

# Universal Ranger Support Alliance

2021 Annual Report



Cover photo: © Héctor Garduño/ CONANP Archive

## **ABOUT THE UNIVERSAL RANGER SUPPORT ALLIANCE (URSA)**

*Supporting rangers today, conserving the world for tomorrow.*

URSA is a global coalition of conservation organisations building a network of well-supported, professional, and capable rangers, who can act effectively as custodians of the natural world. We advocate for the creation of inclusive and effective teams at the forefront of protecting nature, people, and the planet. Our priorities include representation, recognition, and resources for rangers around the world. Join us at [ursa4rangers.org](https://ursa4rangers.org).

## **CITATION**

Universal Ranger Support Alliance, Annual Report 2021.

**Launched in 2020, the Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA) brings like-minded conservation organisations together with the International Ranger Federation to support the implementation of the Chitwan Declaration, passed at the 9th World Ranger Congress held in Chitwan, Nepal in 2019. The URSA aims to establish an enabling environment that builds a professional, accountable and competent ranger workforce globally, whose contributions are formally recognized and respected.**

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## **Message from the Steering Committee**

Rangers are critical frontline workers across protected and conserved areas and they are responsible for safeguarding the natural environment upon which we all depend. Given that climate action and biodiversity loss are two of the most severe risks facing our planet today, the vital role rangers play in helping to protect and conserve the planet is both indisputable and indispensable.

The Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA) believes that a collaborative, coordinated approach is required to address the myriad of challenges faced by rangers. Following a call to action from the ranger community at the 2019 World Ranger Congress, URSA brings together a network of organisations to support these environmental defenders.

### **2021 URSA members**

Fauna & Flora International (FFI), Force for Nature (FFN), Re:wild, International Ranger Federation (IRF), IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (IUCN-WCPA), Panthera, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the Zoological Society of London (ZSL)

Our action plan, launched in 2021, aims to establish a network of well supported, professionally competent, mandated, motivated, responsible and representative ranger workforces.

We are proud to share URSA's first annual report to outline our collective progress in support of rangers. The year 2021 marked a number of major steps forward for URSA. We set up the core team and expanded the partnership. The Gender Equality Report and the Global Code of Conduct were also major milestone publications, highlighting challenges and setting benchmarks. The report below details all the further achievements to date, and allows us all to take stock of the significant work ahead. What is apparent is how much can be achieved for rangers when we work together. **We are pleased to invite you to join the Alliance so that we can accomplish even more successes in 2022!**

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## **Message from Chris Galliers, President of the International Ranger Federation**

The 9th International Ranger Federation World Ranger Congress, in its Declaration (the Chitwan Declaration), highlighted under seven headings many critical interventions needed to support rangers globally. The call to action from the over 550 delegates to the IRF as the global representative organisation for Rangers, was clear and the need for implementation, immediate. To make the necessary impact, and deliver to Rangers, the IRF recognised the need for a collective effort, as no one organisation could deliver on its own. As such, an initial seven international organisations joined forces with IRF to form the Universal Ranger

Support Alliance (URSA). Unfortunately, the momentum was curtailed slightly by the COVID-19 Pandemic but the resulting effects on rangers only provided further evidence of how vulnerable rangers are and that urgent investments into tools, reforms and policy changes were needed.

The IRF is proud of the URSA collaborative and what has been achieved to date. The URSA Action Plan developed on the back of the Chitwan Declaration provides a roadmap to enable and advocate for better training, support, safety, and equality for rangers, as well as a greater recognition of their work. We are also proud of what has already been achieved to date

Over the next five years URSA members will work to build IRF's capacity, membership and networks. It will also work with IRF to increase global representation of the ranger sector and to enable national and regional IRF member ranger associations to adapt global tools and resources to local needs and contexts and to adopt and utilise them.

