



Fauna & Flora International's position on rangers and human rights

INTRODUCTION

FFI is committed to respecting human rights, promoting their protection and realisation within our conservation programmes, and supporting the governance systems that can secure those rights¹.

We recognise the importance of enforcing environmental laws, rules and regulations, and the crucial role rangers play in biodiversity conservation, including through protected area management, tackling illegal wildlife trade, mitigating human-wildlife conflict and other strategies to benefit both people and nature.

Rangers² work in positions of trust doing difficult and sometimes dangerous work. Since they are empowered – and sometimes armed – to perform law enforcement roles, this confers on them obligations to act responsibly, lawfully and in compliance with human rights standards. The human rights system permits rangers to take actions to protect themselves, as well as the natural assets they are charged with defending. However, it also places some limitations on the ways in which they can do this i.e. they should not exercise their roles in ways that infringe on people's rights.

PRINCIPLES OF WORKING WITH RANGERS

FFI only supports law enforcement activities carried out by persons subject to the authority of civil administrations in ways that respect and protect the human rights of all members of local communities and Indigenous Communities. This includes activities undertaken by governments or legitimate political organisations in fragile states.

FFI will ensure that partner organisations (whether state, private, NGO or community-based) that employ rangers have the necessary policies³ and systems in place to respect human rights and the rule of law; the mandate to take appropriate measures to meet international human rights standards; and the ability to ensure that rangers receive the necessary training and oversight 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

All FFI-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, and any applicable

¹ See relevant positions & guidance, e.g. on FPIC, Gender, Access Restrictions, in the Resources section on www.fauna-flora.org/approaches/livelihoods-governance; and CIHR commitments <http://www.thecihr.org/about>

² For the purpose of this document, Rangers are defined as those personnel engaged in frontline roles in the enforcement of conservation laws, rules and regulations, be they community members, state, private sector or NGO employees or contractors

³ See, for example, Tusk Wildlife Ranger Challenge Relief Fund Policy and Checklist; and example policies and guidance e.g. Code of Conduct and Standard Operating Procedures from URSA/IRF (tbd)



international conventions to which the country is party. This includes zero tolerance of torture and inhumane treatment. 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. Use of force should follow principles of necessity and proportionality³.
- 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 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 fairly if rangers violate legal, ethical, and safety procedures, or otherwise fail to uphold principles agreed by FFI and the relevant state authorities. Corrective actions could include employment termination, sanctions, and other means of discipline available to and agreed upon between FFI and the administrative body. Equally, FFI will strive to ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place for the fair treatment of both local communities and rangers in the design of grievance and whistleblowing mechanisms.

3) Build ranger capacity

Education and training must be provided to rangers and their managers to help ensure that human rights are upheld and humane conduct is practised. This should take the form of basic and regular refresher training. Training should include: detailed information on all applicable regulations under national and international laws as well as international best practice; 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 People, collaboration with local communities; techniques for non-violent communication in exercising enforcement functions; and capacity-building for the safety and security of rangers themselves.

4) Support the welfare of rangers and their families

FFI wishes to ensure that rangers execute their job safely and effectively, and expects management authorities to take measures to secure the safety and welfare⁴ of rangers, both women and men.

5) Partner with local communities

A system should be in place for establishing effective collaboration with local communities. Ideally this will happen through communities and rangers jointly creating, executing, and monitoring the implementation of co-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.

⁴ E.g. right to life, safety & security, employment rights, reproductive rights, living standards, healthcare.



6) Identify, monitor and plan for challenges

FFI understands that tensions and issues may exist or arise between enforcement bodies and local communities or other stakeholders. Mechanisms should be in place to monitor, manage, and mitigate the identified risks, including when working with or through partner organizations.

7) Maintain impartiality

Actions must be taken to ensure a clear distinguishing line remains between FFI staff and enforcement personnel, including exercising care in how and where the FFI logo is used and only sharing spaces and equipment when absolutely necessary to maintain a professional level of engagement. Specifically:

- a) FFI 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 FFI premises if staff have written authorization from the government to do so. FFI offices should never be used by enforcement officials to hold or interview suspects, even temporarily.
- b) FFI vehicles should not be used to carry prisoners, offenders, or suspects. FFI vehicles can only be used to transport armed rangers, e.g. for law enforcement, tourism, monitoring activities, if formally approved in writing by the FFI country lead.
- c) The FFI logo should not be used on any materials or equipment directly related to law enforcement or belonging to government agencies, including uniforms and vehicles.

8) Firearms

FFI recognises that front-line conservation may require the carrying of firearms. FFI only supports the use of firearms where there is risk of death or serious injury to a ranger or any other person, and only where use is necessary to prevent this harm as all other measures have failed or would clearly fail. Any force must be proportionate and necessary, authorised and regulated by national law, and only employed by those legally permitted and trained to do so.

9) Communicate regularly

FFI's principles, policies, and procedures regarding rangers, as well as our standards and protocols for stakeholder engagement, will be communicated to all FFI staff, representatives, and partners. This includes guidance on how FFI 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 FFI policies. These communications and responses will be logged, tracked, and reviewed by senior management.

10) Sanctions for non-compliance with human rights principles

FFI will apply necessary remedies to ensure compliance with human rights principles. This might necessitate withholding disbursements or ending support if human rights issues are not appropriately dealt with by relevant legal authorities. FFI will take measures to notify recipients of actions taken, and will also consider the wider impact that these activities may have on other project beneficiaries. FFI will always confidentially report all known or suspected criminal activities to the relevant competent law enforcement authority.