



The IRF Ranger Code of Conduct

Guidelines for Adoption
Version 1.0



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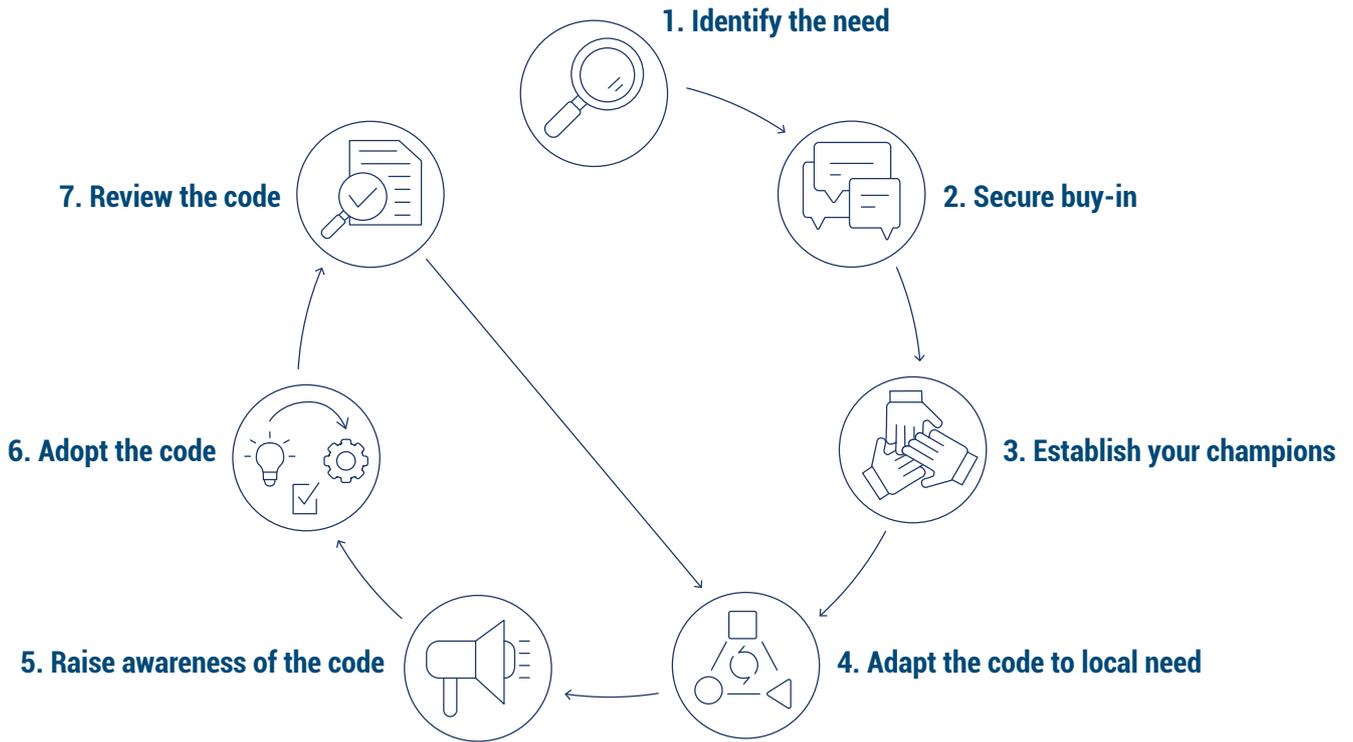
These guidelines have been compiled by Chris Gordon of Conservation Alpha, and the International Ranger Federation.

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Executive Summary

The International Ranger Federation (IRF) Ranger Code of Conduct was developed by rangers, for rangers through a global consultation process.

This summary presents a set of recommended stages for adaptation and adoption by ranger employers to meet local social and legal contexts.



Zafer Kizilkaya | Akdeniz Koruma Derneği



1. Identify the need for a code of conduct

Successful implementation requires willingness from rangers, employers and / or associations to agree to and to adopt the Code, recognising the need for a standard to operate by.



2. Secure buy-in for the code of conduct process

Adoption will require buy-in and willingness at all levels. Key messages can secure buy-in, such as outlining the purpose of a code, the need to professionalise the ranger sector, and the importance of ownership.



3. Establish champions

Uptake will require champions to drive the process, and a representative committee to lead adaptation and to lobby for adoption by senior management and relevant authorities.