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### **Message from Madhu Rao, Chair of the IUCN WCPA**

Protected and Conserved Areas (PCAs) are critical solutions to address the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change. It is critically important for PCAs to be impactful in reversing biodiversity loss and achieving measurable conservation outcomes through effective and equitable management. Rangers play a central and key role in maintaining the integrity of PCAs. Yet the awareness of the scale of their impact remains underappreciated. Challenges overpower the benefits and these crucial

frontline services are lacking in funding, training and appropriate attention from the policy makers. The WCPA is keen to change the status quo. We need to protect the protectors. URSA 5-year Action Plan delivers just that: an ambitious and bold agenda to build recognition, support and capacity of rangers in Protected and Conserved Areas around the world.

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### **Message from Johan Olhagen, Office of the United Nations, High Commissioner for Human Rights**

URSA is playing an important role in working towards further professionalising the wildlife ranger workforce, including in strengthening integration of human rights

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### **Message from Carlos R. Carrión-Crespo, Sectoral Specialist for Public Service and Utilities, International Labour Organization**

Public wildlife rangers are at the forefront of the struggle to preserve uncountable species that are victimized and endangered by multiple consequences of human activity and their ability to play their role requires decent working conditions. As with all public servants, it is the duty of governments, and indeed of society, to ensure that they have the proper tools and working conditions to carry out their work. Decent work, the heart of the ILO's mission, requires the protection of workers' rights, adequate income and social protection.

URSA was established in response to a direct call to action from the ranger community. The Chitwan Declaration not only requested support for rangers from the conservation community but also identified a number of thematic areas requiring support. Eight white papers were written by subject matter experts that identified challenges and offered recommendations. Consequently, URSA produced and launched the Action Plan in 2021, drawing on these white papers. The Action Plan provides a carefully crafted roadmap of activities to facilitate conservation outcomes by 2025 and beyond. These activities are clustered into five strategic objectives that collectively aim to professionalise the ranger workforce and transform working conditions of rangers globally.

The Action Plan provides URSA with a clear strategic framework to coordinate the efforts of all its members, partners and supporters towards a shared vision. To date the URSA Action Plan has been translated into four languages, with plans to create more language versions in 2022. Our hope is that the conservation community will rally around the URSA Action Plan and support its implementation.

