



# Where are the women? Towards gender equality in the ranger workforce

Joni Seager, *Bentley University, USA*  
Gillian Bowser, *Colorado State University, USA*  
Anwasha Dutta, *Chr. Michelsen Institute, Norway*

## Corresponding author

Joni Seager  
Department of Global Studies  
Bentley University  
Waltham, MA 02452  
[jseager@bentley.edu](mailto:jseager@bentley.edu)

## Abstract

The ranger workforce is currently characterized by an extreme gender skew. Exact data—or even reliable estimates—are scarce, but the general understanding is that only 3–11% of the global ranger workforce is female, with considerable local variation (Belecky et al. 2019). Although consideration of the gender context for a workforce often starts with numbers, achieving greater gender balance requires a much more comprehensive understanding of the problems and a wide-net approach to solutions. Bringing women into the ranger workforce is an important human rights and equality goal in itself. Further, there is evidence that women bring skill sets and strengths to the ranger workforce that are different from those of men. Bringing gender equality into the workforce can improve conservation, relationships with communities, park management, and wildlife management. The Chitwan Declaration (World Ranger Congress 2019) commits to broad gender-related goals: gender-equal opportunities in hiring, pay, and promotion in the ranger workforce, as well as appropriate measures to provide safety and support for female rangers. This paper, based in part on interviews with men and women in the current ranger workforce, analyzes the state of the gender imbalance in the ranger workforce, provides a contextual assessment, and advances recommendations for moving towards these Chitwan goals.

## The importance of gender balance in the ranger workforce

As a matter of human rights and gender equality, both women and men have the right to opportunities for employment, livelihood, inclusion, information, and recognition. Both men and women benefit from living in more gender-equal societies and working in gender-equal workplaces.

As a general rule, women want to participate in the ranger workforce as much as men do. One

woman ranger is recently quoted as saying, “Unlike some years ago, when they used to say this job is for men, now there are women who are working to protect the wildlife. It means a lot to us and makes us continue to do our job because we know that people are behind us, supporting us” (cited in Aldred 2016).

To the extent that women have been asked about their experiences and aspirations, most are

enthusiastic about contributing to conservation and sustainability through ranger work, and they express considerable interest in being part of the ranger workforce. Ranger work is a source of prestige and pride as well as employment (often in employment-scarce areas) for women as much as for men.

There is increasing evidence that bringing gender balance into the ranger workforce is *also good* for conservation, sustainability, and wildlife management. In general, tapping a diversity of views and skills improves all work. Women and men have diverse knowledge of and priorities around biodiversity; balancing the ranger workforce will help realize larger conservation goals. Gender-balanced ranger forces create a broader base for community “ownership” and commitment to conservation.

There is considerable analysis, mostly based on surveys in the Global North, that documents a

gender difference in attitudes towards nature and animals—generally with women exhibiting more caring and sympathetic attitudes, men more utilitarian (e.g., Kellert 1987; Byrd et al. 2017; van Eeden et al. 2020). However, a recent study of attitudes towards protected areas in Myanmar complicates the picture: women were found to be less positive towards protected areas, and men were more likely to perceive conservation and ecosystem services benefits (Allendorf 2013). Similarly, a Tanzanian study found that poor women suffer more from protected area restrictions, as they have limited livelihood alternatives (Mariki 2016). Some research suggests that protected area projects that have incorporated gender equity principles and promoted women’s participation are more effective and balanced (Biermayr-Jenzano 2003). In 2014 the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) added recognition that gender considerations were key to meeting the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.



Kenyan ranger | JONATHAN CARAMANUS / GREEN RENAISSANCE / WWF-UK

There is very little firm evidence of the differences women and men might bring with them to conservation and ranger work, and even less from the Global South, but the increasing evidence drawn from community narratives and field practice suggests that:

- Women are close observers of ecosystems, and men and women may have experiences of different ecosystems (e.g., typically, men fish on the open sea while women harvest along shorelines); when women and men come into formal conservation work, they bring these environmental knowledge differences with them.
- Women in communities are already key participants in conservation and conservancies in terms of *informal/additive* roles. For example, in some places women are out in the fields herding and cropping every day, and in that context they are keen observers of what's going on in terms of animal presence and behavior, sustainability, and conservation problems.
- Women rangers often de-escalate conflicts with poachers—women tend to use engagement as a first step, whereas men may be socialized to use enforcement as a first step. Women rangers increase anti-poaching patrol effectiveness in other ways, such as by being able to conduct home/body searches in instances where women are used to hide contraband.
- In their role as educators and primary caretakers of children, women start and sustain the conservation chain of knowledge and caring.