4. Adapt the code of conduct

The IRF Ranger Code of Conduct will require adaptation.

- i. The committee should translate the IRF Code, identifying areas requiring adjustment. The context will vary, but key principles and values will remain. The committee should strengthen any existing codes, based on a review.
- ii. Consultation will be required within the organisation, and with rangers and associations. Consultations with indigenous and community groups will require more engagement. Collaborative input is important. It is likely that a code would be enforceable; this should be communicated. The code should be concise and easy to communicate.
- iii. There may be value in having the code reviewed by a legal advisor and national human rights institutions.
- iv. The committee should present the final draft to decision makers for endorsement.



5. Awareness of the code of conduct

Awareness of the Code, particularly by rangers, will enable adoption. Rangers should view the code as a tool to support decision making. Engaging human resources (HR) personnel will be important.



6. Adopt the code of conduct

Adoption can take place at a range of levels.

- i. **Full adoption:** Adopting the code may require both a top-down and bottom-up approach. Ideally, the code should be incorporated into contracts and conditions of service. For existing rangers, the adoption process may be slower.
- ii. **Enforced Adoption:** Adoption might take a top-down approach where the Code is communicated to rangers and then signed or appended to contracts.
- iii. **Voluntary Compliance:** Relevant for ranger association membership or joining a voluntary ranger team.
- iv. **Implementation:** Implementing the code in one area can facilitate adoption elsewhere.
- v. **Training:** Training courses, regular reinforcement and integration of the code into training materials will be critical.
- vi. **Dissemination:** By publicising the Code, the organisation will build trust and ensure accountability.