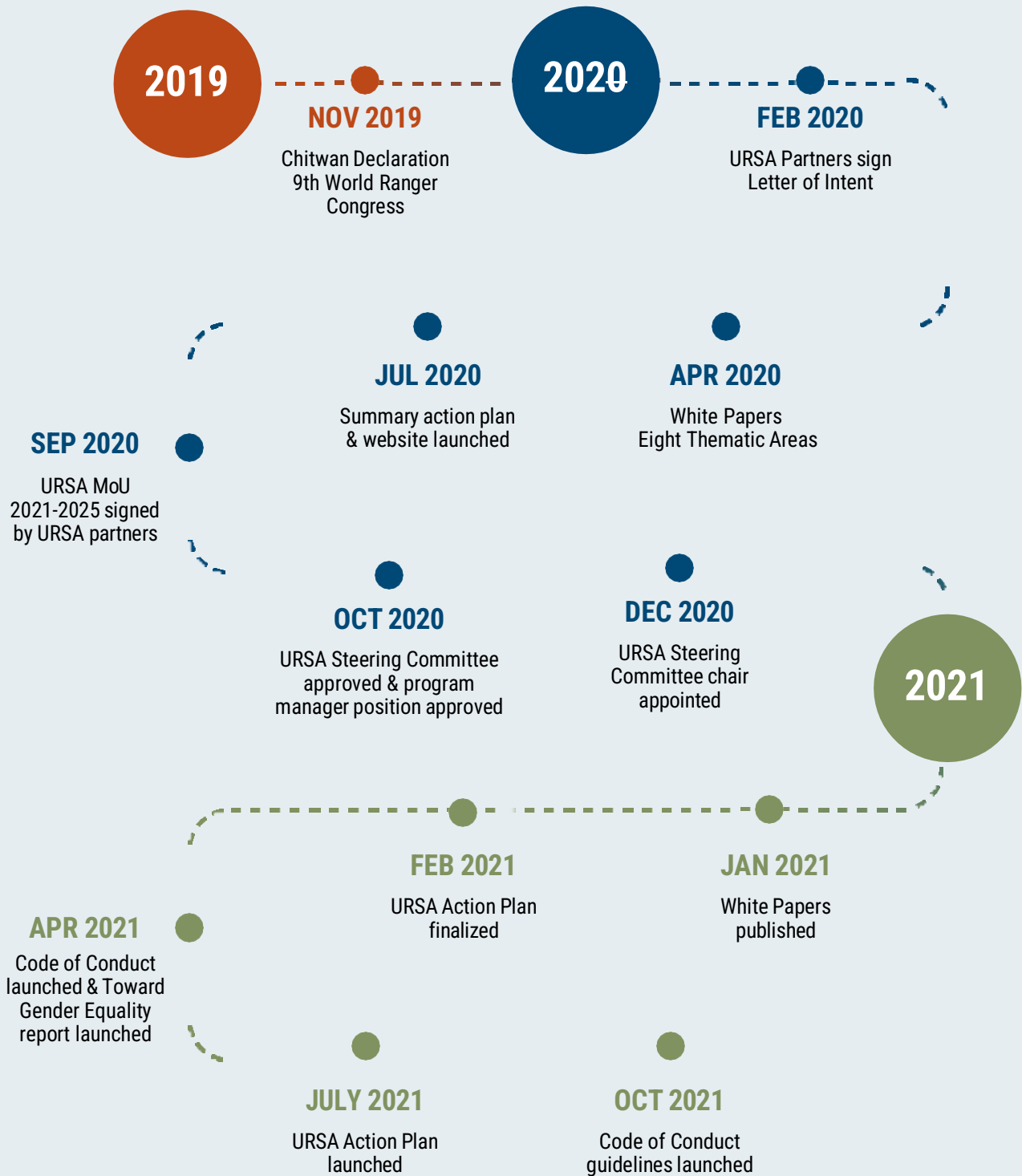
Given how ambitious this strategy is, the URSA members recognise that no individual organisation will be able to deliver change at a global scale. Delivering upon this vision will require many organisations pulling together as one to benefit rangers.

**URSA would like to warmly thank all URSA collaborators, and most importantly, rangers for their time and unwavering dedication to their roles.**



