

Annex to Standard on Community Health, Safety and Security:

Principles Regarding WWF's Support for Enforcement and Rangers

Successful nature conservation must be founded on understanding and supporting human rights in relation to the environment, including rights of Indigenous Peoples. It must also offer a mix of incentive measures to advance sustainable development as well as enforcement actions to guard against illegal activities. WWF recognizes the importance of enforcing environmental laws and regulations, and the critical role rangers¹ play in protecting wildlife, managing protected areas, resolving human-wildlife conflict, and achieving other positive outcomes for people and nature. Rangers are entrusted with the conservation of nature, and in many cases are mandated as the fundamental authority for enforcing the law. This lawful duty must be exercised with restraint and must meet high ethical standards to ensure that human rights are respected and protected.

WWF only supports law enforcement activities when carried out by persons subject to the authority of civil administrative bodies. By definition this will include those run by government or legitimate² political organizations in fragile states³, and in a way that respects and protects the human rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples.

Per the WWF Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework (ESSF)

All WWF landscapes providing support to enforcement by rangers, whether in landscapes or as institutional support, must be screened for risks. The risk assessment should begin as soon as the WWF implementing office in a country contemplates providing support to rangers or equivalent forces. Where WWF co-manages a protected area where armed law enforcement guards/rangers are present, this will be categorized as high risk. Screening should begin with an evaluation of the laws, regulations, systems, protocols, operational procedures (including disciplinary measures for cases of human rights abuse), administrative hierarchy, qualifications of the rangers already working in the landscape or protected area, and other related issues. Mitigation actions must be appropriately developed with the competent authorities and must also meet the requirements of the Standards on [Stakeholder Engagement](#), [Grievance Mechanisms](#) and [Indigenous Peoples](#). Financing must be available to implement and monitor mitigation measures as part of proposed activities. Mitigation measures for wrongful acts—including suspected, potential or realized human rights violations—may include WWF ceasing support to government authorities until such time that the government has addressed the situation. Mitigation actions must be continually monitored throughout implementation.

In areas of instability, weak rule of law, or where there is a history of local conflict, additional mitigation and monitoring measures may be required. The sign-off and disclosure protocols for screening, planning, implementing, and monitoring mitigation measures will follow the Framework document requirements, including those for special consideration landscapes as applicable.

¹ Ranger is a collective term used to describe wildlife wardens, forest guards, foresters, scouts, watchers and other frontline staff

² "Legitimate" here means political organizations that are not banned by national governments nor on any international banned lists issued by foreign governments and UN

³ The World Bank's list of fragile situation can be found at:

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/harmonized-list-of-fragile-situations>

Principles on Enforcement and Rangers

WWF's principles to manage risks that emerge from enforcement support, particularly vis-à-vis rangers and local communities, are identified below. It is paramount that WWF ensures both the safety of communities and rangers.

The principles focus on the rangers as well as the operational oversight and regulatory framework in which they operate. WWF will seek to ensure that the competent authorities for management of conservation areas have the mandate to take appropriate measures to meet WWF's standards and ability to ensure that rangers receive the necessary training and evaluation to uphold human rights.

The following principles will be exercised in the development and implementation of all projects involving rangers.

1. **Act within the law.** WWF will act within the law to avoid abuse in any form. All WWF-supported activities should be carried out in accordance with the laws of the country in which they are undertaken, the requirements specified by the donor from which supporting funds were sourced, as well as any applicable international conventions to which the country is party. Where regional or international standards or best practices go beyond domestic law, activities should be carried out up to the international standard, unless directly contradicted by domestic law.
 - a. Measures should be agreed with the competent authorities to ensure that law enforcement personnel follow legal, ethical, and safe procedures for apprehending suspects and for people detained under custody of rangers. Training programs—including human rights training around arrest, interrogation, and detention—must be in place, fit for purpose, and implemented both for the ranger force and for the management of the ranger institution.
 - b. If wildlife crime data are collected, such data must be collected, shared, and managed according to the country's data protection laws and regulations, or with appropriate government permission. Sharing of wildlife crime data across international borders can only be done if it is legal to do so according to the laws or regulations of the country where the data originated, or with appropriate authorization from the government and in a manner that minimizes risk of harm to those linked to the data.
2. **Ensure accountability.** Systems should be in place for management authorities to act swiftly and justly if rangers violate legal, ethical, and safety procedures, or otherwise fail to uphold these Principles or others set by the competent state authorities. Corrective actions could include employment termination, sanctions, and other means of discipline available to and agreed upon between WWF and the administrative body⁴. Equally, WWF should strive to ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to provide for the fair treatment of both local communities and rangers in the design of grievance and whistleblower mechanisms and to monitor, manage, and mitigate identified risks, including when working with or through partner organizations.