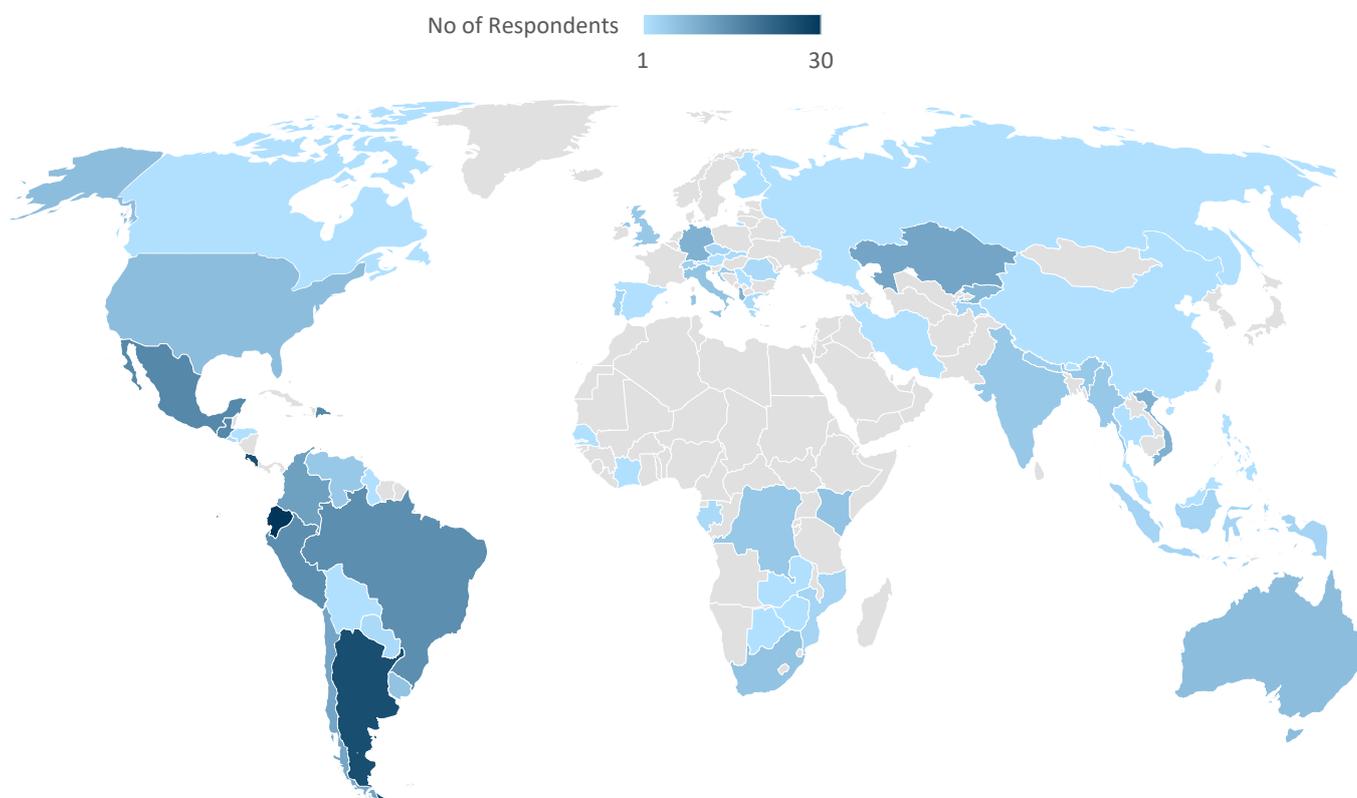
7. Review the code of conduct

The Code should be reviewed every 3-4 years to support active implementation and use.

Purpose of the Guidelines

Rangers help safeguard natural and cultural heritage, and the rights of people whose lives are inseparable from nature.

Following a request from the ranger community through the Chitwan Declaration, the International Ranger Federation (IRF) Ranger Code of Conduct was developed through a global, iterative consultation process, based on feedback from **1,820 stakeholders** from **61 countries**, **87% of whom were rangers (16% female)**. The final Code of Conduct was reviewed by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The IRF Ranger Code of Conduct has been developed by rangers, for rangers.



The IRF Ranger Code of Conduct provides a global guiding framework, which will need to be adopted by governments and ranger groups, and adapted for implementation as necessary to meet local social and legal contexts. The IRF Ranger Code of Conduct is an aspirational document that should inspire rangers. The templates it includes are a guiding resource, providing core principles for groups to develop their own standards. These are not enforced definitions or codes but there is strong encouragement to follow them as best practice guidelines. The aim is for rangers to strive to uphold these values and commit to their own code of conduct. For a ranger code of

conduct to be effective, governments and ranger employers also have to improve ranger wellbeing, foster recognition and appreciation for the ranger sector and create public awareness about the important role that rangers play in protecting culture, nature and the natural resources upon which we all depend.

These guidelines have been developed to support the IRF Ranger Code of Conduct, and should be consulted in parallel with them. They provide guidance to rangers and their employers, with practical steps and considerations when adopting and institutionalising the code.

What is a Code of Conduct?

The purpose of a code of conduct is to ensure that individuals behave legally, appropriately and accountably.

Codes of conduct aim to:

1. offer a clear statement of values, and foster commitment to these values
2. establish expected and consistent ethical standards of conduct and associated basic principles
3. promote a cultures of professionalism and generate pride amongst staff
4. raise awareness of good governance practices
5. strengthen the public's confidence and trust in individuals and their institutions

A code of conduct can become the benchmark against which individual and organizational performance can be measured. It is a reference for employees to support day-to-day decision making. It encourages discussions of ethics and compliance, empowering employees to handle ethical dilemmas. A code of conduct sets a broader set of principles for developing the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for strengthening the professionalisation of the organisation and its employees.

Who is the IRF Ranger Code of Conduct for?

The IRF Ranger Code of Conduct provides a template that needs to be adapted to local contexts and the varying roles and responsibilities of rangers.

These guidelines have been produced primarily for the following organisations:

- Organisations that directly or indirectly employ rangers as permanent or temporary employees.
- Organisations that voluntarily establish ranger teams.
- Organisations or associations that represent rangers.

In addition, these guidelines may be useful for the following organisations as they support and facilitate the adoption of a code of conduct:

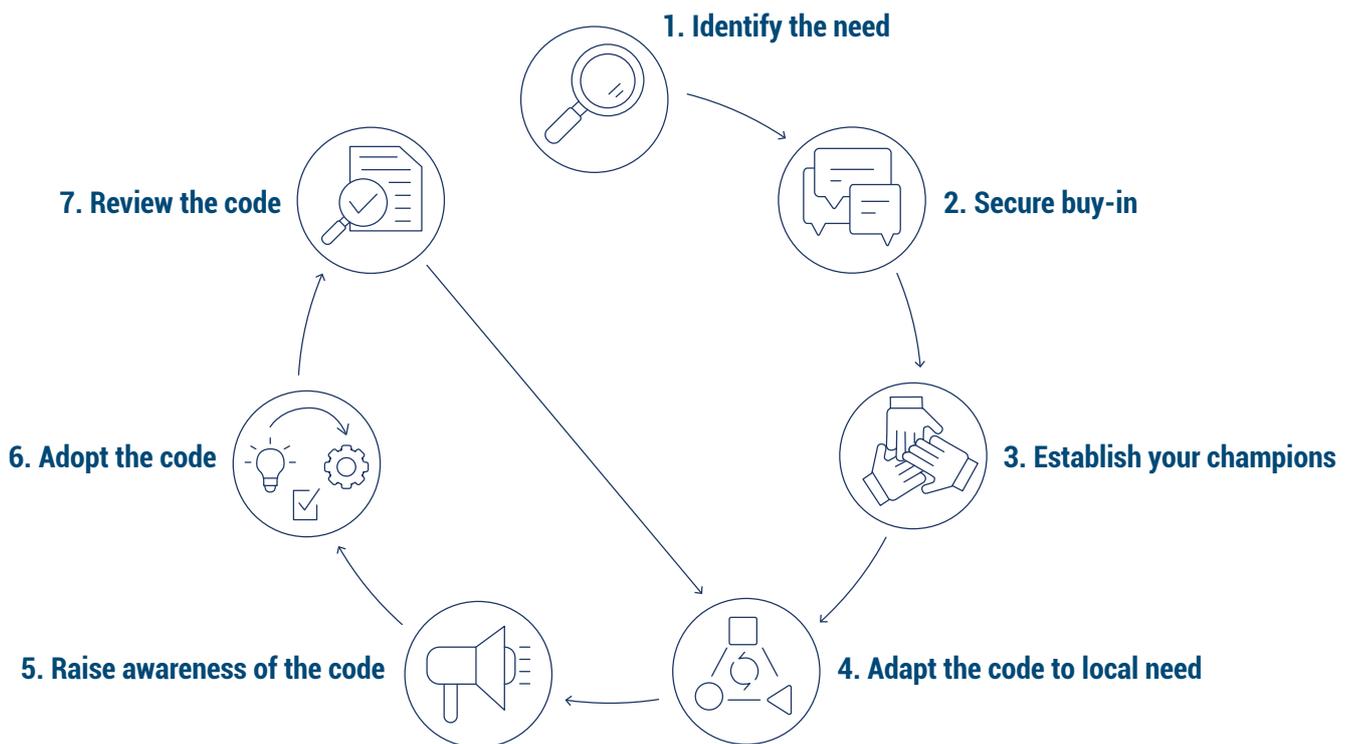
- Organisations that support or fund ranger activities.
- Organisations and individuals that train rangers.

How should the IRF Ranger Code of Conduct be implemented?

There will be no single approach to implementing the Ranger Code of Conduct.

Countries may require “top-down” or “bottom-up” approaches for implementation, or a combination of the two. These guidelines present a set of recommended stages for adaptation and adoption of the code by both ranger employers and supporters.

Importantly, responsibility for successfully implementing a code of conduct should not fall solely on the rangers. Ranger employers need to set the standards, and ensure their rangers have good working and employment conditions, institutional support and strong leadership. Ranger supporters such as the NGO sector can play a key role here.





1. Identify the need for a code of conduct

The IRF Ranger Code of Conduct defines the core values and beliefs that inspire good ranger conduct. Ultimately, the successful implementation of a code of conduct requires willingness from rangers and their employers to agree to and to adopt it.

Identifying a need for and willingness to adopt such a code is an important first step, requiring a range of approaches, according to the needs of the adopting organisation.

- i. **Ranger employers.** The organisation recognises that it requires a code of conduct as a standard to operate by, or that an existing code is inadequate and/or outdated. In some situations, existing civil service codes of conduct could be strengthened by considering components of the ranger code.
- ii. **Voluntary ranger teams.** An organisation or community with its own voluntary ranger team wishes to define its own standards of conduct.
- iii. **Ranger associations.** A ranger representative association wishes to establish a standard of conduct for its members.
- iv. **Ranger supporters / donors.** A donor wishes to establish a code for beneficiaries as a safeguarding mechanism for their funding support, or to respond to a request to establish a Code.
- v. **Ranger trainers.** A training organisation wishes to use a code of conduct to establish generic norms and standards of conduct among trainees. Secure buy-in for the code of conduct process



