSexualMisconduct/Partners>

adhere to the intended purpose of interactions, proportionate and lawful application of force is critical to ranger actions and the protection of human and animal life.

Acting under these principles, rangers trained in de-escalation tactics will be better able to avoid conflict, violence, and injury, and able to better manage detention or arrest situations in similar fashion.

Conversely, use of force encounters that become disproportionate to the situation can have lasting and tragic consequences for all involved. In addition, there can be permanent consequences for ranger efficacy, legitimacy, and reputation, and likewise endanger the Agency's overall mission. Applying too much force has a strong likelihood of leading to violations of human rights and counterproductive ranger-community relations, while under-application of force—for situations deemed either immediately or later as being in need of forcible control—can put rangers and bystanders at risk of injury or death, while also potentially emboldening poachers who may discern that a more aggressive stance on their part can create an advantage. Clearly articulated standards, tactics, and authorities are vital and fundamental to the success of ranger activity and fulfillment of their mission and should be prominent features of ranger training.

## SECTION 5: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

### PURPOSE

Critical to the long-term success of rights-based training and improved ranger conduct is the monitoring and evaluation of ranger behavior. The purpose of a monitoring and evaluation plan is three-fold. First, without some form of oversight, rangers can operate with impunity. If their superiors are absent, or worse, actively engaged themselves in unlawful activity, then the temptation to commit abuses is heightened. Second, an evaluation mechanism can help an organization grow and improve its effectiveness. For instance, an evaluation could determine whether existing patrol routes used by rangers are effective at deterring poaching. Third, some form of evaluation mechanism is vital to career commitment and growth. If rangers feel that their work is not valued or appreciated, or if they are disregarded by other sectors of society, dedication to their work will diminish, and the risk of aiding and abetting poachers will increase. Equally important is monitoring the mental health of rangers.<sup>19</sup> The psychological impact of the trauma suffered by rangers should be given the greatest attention by partners. Counseling or therapy of some sort should be available to rangers to minimize the risk of outbursts of unwarranted violence caused by repressed anger or trauma. Any monitoring and evaluation must be applied to all levels of an organization and must flow in both directions, so that rangers have an opportunity to be heard. Improved performance can only be achieved if the commitment to human rights is institutionalized throughout a partner's operations such that violations are never tolerated.

### EXPECTATIONS

A variety of approaches may be employed for monitoring and evaluation. Some may be more universally applicable depending on the level of technology required. At the most elemental level, the following mechanisms should be integrated into operations:

**Peer evaluation:** The simplest and most basic form of monitoring and evaluating the performance of rangers is for them to be given the opportunity to regularly submit confidential evaluations of their peers and their superiors. This form of evaluation should also allow rangers to air grievances to their superiors or the partner about the challenges or struggles they face in the workplace.

**Performance evaluation:** Ranger supervisors will also be expected to engage in regular evaluations of their rangers. In doing so, rangers who excel in their work can be promoted and given greater responsibility, while those whose performance is lacking or against whom complaints have been made, either by peers or the local community, can be dealt with in line with established policies and practices.

**Community engagement:** Communities bordering protected areas are often affected by enforcement or other ranger functions inside the reserves. As such, partners are encouraged to regularly engage with local communities and different types of community members, including women and marginalized groups or tribal elders, as a means of monitoring ranger performance. Partners will be expected to formulate guidelines for community inclusion with a particular focus on pre- and post-operational feedback. Providing local communities with the means to share their experiences with rangers is a vital component to monitoring and evaluation. Partners should develop community outreach protocols for advising nearby residents and working with local leadership structures, when operationally appropriate, about ranger activities that may affect these communities.

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<sup>19</sup> Copple, Colleen, James Copple, Jessica Drake, Nola Joyce, Mary-Jo Robinson, Sean Smoot, Darrel Stephens, and Roberto Villaseñor. 2019. *Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Programs: Eleven Case Studies*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. <https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/Publications/cops-p371-pub.pdf>.

As discussed above, partners should ensure that communities bordering protected areas are aware of the boundaries and permitted activities. Likewise, at the conclusion of specific actions, rangers should inform the communities of the results and check for possible negative impacts—again, as operationally feasible based on investigative, enforcement, and judicial functions. Wherever possible, partners should make use of independent third-party reporting grievance and redress mechanisms and use an ombudsman or judicial liaison officers as available in the country of operations.

**Incident logs:** Some form of documenting what happens in the course of protected area management, specifically interactions with civilians, is a crucial component of monitoring and evaluation. At the most basic level, these can be hand-written summaries of incidents, although if technology is available, more sophisticated systems can be employed. These might include the use of body cameras or smart phone apps. Incident logs should include details of how any conflict began and include notes about any injuries. To minimize repeat incidents, it is important for rangers and partners to identify and correct the root causes of conflict, rather than simply treating “presenting symptoms.”

**Debriefing:** After any serious incident involving violence, conflict, or threats to rangers, teams should debrief as soon as possible. By doing so, rangers and partners can identify good practice and areas for improvement, which can in turn be incorporated into organizational learning.<sup>20</sup> Debriefing is important to analyze and assess the operational performance of a team, prevent the repetition of mistakes, identify, and manage the emotional state and stress levels of rangers, gather intelligence and information that might be relevant to other teams or the partner, and gather concerns or observations from rangers.

**Conflict analysis:** Evaluation should be measured against the baseline established by the conflict analysis outlined in Section 2. Key areas of contention identified in that analysis should be reviewed against changing attitudes and behavior as a measure of progress in the relationship between protected area management and local communities.