⁴ If there is disagreement on the corrective action, WWF will seek to resolve the dispute with the administrative body but will retain the right to cease support if agreement cannot be reached.

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3. **Build ranger capacity.** WWF will ensure that education and training is provided to rangers to help ensure that human rights are upheld, and humane conduct is practiced. This should take the form of basic and regular further (refresher) training. Training should include: detailed information on all applicable regulations under national and international laws as well as international best practices; proportionate, legal, accountable, and ethical rules for the use of force and firearms to ensure the minimum amount necessary to accomplish the lawful objective concerned; guidance on discipline, respect of instructions, sensitization to human rights and Indigenous Peoples, collaboration with local communities; techniques for non-violent confrontation in exercising enforcement functions; and, capacity-building for the safety and security of rangers themselves.
4. **Support the welfare of rangers and their families.** WWF's intent is that rangers execute their job safely and effectively and expects management authorities to take measures to secure the safety and welfare of rangers, particularly from poachers and other harm.
5. **Partner with local communities.** A system should be in place for establishing effective collaboration with local communities. Ideally this happens by communities and rangers jointly creating, executing, and monitoring the implementation of co-created management plans for: natural resource utilization, upholding their rights and responsibilities, and ensuring mutual accountability for their actions. Local communities and rangers must also have access to appropriate grievance mechanisms to air, elevate, and act upon concerns if any should arise, as provided for in the Framework document.
6. **Identify, monitor and plan for challenges.** WWF will be cognizant of tensions and issues that may exist or arise between enforcement bodies and local communities or other stakeholders, as well as problems that may occur through interactions with rangers.
7. **Maintain impartiality.** Actions must be taken to ensure a clear distinguishing line remains between WWF staff and enforcement personnel, including exercising care in how and where the WWF logo is used and only sharing spaces and equipment when absolutely necessary to maintain a professional level of engagement. Specifically:
 - a. WWF offices must not be used for holding evidence of crime that may be used in a court of law (e.g. confiscated firearms or wildlife products). However, confiscated materials that are not part of court cases (e.g. snares stored temporarily and meant for later destruction) can be kept in WWF premises if staff have written authorization from the government to do so. WWF offices should never be used by enforcement officials to hold or interview suspects, even temporarily;
 - b. WWF field vehicles should not be used to carry prisoners, offenders, or suspects. WWF vehicles can only be used to transport armed rangers (e.g., for law enforcement, tourism, monitoring activities) if formally approved in writing by the WWF country office director;

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- c. The WWF logo should not be used on any materials or equipment directly related to law enforcement or belonging to government agencies, including uniforms and vehicles. The logo may be used appropriately in places like water tanks, WWF office field vehicles, tractors, torches, park buildings, billboards, other signage, computers, GPS and notebooks.
8. **Firearms.** Per the [Exclusion List](#), WWF will not finance the purchase of firearms or ammunition for the government or any partners or associates. While accompanying law enforcement personnel, WWF staff may not carry or handle a firearm or such lethal equipment, even if they are trained to carry a firearm and it is legal to do so.
9. **Communicate regularly.** WWF's principles, policies, and procedures regarding rangers, as well as protocols for stakeholder engagement are codified in the Framework document, which will be communicated to all WWF staff, representatives, and partners. This includes guidance on how WWF will communicate regularly with stakeholders on human rights-related issues and violations of conduct by rangers, as well as on the actions taken to ensure compliance with national laws and regulations and WWF policies. These communications and responses will be logged, tracked, and reviewed by senior management.
10. **Sanctions for malfeasance.** WWF will apply necessary remedies to ensure compliance with the Framework document. This might necessitate holding disbursements or ending support if human rights issues are not appropriately dealt with by appropriate legal authorities. WWF will take measures to notify recipients of actions taken and will also consider the wider impact that these activities may have on other affected parties. WWF will always confidentially report all known or suspected criminal activities to the relevant competent law enforcement authority.