2. Secure buy-in for the code of conduct process

Adopting a ranger code of conduct will require institutional buy-in and willingness at all levels. Buy-in will be required from both rangers and other key individuals (e.g. protected area and ranger managers, human resource staff, senior management) to ensure both a bottom-up and top-down approach to engagement. Clearly communicating the value of a code can drive its uptake; the following approaches and messages can help to ensure buy-in for the process:

- i. **Outlining the purpose of a code of conduct.** It provides clear and formal guidance for how rangers should conduct themselves, and acts as an important mechanism for safeguarding against wrongdoings and human rights violations. It is important to realise however that a code of conduct does not set the standards for ranger employment and welfare.
- ii. **Recognising a professional ranger sector.** A code of conduct emphasises the professionalism of rangers, providing a framework for public and institutional respect, and for building trust between rangers, communities and other stakeholders.
- iii. **Communicating how representative the Ranger Code of Conduct is.** It was developed through a global consultation process, collecting responses from a diverse group of over 1,800 people from 61 countries across all regions, 87% of whom were rangers. In addition, relevant Government documents were consulted and used to help draft the code.
- iv. **Explaining that the IRF Ranger Code of Conduct will need to be adapted to local needs.** The IRF Ranger Code of Conduct was designed to support ALL roles and responsibilities of rangers globally. The code will require adaptation at a national or organisational level to local contexts, laws, regulations and needs. Each ranger employer must recognise that rangers have differing roles and responsibilities in different regions.
- v. **Engendering a sense of ownership.** Consultation and sensitisation are needed to generate ownership for rangers and ranger organisations, and a sense of pride that rangers operate to similar standards, highlighting case studies where the code has been adopted.

Securing the necessary buy-in takes time. This can be supported by regular, creative communication of the key messaging in multiple formats, such as through targeted meetings and webinars, explanatory videos, and at relevant events and congresses. Ranger associations, intergovernmental organisations and supporters can have an important role in communicating the key messages, while recognising potential local sensitivities where initiatives are led by external and/or international groups. Linking with other global standards and toolkits (for example the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Area and the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool) could help to mainstream the requirement for codes of conduct as fundamental standards that all ranger groups should operate by.



3. Establish champions

The successful uptake of a code of conduct will likely require champions to drive the process, along with formation of a committee or working group to lead adaptation of the IRF Ranger Code of Conduct and to lobby for formal acceptance and adoption by senior management and relevant authorities.

To ensure that the code aligns to ranger requirements, the committee or working group should be representative and gender-sensitive: alongside senior managers and the human resources officials, a committee should include senior rangers, protected area and ranger managers, ranger association representatives. It may also be valuable to seek inputs from national-level human rights and community organisations. In this way, senior decision makers can see buy-in from all levels. In some circumstances, ranger associations and NGOs may be best positioned to drive uptake of the code of conduct.



4. Adapt the code of conduct

In almost every situation, the IRF Ranger Code of Conduct will require some level of adjustment to meet specific practical and institutional needs.

- i. As a first step the committee or working group should read the IRF Ranger Code of Conduct and translate it into the local language, as required. This would enable identification of areas obviously requiring adaptation and adjustment before wider consultations, for example modifying language or editing sections of the code to make it locally appropriate. The context of a code will vary between sites, but key principles and values will likely remain. A Microsoft Word template of the IRF Ranger Code of Conduct will have suggested sections that should be non-negotiable, helping to facilitate this process. This template is included in the Appendix.
- ii. Government entities may already have an official code of conduct for public servants, and organisations may have their own codes. These are likely to be quite generic. The committee should reflect on and strengthen any existing codes, based on a review against the IRF Ranger Code of Conduct.
- iii. Once a first draft of a code of conduct has been prepared, consultation will be required within the organisation, and with rangers and ranger associations to ensure the code is accurate and meets people's needs. The scale of consultation depends on the numbers of individuals and organisations affected and on available resources, but a light-touch consultation is recommended. Necessary consultations with indigenous and community groups will require more engagement to integrate their perspectives and will require concerted effort and sensitivity.

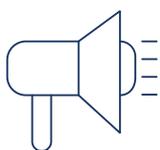
Collaborative input is important, particularly from senior rangers, ranger managers and the leadership, enabling discussions with rangers about what a code means in their daily work. At an organisational level, it is likely that a code would be enforceable i.e. there would be formal requirement for adherence and formal disciplinary procedures linked to non-compliance; this should be clearly communicated during such consultations. It is critical that all rangers understand the code and any terminology used; the final code of

conduct should be concise, simple and easy to communicate. If it has clear and justified standards and values, individual rangers should have no issues with adhering to it.