Rangers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo © LuAnne Cadd

# URSA Timeline 2019-2021



# The Action Plan Summary

VISION	A network of well-supported, professionally competent, mandated, motivated, responsible and representative rangers working effectively as custodians of biodiversity and the life systems upon which we all depend.				
GOAL	By 2025, there is a global enabling environment providing a unified voice for rangers and standards for capacity, employment, equality and conduct to build a demonstrably professional, accountable and competent ranger workforce, whose contributions are formally recognized and respected.				
COMPO- NENTS	A. Advocacy and Representation	B. Capacity	C. Employment and Welfare	D. Equality and Equity in the Ranger Sector	E. Community Relations, Ranger Conduct and Accountability
OBJECTIVE	By 2025, the ranger profession is increasingly and formally recognized internationally and by governments, with rangers effectively represented and connected.	By 2025, a common framework for improving and sustaining ranger capacity is in place and increasingly adopted and implemented.	By 2025, global minimum standards for ranger employment and welfare are developed, and increasingly adopted nationally to enhance ranger working conditions and well-being.	By 2025, systems and structures have been adopted by IRF, its ranger associations and by URSA members that enable equal opportunities, fair treatment, and equitable working environments for rangers.	By 2025, rangers in all IRF regions are operating within a framework of working practices, ethics and conduct that value and build trust with communities and the public, and promote responsibility and accountability.
OUTPUTS	<p>A1. IRF is strengthened as the global representative body for rangers and custodian of standards, promoting rangers' interests.</p> <p>A2 A growing network of ranger associations is established and strengthened.</p> <p>A3 Awareness of and respect for the ranger profession is improved at all levels.</p> <p>A4. The ranger occupation is officially recognised internationally and in multiple countries.</p>	<p>B1. Systems are in place to identify and track ranger capacity needs and development opportunities.</p> <p>B2. Ranger employers and supporting organisations have the capacity to enable effective ranger performance.</p> <p>B3. A global guiding framework of competences, standards and training and learning provision is established and adopted.</p> <p>B4. A global connected network of rangers is established.</p> <p>B5. Rangers and employers have access to essential and appropriate technology.</p>	<p>C1. Global minimum standards for ranger employment and welfare are defined, promoted, and adopted by governments and ranger employers.</p> <p>C2. Ranger welfare and well-being are improving in all IRF regions.</p> <p>C3. The commitment and motivation of rangers is widely recognized as an important factor in effective conservation.</p>	<p>D1. IRF adopts and promotes clear policies and positions on equality, equity and rights in the ranger sector.</p> <p>D2. Resources, materials and guidance are available to support and promote national implementation of the policy on equality, equity and rights.</p>	<p>E1. A global code of conduct for rangers is defined and widely adopted.</p> <p>E2. Safeguarding policies and processes, designed to prevent and respond to violations by rangers of human, community and Indigenous rights have been established and adopted by IRF and URSA members.</p> <p>E3. URSA, IRF and ranger associations are actively engaged in building trust between rangers and communities.</p>

# Achievements

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The Alliance made significant progress on the plan delivery despite the difficulties faced by the ongoing pandemic. The activities reported below were made possible by the commitment of individual members of URSA working together. This in no way is intended to underplay the significant hard work of the various individuals and organisations who have helped deliver on these many achievements, for which URSA expresses its sincere thanks. Many of these achievements span across our five strategic objectives.

## Advocacy, Representation and Recognition

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By 2025, the ranger profession is increasingly and formally recognized by governments globally, with rangers effectively represented and connected.

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URSA conducted a survey of ranger associations, led by the University of Central Florida (UCF), to better understand their current state. The report produced from these surveys will be published in 2022. The study is the first phase of a longer project aimed at improving the capacity of ranger associations in supporting rangers' interests, both globally and locally.

Under the leadership of the International Ranger Federation (IRF), and along with regional ranger associations and other experts from different sectors, the framework for the State of the Ranger Report has been designed through a collaborative process. This benchmark survey follows on from the extensive Life on the Frontline report to monitor the status of the ranger sector and to understand ranger working conditions and will be published every World Ranger Congress. The objective is to measure progress of the professionalisation of the ranger sector globally. The initial report will be launched at the next World Ranger Congress.

URSA has been proactively promoting the ranger sector globally. The Alliance organised, or participated in, more than ten online and in-person international events. With more than 100 participants in each webinar, we launched our Action Plan and the first ever report exploring challenges to gender equality in the sector. URSA co-organised the World Ranger Day, co-hosted the Ranger Round Tables, and hosted a side event at the 44th World Heritage Committee meeting. URSA also advocated for recognition of and support for the ranger profession during the IUCN World Conservation Congress (WCC) in Marseille, France, and the Protected Areas Day celebration of Latin America.

The URSA communications team launched our website and social media channels to connect with rangers, supporters and other stakeholders around the world. Since its launch in early 2021, the Ranger App, developed by Force for Nature, has gathered over one thousand members from over 100 countries and various organisations. The Ranger App aims to create a global ranger community to share experiences and knowledge, and to improve dialogue with rangers.