## IMPACT AND IMPORTANCE

Implementing a monitoring and evaluation plan that increases accountability, improves the morale of rangers, facilitates community dialogue and inclusion, and fosters career progression will strengthen the commitment and loyalty of rangers to their work and enhance cooperation between partners and local communities. Low morale, poor mental health, and the feeling of being taken for granted or underappreciated can increase the risk of illegal activities by rangers, whether that be human rights abuses or collaboration with poachers. Rangers need to feel proud of the work they do, appreciated by their local communities, and conscious of the fact that violations of this code of conduct will not be tolerated. Moreover, rangers themselves must feel safe and be protected from bad actors within their ranks, particularly in the case of gender-based violence, fear of reprisal, and other forms of violence carried out by colleagues. Likewise, local communities need to feel that their feedback is important and valued. A system of monitoring and evaluation adopted across an institution that rewards exceptional behavior and weeds out errant behavior will result in a team of rangers who are committed to their work and strive for excellence.

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<sup>20</sup> Miller, L. 2006. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing for Law Enforcement: Practical Models and Special Applications. *Int J Emerg Ment Health* Summer 8(3):189-201. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16944792/>.

## SECTION 6: ACCOUNTABILITY

### PURPOSE

The final component of this guide, but the first line of defense against ranger misconduct, is an internal culture of accountability. This section outlines expectations of how partners can work toward an operational model that includes oversight and multifaceted accountability mechanisms for rangers seeking to abide by a rights-based code of conduct. Without a culture of accountability and systems in place to provide it, rangers can behave with impunity. This in turn undermines trust with the local community, which is essential for effectively combating wildlife crime. This guide is designed to raise the bar for ranger conduct. The most essential component for eliminating abuses and improving professionalism, transparency, and integrity is the partner's insistence that a strong culture of accountability permeates all aspects of the mission.

### EXPECTATIONS

Partners are encouraged to hold their rangers to a rights-based standard for the protection of national parks and other protected areas. USAID has zero tolerance for any human rights abuses, including sexual exploitation and abuse, and will hold partners accountable for any violations that occur under their control. There are a number of ways that ranger accountability can improve, such as the following:

**Justice system:** Rangers must see themselves as accountable to the rule of law. In addition to international standards, each partner will be subject to local laws and rules of engagement. Partners are expected to understand all the national laws under which rangers are operating and, if applicable, authorized to use lethal force. Partners are encouraged to cooperate with local law enforcement and the courts when it comes to possible human rights abuses. Partners are also encouraged to work closely with judicial liaison officers (or equivalent) in countries where such positions exist. Partners must report abuses reported to them for action by the appropriate domestic justice system and must take steps to correct or strengthen policy and practice to prevent future misconduct. The domestic justice system is ultimately the final arbiter in ranger accountability.

**Independence:** The ability to abide by the rule of law requires independence. Outweighing the desire to protect their conservation areas, or even their loyalty to the government in power, must be a recognition that rangers are accountable to and must abide by the fundamental principles of human rights and internationally recognized rules of engagement for armed actors. Partners can support independence by working to eliminate other malevolent influences, such as threats to rangers and their families by criminal enterprises, the temptation to poach themselves, undue influence from corrupt governments, or bribery.

**Peer intervention practices:** 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 behavior 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.

**Community engagement:** Following on from community engagement into the monitoring of ranger conduct, partners should engage in some form of community feedback to ensure trust and accountability. There should be a transparent and open line of communication between local communities and the partners to allow civilians to lodge complaints and air grievances. Partners should ensure that local communities feel safe to report violations and that there will be no recriminations or negative

consequences. As such, a system of anonymous reporting should be available wherever possible. After feedback, complaints, or recommendations are received, partners should act swiftly to address any issues and inform communities of the steps they have taken.

**Stakeholder engagement:** Engaging other nonprofit, nongovernmental, and civil society actors, particularly those with gender, gender-based violence, and social inclusion expertise, in the activities of rangers can provide valuable feedback and accountability. These stakeholders can play an important role in supporting rangers and formulating the most effective crime-prevention policies and procedures. They can also provide additional research, data, resources, and policy ideas that can lead to more effective protection of parks and protected areas.

## **IMPACT AND IMPORTANCE**

A culture of accountability is arguably the most crucial component of preventing ranger abuse and fostering excellence. Whatever the organization, whatever the role, without some form of accountability, suboptimal behavior will eventually emerge. Although the right kind of training is essential, for improvements to have lasting impact, it is vital to address the underlying institutional deficiencies that are the root cause of problems and not just the most visible problems surrounding ranger behavior. Rangers should see themselves as accountable to the rule of law. Rangers should also be accountable to regulations and policies put in place by the ranger organization. Partners should look to engage a variety of key stakeholders in their operations, because the creation of multiple mechanisms of accountability increases the likelihood of institutionalizing reform. Accountability is essential for building trust with communities bordering protected areas, and trust is essential for combating wildlife crime. If local communities do not trust rangers, they will be less likely to cooperate with rangers or report suspected illegal activity, thereby creating safe havens and impunity for criminals.

## APPENDIX I: RESOURCES

The resources provided offer a range of information related to international human rights standards, human rights in a conservation context, de-escalation and use of force protocols in different law enforcement contexts, anti-poaching guidance, gender-based violence safeguarding and prevention, and working with Indigenous Peoples.

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