Having a consistent code nationally will be ideal, but there may be a need to consider the diversity of organisations, cultures and systems of governance in many countries; individual organisations may require their own codes. This will be particularly true for indigenous people and local community ranger groups, where the code would likely be much changed to adopt the values and reflect the cultural identity of the group and the communities they serve.

- iv. Once the consultation process has been completed, there may be value in having the code reviewed by a legal advisor and national human rights institutions. Legal endorsement could facilitate the adoption process, providing comfort for rangers and organisations that the code of conduct is fair and within the national laws.
- v. Once the code drafting has been finished, the working committee should present the final code and the results of the consultation to senior management and relevant government departments. This allows senior decision makers to understand the process, observe the support for the code, endorse the code and further build organisational willingness.

5. Awareness of the code of conduct



The *Buy-In* and *Adaptation* processes will generate significant understanding and buy-in for the code of conduct, but there will likely still be a need for further awareness among the rangers, requiring active dissemination, communication and explanation. Awareness of the Code of Conduct, particularly by the rangers, will be valuable to enable adoption. Ranger associations and partner agencies can support this process. All key individuals within the organisation must understand the need for the code of conduct, explaining why rangers should adopt the code. Concise, simple messaging will support this process, particularly if communicated in a dynamic way.

Several of the key messages from the *Buy-In* step will remain pertinent here, particularly the positioning of the code as part of the journey towards a more professional ranger workforce. One approach would be to highlight “role models” within the organisation who exemplify the code. Rangers should view the code of conduct as an easy tool to support good decision making. If the code can demonstrate sufficient value, the process of adoption will be much simpler.

Engaging and educating human resources (HR) personnel will be important, particularly if the organisation wishes to embed the code into employment contracts. HR teams often do not understand the details and nuances of ranger work.

6. Adopt the code of conduct



Once a code of conduct has been developed, it is possible that employees will read the code, but not fully apply it. Signing a code of conduct is simple, institutionalising it is usually the major challenge. Adoption can take place at a range of levels.

- i. **Full adoption.** The process of adopting or implementing the code needs careful consideration and a structured plan, likely requiring both a top-down and bottom-up approach. The buy-in generated previously will be critical for demonstrating institutional support and for successful implementation.
- . To institutionalise the code of conduct, the working committee should discuss with the organisation’s Human Resources (HR) department on how to integrate the code into recruitment and contracting. Ideally, the code should be incorporated into the HR manual, new contracts and conditions of service. It will likely be easier to ensure uptake with new recruits than with established employees; new rangers would need to be told about the

code at the time of recruitment and before being inducted into service, when they would need to sign the code. For existing ranger employees, the adoption process may be slower to ensure they willingly agree to sign the Code of Conduct. Acceptance is likely to be easier if rangers have been represented in the consultation process.

- ii. **Enforced Adoption.** In some organisations, adoption of the Code of Conduct might take a top-down approach, resulting in enforced adoption. Once the Code has been developed and approved by the relevant decision makers, it would need to be communicated to rangers and then signed or appended to contracts. Such an approach presents various issues which may be partially addressed by at least taking a consultative approach during the development and adaptation of the code. Enforced adoption could also apply at an institutional level where funding support to the organisation is dependent on adoption of a code of conduct.
- iii. **Voluntary Compliance.** In some circumstances, rangers would voluntarily comply with a code of conduct. This would be, for example, more relevant to ranger association membership or joining a voluntary ranger team. In these circumstances, it is harder to legally enforce a code of conduct unless the provisions of the code are linked to national law. The code should be developed and adapted following the outlined process and once approved by the organisation, the code should be presented to the volunteers / members. Uptake of the code will be facilitated if the rangers have been consulted during the development.
- iv. **Implementation.** One approach is to implement the code initially at the conservation area level, working closely with the park manager and senior rangers to get rangers to adopt and follow the code voluntarily. If the organisation operates at a national level, implementing the code in one or two “flagship” parks can facilitate adoption in other parks thereafter. Buy-in from conservation area and ranger managers will be important for promoting the code and securing ownership for this adoption process. The leadership team in the conservation area will be best placed to advise on operationalising the code of conduct. Trialling the implementation at a smaller scale provides an opportunity to get feedback on what changes are required, any implementation challenges, while guiding implementation processes.
- v. **Training.** Once the code of conduct has been institutionalised and adopted, there needs to be an ongoing process to professionalise the ranger workforce. Specific orientation courses on the code are likely to be necessary, alongside regular reinforcement and updating by supervisors and integration of the code into other training materials, both for rangers and managers. Alongside teaching the code, courses should also teach the values that underpin it. For example, elements of the code related to human rights and associated values would be integrated into training on community engagement or mitigating human-wildlife conflict. Where there are no training opportunities, the code can still provide guidance to rangers on decision making. Ranger supporters, such as the NGO sector, can provide value here.
- vi. **Dissemination.** There may be value in an organisation being transparent with the adopted code of conduct. By publicising its existence and freely sharing it with partner organisations and local communities, and by committing that all staff will adhere to it, the organisation will build trust and will ensure that all employees are accountable. Media and public relations teams could be used to communicate the code to the public in order to build trust. The adoption of a code of conduct should engender pride for organisations and rangers alike. Communicating these standards will be an important way to emphasise this pride to both internal and external stakeholders.