There are many positive examples of women's contributions as rangers, both in mixed-sex and women-only teams. These successes may provide key insights into best practices and lessons learned.

Having women in the ranger workforce can build different relationships with communities. Due to cultural barriers, male rangers often aren't able to build relationships across all members of communities. Women rangers can tap community-based women's networks and communications

flows more easily than men, thus potentially doubling the flow of information between rangers and community members about conservation, wildlife activities, or sustainability problems. In many parts of the world, rangers in the field are likely to encounter women on a daily basis: fuelwood and fodder collectors are mainly women from nearby villages. Having women in the ranger force can make these encounters less fraught.

Even if women in communities are not formally engaged in conservation activities, they may be well positioned to serve as citizen scientists; women rangers could tap into women's community networks to encourage this. The increasingly ubiquitous use by women of mobile banking in the Global South indicates growing use of mobile phones, which suggests another possibility: engaging community women as environmental rapporteurs.

A broader outcome of having more women rangers is that it might encourage women's participation in conservation/natural resource management more widely. This possible dynamic deserves closer examination.

### **Obstacles and challenges**

Most of the factors that limit women's equal participation in the ranger workforce are universal or nearly so, even if they turn up in distinctive context- and locale-specific forms. The key obstacles include:

- Culturally entrenched gender norms, presumptions, and traditional attitudes, often internalized and expressed by women as much as by men, hold women back from participating in activities that are variously defined (rightly or wrongly) as being "outdoors," physically arduous, possibly dangerous, and technically or scientifically oriented.

Men, conversely, are viewed as being more naturally suited and better equipped for all of these (presumed) attributes of a ranger. This male socialization is itself a gender-based

stressor, putting pressure on men to engage in masculine-normed behaviors that may be risky or dangerous.

Similar attitudes and presumptions have held women back from occupations such as police work or firefighting, but in many places some progress has been made in balancing those workforces. Examples and lessons learned from this progress could provide encouragement that gender balancing can be accomplished.

- Presumptions about women’s limitations and men’s abilities typically produce a ranger workforce that is rank-segregated by gender: most women occupy support or administrative roles (which also are often the lower-paid ranks); they are not promoted into or otherwise able to access the full range of ranger opportunities on the same terms as men.

When women occupy segregated employment niches, they may be outside the loop of information-sharing and important decision-making meetings and channels.

- Women rangers face high levels of gender-based violence (GBV) and harassment from fellow rangers and supervisors, across all sites from the field to the office. Exact data are scarce but externally observed evidence as well as experience-based narratives by women in the ranger ranks point to harassment as frequent and widespread, and GBV as a persistent danger (US National Park Service 2017). LGBT or other minorities are likely to be even more vulnerable, although data on this are even more elusive.
- Increasing trends towards “green militarization,” especially in anti-poaching efforts, heighten the masculinization of the ranger workforce and exacerbate all of the above factors. There are counter-examples of gender-integrated or women-only anti-poaching teams that achieve considerable success with less-militarized approaches (IAPF, n.d.).
- Across all levels from global to local, ranger

offices and organizations do not have in place policy frameworks, accountability mechanisms, or expertise capacities to shift these dynamics.

- Likewise, ranger organizations, offices, government ministries, community leaders, and official leaders seldom make explicit, public, and consistent commitments to gender equality. Leadership in prioritizing gender equality is essential.

Parallel general analyses of staffing of protected areas point to similar gender dynamics (Hill Rojas 2001; Aguilar 2004; Gonzales 2007; Badola 2014; CPAM 2020).

**Cultural shifts and changes in attitudes are necessary but not sufficient; “structure” counts as much as “attitude”**

Traditional attitudes around gender norms and appropriate activities for men and women hold back gender equality in the ranger workforce. Ranger entities alone can’t be held responsible for creating society-wide cultural shifts, but they have important contributions to make. The ranger workforce can model gender equality, and bringing gender balance to ranger work can be a catalyst for social change as well as helping elevate the overall importance of conservation.

Within ranger entities, leading from the top is key to righting the gender imbalance. Senior managers, supervisors, and leaders (at all levels) set the tone for organizations and workforces. Many of the specific recommendations provided in the final section of this paper are aimed at setting appropriate leadership parameters that will in turn create a culture of equal opportunity.