URSA participated in international events to progress the ranger agenda:

- **Launch of Action Plan, Code of Conduct, and World Ranger Day:** Promoting URSA and advocating for rangers
- **World Conservation Congress, Marseille, France:** Two live and virtual sessions on ranger professionalisation and Code of Conduct. Stand promoting URSA. Recognition of rangers in the Congress Manifesto.
- **Promoting equity and equality in the sector:** Launch of the report 'Towards Gender Equality in Ranger Workforce' and First Latin America Female Rangers Congress
- **World Ranger Day:** URSA together with IRF organised a series of events celebrating rangers across the world.



URSA has also produced a number of impactful videos for communicating critical messages about rangers to the public and to policy makers. The five short explainer videos, narrated by Edward Norton, provide clear messaging to a global audience on the importance and value of rangers as frontline conservation professionals. The videos outline the many challenges rangers face and highlight why they need more support.

In 2022, URSA will continue to advocate for rangers and the critical role they play in protecting nature and cultural diversity.



B. Long, URSA event at the IUCN World Conservation Congress

## Ranger Capacity

By 2025, a common framework for improving and sustaining ranger capacity is in place and increasingly adopted and implemented.

URSA has established a working group to support this component of the action plan. The initial focus has been on identifying the core and specialist competencies required by rangers. These are based on the diverse roles of a ranger outlined in the Code of Conduct. The ranger competencies framework will enable ranger employers and managers to better understand the differing skill sets rangers require to fulfil their various roles. The framework will also be used to identify competency gaps and develop workforce capacity.

In 2022, URSA will survey rangers globally to build a global database of ranger competencies. This database, based on continuous feedback from rangers, can support a comprehensive framework of training for building strong ranger capacity in the coming years.



Capture from the 5 'explainer' videos

## Employment and Welfare

By 2025, a set of global minimum standards for ranger employment and welfare is developed, and increasingly adopted nationally to enhance ranger working conditions and well-being.

Rangers lack recognition internationally and within many countries as a profession. To address this, URSA has been discussing formal steps with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to enable formal recognition and to allow for the adoption of rangers as a class of professionals at national levels. This will be critical for improving the sector’s employment and welfare conditions. As a first step, URSA aims to generate minimum employment and welfare standards for rangers. URSA has investigated existing employment standards to try and establish a benchmark for the minimum and desired standards. However, despite a global search of our networks, there are only limited examples of ranger employment standards. This highlights the importance of rectifying this issue.

In 2022, URSA are planning to establish a blueprint for national labour bodies and ranger employers to improve working conditions within the sector. Recognising a dire need for improvement, URSA aims to develop minimum employment and welfare standards for rangers. These standards will be used to lobby stakeholders and provide guidance to those supporting and employing rangers.

## Equity and Equality

By 2025, systems and structures have been adopted by IRF, its ranger associations and by URSA members that enable equal opportunities, fair treatment, and equitable working environments for rangers

Equity and equality are fundamental for the professionalisation of the ranger workforce and a central component of our URSA Action Plan, forming one of our key strategic components, and cross-cutting through other strategic objectives.

## State of the Ranger Report

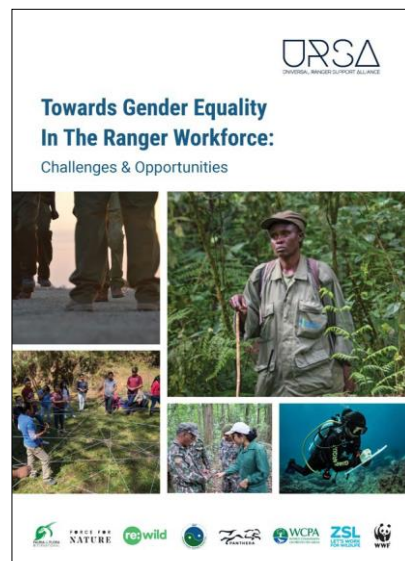
URSA commissioned a dedicated report on gender equality within the ranger sector, lead authored by renowned gender specialist Joni Seager. ‘Towards Gender Equality in the Ranger Workforce’ provides a systematic overview of resources available and highlights some stark examples of the inequalities faced by female and male rangers. This important and timely report provides key insights into the many challenges facing women working within the ranger sector. The report provides a clear call for action in creating a more inclusive, diverse and equitable profession, free of abuse and harassment.