7. Review the code of conduct

The results of adoption should be formally reviewed, potentially every 3-4 years, helping to prevent the code from being just a “paper” standard. Organisations might consider having all ranger employees complete an annual assessment of the code as part of their performance review. Ethical behaviour could be a component of periodic performance evaluations – this might include incentives for compliance and sanctions in case of breaches. In addition, ranger-based surveys could analyse responses between rangers who have a code, compared to those with no code. The code of conduct could also be used as an important input for further codes of ethics to be developed in certain contexts¹.

If the code is found to require revisions when reviewed, the committee might follow a similar process to update it, as outlined in the Adaption, Awareness and Adoption phases.

Violations of the code of conduct

If the code is not observed and violations are not promptly and reliably addressed, its impact will be greatly reduced. Organisations will need to develop disciplinary processes linked to the code, a process that will be easier to enforce if the code has been embedded into contracts and legally adopted. Violations of the code should then be investigated through the defined procedures, with resultant disciplinary processes based on the severity of the incident, resulting in potential termination of contract and even legal proceedings against the individual. Organisations should ensure that all violations are formally and fully documented and that whistleblowing policies are in place to encourage employees to report on violations of the code, and to ensure these whistleblowers are protected. Where possible, such disciplinary processes and policies should align to existing organisational policies. Large organisations may wish to consider appointing an independent body to investigate major breaches.

For organisations adopting the code on a voluntary basis, there will be limited ability for legal proceedings unless the individual has broken national laws. In this scenario, the response to any violations of the code will likely focus more upon a scale of appropriate sanctions and ultimately expulsion from the association, or ranger team.

The IRF Ranger Code of Conduct template includes a section on *Response to Violations of this Code of Conduct*.

The IRF Ranger Code of Conduct as a live document

During the development of the IRF Ranger Code of Conduct, the intention was to consult as widely as possible. However, the IRF recognises that there may be individuals and groups who feel they were not properly consulted. Furthermore, the Code may need to evolve and improve to remain relevant over time; as such it is a live document that will be reviewed annually. Any comments or suggested changes to the Code of Conduct or to these accompanying guidelines should be sent to president@internationalrangers.org.

¹ There were comments from some regions that a separate Code of Ethics may be required.

Appendix – IRF Code of Conduct

Template: Non-Negotiables

The bold text has been identified as non-negotiable parts of any code. In order for a code to be referred to as an IRF Code of Conduct, it has to as a minimum have these sections included.

Ranger Code of Conduct

PLEASE NOTE:

This Code has been written in the future tense to indicate a commitment to conduct oneself according to the Code. The Code is designed to inspire rangers to excellence. It has been written based on all ranger roles. However, some sections may not be relevant to all rangers. Ranger groups can adapt this Code to remove irrelevant sections. For examples, many rangers do not carry firearms, and so that section can be removed.

I commit myself to keep the following Code of Conduct:

As a Ranger, I have an important role in protecting and conserving nature and cultural heritage where I work for present and future generations; this is my primary role and objective. As an ambassador, I will follow the ranger values, honour my profession and uphold the applicable laws, professional standards, and guidelines at all times.