But good intentions and attitude shifts (even sweeping cultural shifts, if imaginable) alone will not solve the gender imbalance problem. There are specific structural impediments that prevent women being integrated into the ranger workforce on equal terms with men, which must be acknowledged and mitigated. These include:

- **Hostile ranger work environments**, including widespread sexual harassment and GBV,

combined with lax systems of accountability that provide impunity for abusers. One (male) conservation expert remarked that in the ranger workforce there is often “an entrenched, closed ‘brotherhood’ culture, based on shared hardship and experiences all the way from training school, often linked to drinking, customs and rituals etc. It is almost impossible for women to break into this (even if they wanted to). To change this, we need to work from the very first levels of training.”

- **The increasing militarization of ranger work** in many parts of the world: this produces and provides the logic for increased masculinization in a workforce that is already heavily gender unbalanced.
- **Specific recruitment practices** that often discourage women from applying (see “Recommendations,” below), as do girls’ and women’s internalized attitudes about their limitations. An “upstream” strategy is needed to put girls on the path to the right education to become a ranger.
- **Pervasive sex-segregation**, whereby women are channeled into certain jobs and seldom hired or promoted into other ranks. Women who do become rangers often tend to do jobs that are defined as “women’s work” related to office work, administration, education, awareness, tourism, and community outreach. While these are positions of critical importance, they can also become occupational traps for women, who are then often passed over for promotion to positions that have responsibility for wider ranger operations.
- **A lack of specific workplace and employment practices that support gender equality**, such as provision of maternity and paternity leave policies, daycare, accommodation for workers who are pregnant, and promotion and reward systems that aren’t predicated on field patrol experience. Few ranger entities currently have such policies. The challenges to women who are pregnant were detailed in the latest survey of ranger working conditions (Belecky et al. 2019): “Last year I got pregnant but I had to execute my responsibilities, including going for patrols. We

usually patrol for 15 days before coming back to camp. I was part of the patrol until I was six-months pregnant. It was an experience I wished I could avoid but couldn’t because not going to the patrols meant no extra allowances which I desperately needed. Most female rangers do this, which is extremely risky for both mother and child.”

- **Inadequate assessment of gender-differentiated needs** in terms of *specific* working conditions and provisions (including toilets, uniforms, and security provisions). Currently, toilet, water, and sanitation provisions are far from adequate for all rangers (Belecky et al. 2019), but the repercussions for women are more limiting.
- **Perpetuating the burden of minority status** by integrating women into ranger teams (whether office or field) in very small numbers, often literally one by one. This puts all the responsibility on those women to “cope” with the gender imbalances—and sets them up for failure. There is a large academic and practice-based literature on when the integration of women begins to have an organizational impact. As a general finding, the culture of organizations starts to shift toward gender balancing at about the 30% threshold, with 50% as the goal.
- **Not having structural changes in place to support incoming women recruits.** Introducing female quotas might be an effective strategy, but mandated quotas or hiring targets can only be successful *after* systems are in place to enable and support the women hired. Structural changes must lay the conceptual groundwork and attitudinal shift for hiring and acceptance of female rangers.
- **Limited capacity to deal with GBV and harassment.** As a general rule, ranger organizations don’t have established mechanisms to identify and remedy GBV behaviors; resulting *ad hoc* responses are often re-traumatizing for the survivor.

In other words, many workplace practices, structures, and norms need to be assessed and transformed at the same time that “attitudes” are

being challenged and changed. These multiple approaches then work synergistically to amplify and accelerate successful and sustainable gender balancing.

The specific recommendations provided below offer a guide to some of the key structural changes that could be enacted to move towards successful gender balancing.

### **Green militarization**

In response to increasingly commercialized and violent poaching activities, in many countries ranger work has become more risky and violent. While this may be a necessary (and reluctant) shift, the change to militarized ranger work also has important gendered consequences:

- It draws on, privileges, and reinforces a macho version of masculinized approaches to being a ranger (which in itself is unhealthy and risky for men).
- Women are widely seen to be unsuited for work that involves heavy arms; handling of heavy armaments is almost everywhere seen to flout gender norms of femininity.
- It escalates the potential for violence between different ranger teams (e.g., community patrol teams and ranger patrol teams) as well as between rangers and communities.
- It can lead to less effective conservation, alienating communities from ranger teams (which then also makes it even harder to recruit women) (Duffy 2014, 2019).
- Firearms, protective equipment, and associated technology surveillance are expensive; given finite and “one-pie” budgets, more money spent on militarized ranger activities (male) usually comes at the expense of “soft skills” ranger activities (female) such as interpretive and educational services (Duffy 2014, 2019). The shift in budget allocations/priorities is a gendered shift.