Since its launch, the report has been translated into Spanish (with further language versions planned). The report provided the template for discussion for the first Latin America Female Ranger Congress.

In 2022, URSA plans to further improve understanding of equity and equality challenges facing other under-represented groups within the ranger sector. URSA aims to produce a comprehensive picture of the challenges that rangers experience. Informing our understanding of the issues is vital but ultimately these seminal reports need to inform policy solutions in order to drive change within the profession.



Leaflet from the first Latin America Female Ranger Congress



Towards Gender Equality in the Ranger Workforce Report

## Community Relations, Ranger Conduct and Accountability

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By 2025, rangers in all IRF regions are operating within a framework of working practices, ethics and conduct that value and build trust with communities and the public, and promote responsibility and accountability.

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A significant achievement during 2021 was supporting IRF to develop and publish a global Code of Conduct for rangers. The development of this Code involved a global consultation process spanning over five months. 1,800 rangers and experts provided inputs and comments from 61 countries across the globe. The Code of Conduct provides a template for ranger employers to adapt and to adopt so as to support the professionalisation of their ranger workforce. Reviewed by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Code provides clear guidance for standards of conduct that protect the human rights of rangers, their colleagues and the communities and individuals with which they interact. The Code of Conduct not only provides a roadmap of professional standards for behaviour, it also highlights the core values that were identified as important from the consultation process. In addition, the Code establishes a clear definition of a ranger and outlines the myriad of roles they perform.

To support the implementation of the Code of Conduct, URSA supported IRF to develop and publish a set of practical guidelines. These included a proposed process for adapting and adopting the Code of Conduct for relevant context at a national or local level. URSA created engaging 'explainer' videos aligned to the Global Code of Conduct. These videos, produced in multiple languages, are intended to support the roll-out and implementation of the Code of Conduct. They allow rangers to better understand the components of the Code, and why the standards set by rangers are so critical to the professionalisation of the sector.

In addition to this critical resource, URSA has started producing the first comprehensive, ranger-oriented social safeguards document. The intention is that this resource can provide further direction and assistance for ranger associations and employers, thereby ensuring that human rights are respected at all times.

Where there is a clear understanding of the value of rangers and the natural environment amongst local communities and indigenous peoples, there can often be positive and harmonious interactions. Unfortunately, this isn't always the case. There are too many examples where local communities feel threatened by the actions of rangers.

URSA has initiated a project to develop a framework for building trusting relationships with communities. This framework will highlight the main contributing factors, both positive and negative, that can build or erode trust. Once complete, this framework will provide a practical tool that protected area managers and staff can use to promote positive relationships within the communities.

As part of the project, 100 case studies have been gathered from across the globe along with 11 detailed examples. The scoping report will be launched at the Asian Park Congress 2022.

In 2022, URSA plans to develop the training material for the Code of Conduct and organise a series of workshops to pilot the process of adoption of the Code. In addition, the ranger-community trust scoping document will be translated into multiple languages for wider consultation with rangers and IPLCs.

### Universal Ranger Code of Conduct

**Translated into 6 languages:** English, Assamese, Urdu, French, Malay, Spanish, and Portuguese.

**Supported by guidelines for local and national adoption:** Developed in late 2021, these guidelines provide practical advice for adaption and adoption of the Code of Conduct. Currently available in English and French, the guidelines will be promoted during various international events in 2022.

**Adopted by Bhutan:** National authorities of the country confirmed that the Code of Conduct became officially adopted by the ranger workforce.