Professionalism

I am professional and proud to be a ranger. I will respect and follow lawful instructions from those senior to me and will always perform my duties diligently and to the best of my ability. I will ensure that I understand my duties and any instructions given to me. I will always try to develop my knowledge and apply it in my work. I will take responsibility for my actions, and act with honesty, integrity, and a positive attitude, even in difficult situations. As part of a team, I will be loyal to my colleagues, my organisation and the environment and communities where I work. I understand that any unprofessional conduct by me places safety, reputational or legal risks upon me, my colleagues and my organisation.

I will behave in a professional and respectful manner. I will foster peaceful and positive relationships with

communities, respecting cultures, customs, rights, livelihoods, and knowledge. I will maintain clear, open, and effective dialogue with all stakeholders and colleagues, and duly act to build trust.

I will abide by my organisation's uniform code and ensure efficient use of organisational resources and assets.

Human Rights and Dignity

I will respect human dignity and uphold the human rights of all persons, following the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I will treat everyone with equal respect and impartiality without nepotism or favouritism. I will not discriminate against, harass, or abuse people under any circumstances, whether physically or orally. I will respect gender, age, ability, race, social-economic or ethnic status, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs or lack thereof. I will not tolerate actions by others that violate anyone's human rights, and will report any violations or wrong doing to the relevant authorities.

Integrity and Transparency

I will avoid situations in which personal, community or other interests conflict with my duties, and will declare them if they do. I will not accept or offer benefits, favours or other advantages that will compromise my role.

I will not commit or abet crimes and will not collude in illegal behaviour. I will actively oppose corruption, including bribery to obtain preferential treatment, information, or to ignore or abet criminal activity. I will report any such illegal activities to the relevant authorities.

Legality

I will make myself familiar with and abide by the laws and regulations relating to my work and conduct. I will only give and carry out lawful orders and instructions. To the best of my capacity, I will prevent any violations of laws and regulations, and address these according to established procedures and my powers and responsibilities.

Confidentiality

I will not disclose to unauthorised persons any sensitive information related to my work. I will follow all instructions related to information designated as confidential, unless my duty or the needs of justice strictly require otherwise.

Safety

In all my actions, I will do my best to ensure the safety of myself, my colleagues, my environment, Indigenous Peoples and local communities and visitors. I will strive to be physically and mentally fit to carry out my duties. I will never use illegal or intoxicating substances or alcohol while on duty.

Response to Violations of this Code of Conduct

I will report, challenge or act, following established procedures if the behaviour of colleagues or others in my organisation contradicts the ranger values or Code of Conduct. I expect the same from my colleagues should my actions fall below these standards.

Rangers and Law Enforcement role – To Be Included as Required – THE FOLLOWING IS FOR GUIDANCE ONLY Rangers must always adhere to the UN principles, the national laws and the organizational rules of engagement in the country where they operate.

Use of Force

My primary goal is to communicate and to proactively engage to change the behaviour of those in breach of laws or regulations. I will only use force as a last resort. This will be the minimum force necessary to make a situation safe and will always be proportionate to the threat I face as I perform my duty within the law. I am responsible and accountable for any use of force and must consider this prior to any action.

Protection of Persons

I will ensure the rights and well-being of persons in my custody. I will not detain people indiscriminately or inflict or tolerate torture or cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment.

Firearms

I will ensure I know and respect all laws and procedures concerning firearms. I will be legally permitted to bear any firearms or weapons entrusted to me, and I will only act within my mandate. I will at all times either have them in my possession or ensure they are in a secure place. I should be trained in their safe use and maintenance.

I will only use firearms according to established procedures for animal management and control, or in self-defence or the defence of others when faced with an imminent threat of death or serious injury. I will only use intentional lethal force with a firearm against a human being if it is strictly necessary to protect life. I am accountable for all actions with my firearm and must consider less-lethal options before I rely on it to use force.

Reference

For any rangers without rules of engagement or standard operating procedures, we refer you to the UN principles on the use of force and firearms, including less-lethal weapons and ammunition:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/useofforceandfirearms.aspx>

https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CCPR/LLW_Guidance.pdf

and the UN International Human Rights standards for law enforcement:

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/training5Add1en.pdf>



Ranger Code of Conduct Guidelines for Adoption developed
by International Ranger Federation with support from:



ursa4rangers.org



internationalrangers.org



globalwildlife.org



panda.org



fauna-flora.org



[iucn.org/commissions/
world-commission-protected-areas](http://iucn.org/commissions/world-commission-protected-areas)



zsl.org



panthera.org



forcefornature.org