Bhutanese rangers | SIMON RAWLES / WWF-UK

Having more gender-balanced ranger workforces may open up a path towards less-militarized and de-escalated approaches—although more evidence and more analysis on this dynamic is needed (IAPF, n.d.). Women might be able to deploy community-based diplomacy and de-escalation in conflicts over land or wildlife management, both because of their access to women’s networks and because they are less likely to be socialized to think of armaments as a frontline tool. This would reduce risk for all parties; women and men rangers as well as communities would benefit from less-violent approaches.

The success of gender-integrated and women-only anti-poaching teams offers a counter-narrative to the emerging sense that militarization is imperative. The Akashinga female ranger teams in Zimbabwe, for example, are given full paramilitary training, but their activities are proving more effective, less violent, and less prone to corruption than those of male ranger teams. The International Anti-Poaching Foundation (IAPF, n.d.), reflecting on its experiences with the all-women Akashinga ranger team, reports: “These women have achieved what few armies in history have come close to—they won the hearts and minds of the local population. If given the opportunity, women will change the face of conservation forever.”

### **Sexual violence and harassment**

The ranger workplace can be particularly hostile for women and sexual minorities (Castañeda et al. 2020). This is a global issue. Although there is limited quantitative information on rates and incidence (see US National Park Service 2017), the available evidence reveals that women (and some men) in the ranger workforce routinely experience GBV and harassment. Non-binary, LGBT, and other minorities are likely to be at even greater risk. This includes ranger-on-ranger violence/harassment, and harassment in offices where there are steep power differences and limited channels to report and seek recourse for abuse. Impunity is endemic, with few established protocols for dealing with harassers.

There is also credible evidence of sexualized violence against community women by male rangers, especially anti-poaching rangers who may use violence or the threat of violence against community members to extract information on poaching (OHCHR 2010; McVeigh 2019). The militarization of ranger work will escalate the likelihood of these abuses.

Evidence from the humanitarian and development communities establishes that GBV, especially in “the field,” is enabled or fueled by a “cowboy” culture (“There’s a sense they are out there on the range and there’re no sheriff in town and they can get away with anything”); power difference dynamics that shield abusers who may be in senior management positions and prevent women from reporting abuses through official channels; organizations that don’t know how to handle reports of violence or harassment, nor how to support victims; and professional blowback for reporting assaults and harassment (Edwards 2017). These factors seem to be equally pertinent to ranger communities and workplaces.

For women rangers, both the office and the field can be dangerous work sites. It should be assumed that men too suffer sexual violence from other rangers, although there are even less data on this. Background data for the 2019 WWF report *Life on the Frontline* reveals this profile of the prevalence of violence (Table 1).

Sexual violence and harassment are always significantly underreported. Recent US criminal justice analysis, for example, estimates that only about 20% of sexual violence incidents are reported (USDOJ 2018).

### **Data, research, surveys**

There is very little systematically collected information on the specific experiences of women and men in the ranger workforce. Surveys and gender-disaggregated data collection can seem to be a low priority given the urgent material and organizational needs in ranger workforces, but in the absence

Subjected to sexual harassment or sexual violence within the previous 12 months?		
	Male	Female
By supervisor DURING COURSE OF WORK	1.0%	2.0%
By co-workers DURING COURSE OF WORK	1.1%	2.6%
By community members DURING COURSE OF WORK	1.6%	1.5%
By supervisor OFF-DUTY	0.7%	1.4%
By co-workers OFF-DUTY	0.8%	1.2%
By community members OFF-DUTY	1.1%	1.5%

**Table 1.** Percentage of respondents to Life on the Frontline survey reporting sexual harassment or violence (Belecky et al. 2019).

of quantitative data and qualitative narratives, discrimination can be trivialized and appropriate remedies for gender balancing left unexamined.

Further analysis would be helpful on questions such as whether more gender-balanced ranger workforces affect community interactions, make a discernible impact on conservation outcomes, and do in fact open up a path towards less-militarized and de-escalated conservation approaches. Partnerships with academics and others could produce mutually beneficial opportunities for research.

**Recommendations for moving towards a more gender-balanced ranger workforce:**  
**Contextual notes**

The specific recommendations below are framed by broad understandings of bringing gender change into established organizations.