Screenshot from the video promoting Ranger Code of Conduct

The Alliance operates on three levels of engagement – Members, Partners and Supporters. While the different levels have different criteria for joining, common to all is that organisations are required to sign the URSA Charter and commit to help URSA implement our Action Plan. We encourage any organisation that joins the Alliance to actively support the working groups to drive change. Join us!

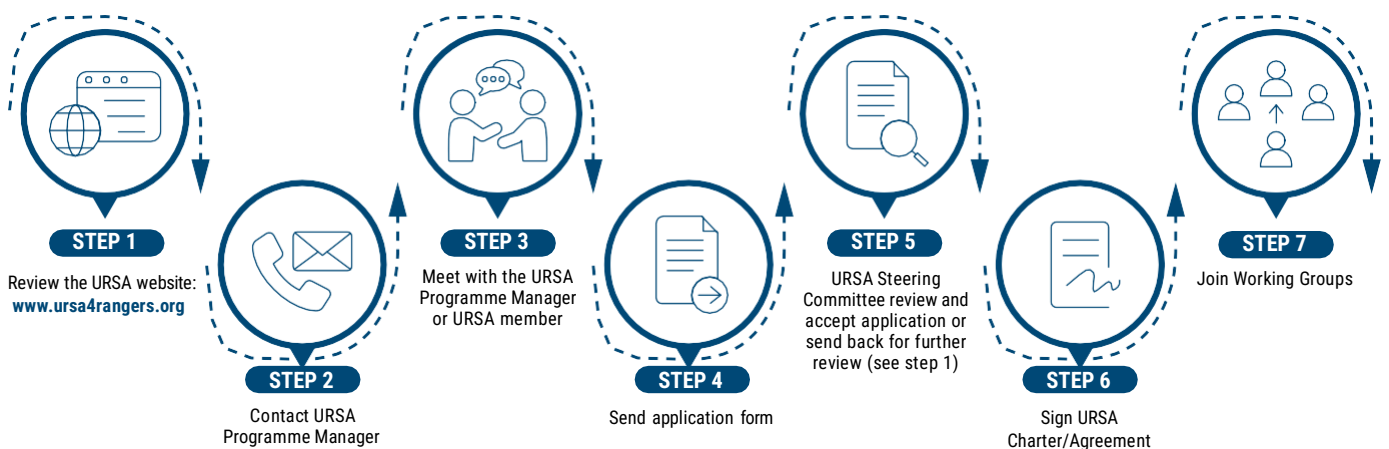
- **Member** – your organisation will have a global footprint and will be supporting rangers across multiple geographical regions. Members will also actively engage in at least one of the URSA working groups.
- **Partner** – your organisation will have regional reach and influence. You will be able to help URSA leverage support at the regional level. You're likely to be involved with rangers across multiple national level sites. As a Partner you will be encouraged to participate in an URSA working group.
- **Supporter** – your organisation will be actively involved in supporting Action Plan implementation at the national and local site level.

## How to join URSA

URSA recognises the immense value in collaboration and cooperation to drive change on such an ambitious scale. This vision requires many like-minded organisations pulling together to support rangers at varying geographical scales. URSA welcomes all organisations that share this vision for change, whether a ranger association, a global or regional NGO, a national conservation organisation, a government agency or a private organisation that employs rangers, an inter-governmental body or simply an organisation that shares URSA's vision.

The URSA programme manager will guide you through the admissions process and advise you on which tier is right for your organisation. You can contact us at: [info@ursa4rangers.org](mailto:info@ursa4rangers.org)

### Seven steps to joining URSA



# URSA

SUPPORTING RANGERS

TODAY.

CONSERVING THE WORLD FOR

TOMORROW.



[internationalrangers.org](http://internationalrangers.org)



[rewild.org](http://rewild.org)



[panda.org](http://panda.org)



[fauna-flora.org](http://fauna-flora.org)



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



[zsl.org](http://zsl.org)



[panthera.org](http://panthera.org)



[forceornature.org](http://forceornature.org)