1. Leadership counts. It is of the highest priority that senior managers and leaders make strong and unequivocal commitments to gender balancing. Accountability must flow both up and down the organizational ladder. Gender-balancing the ranks of leadership is among the highest priorities.
2. Structural changes are needed simultaneously with organizational commitments. It is not viable to just “drop” women into inequitable and structurally unsupportive workplaces. The ambition of equally integrating women into ranger workforces will be unattainable without changes in uniforms, work-transfer rules, security from harassment, etc.
3. Even though many of these recommendations are “universal,” as are many of the impediments to gender balancing, the differences in “North/South” ranger workforce conditions means that all recommendations will need to be enacted in locally sensitive ways. Global recommendations need localized solutions. However, sensitivity to local contexts must not be used as an explanation for inaction. The goal of a gender-balanced ranger workforce should be an unwavering commitment across all locales.
4. International forums such as the World Ranger Congress provide ideal opportunities to model and advance goals of gender balance—by featuring the work of women rangers, and by providing mentoring and role model interactivity. One overarching recommendation is to build on these existing platforms to create greater formalized connections among women across the global ranger workforce, perhaps by establishing a women’s network.
5. Data and information should report on gender. The WWF *Life on the Frontline* reports provide the most comprehensive basis for assessing the conditions for the ranger workforce and set a good example for a wide-net approach. Currently, this report provides a short gender snapshot, but doesn’t disaggregate data/information throughout. Future global ranger tracking tools by country should ensure all data are disaggregated by gender.
6. The militarization of ranger work poses complex challenges. Engaging stakeholders in an assessment of the effects of militarization—

including gendered effects—is critical. There is an urgent need for transnational sharing of green militarization experiences and a collective evaluation of its gender-differentiated consequences. Discussions about militarization also point to the need to reconsider the nature of ranger work overall. In general, women are often expected to perform in pre-defined male roles, rather than given room to redefine them.

### Specific recommendations

**1. Create the “upstream” conditions for a gender-balanced workforce.** Increasing the number of women and girls who consider ranger work to be a viable option requires education and outreach. This might be effectively achieved through partnering with schools and existing non-ranger-specific education programs.

Early pre- and in-service training for rangers should incorporate gender-related content, and also actively demonstrate gender equality in the personnel and topics.

**2. Develop enabling policies that establish gender equality as a priority mandate and mission for all ranger activities and workplaces.**

All domains of the ranger workforce should develop and promulgate policies, including mission statements, that unambiguously center gender equality as a priority goal. Models for this exist: for example, the National Wildlife Federation in the US offers this gender-sensitive mission statement: [www.nwf.org/About-Us/DEIJ](http://www.nwf.org/About-Us/DEIJ).

If there are national gender-equality laws and expectations, a localized policy to leverage and amplify those mandates should be developed. Ranger federations could review the equal opportunity legislation in the countries where they operate, and lobby for these to be improved if necessary.

Specific workplace and employment policies to support gender equality might include:

- Provision of maternity *and* paternity leave policies.
- Guaranteeing time off to male and female employees for taking care of ill family members.
- Daycare for children of both male and female employees.
- Accommodation for workers who are pregnant.
- Promotion and reward systems that aren’t predicated on field patrol experience.

Recruitment policies are particularly important. Announcements of ranger opportunities (paid or volunteer) should be couched in gender-neutral terms and specify a commitment to non-discrimination. Affirmative statements to the effect that “women and minorities are encouraged to apply” are often beneficial in establishing a diverse applicant pool.

Information materials on gender equality that explain why it is both a human rights imperative and a critically important goal for conservation and sustainability should be developed and distributed to all ranger offices, workplaces, and other sites. Gender-equality information training should be mandatory for all paid employees and volunteers involved in ranger work.

Accountability should be embedded in personnel review mechanisms to ensure that leaders and supervisors understand the importance of gender equality in their work and that they will be held responsible for its success. A good example of this is the *Gender Pay Gap* report of the UK Lake District National Park (Lake District National Park 2018).

**3. Create an information basis for effective action.** All offices should collect and maintain databases that include, at a minimum, the following information points, collected on a yearly basis. These data by necessity should be collected locally; if compiled at a subnational or national level, the local disaggregation should not be erased. All information should be anonymized and made publicly available.

- Raw numbers and the percentage of staff members and volunteers by gender identity (men, women, and non-binary).
- Employment data by gender identity cross-tabulated by work assignment and job type/rank/category (e.g., administrative staff, support staff, frontline rangers, pay level or volunteer status, seniority level)
- Promotion and progress-through-the-ranks data disaggregated by gender identity.
- Data on harassment and GBV to be collected through appropriate and confidential channels.

Sound policies require sound information. Surveys can help assess the gender-differentiated experiences of being in the ranger workforce, both positive and negative, including gender-specific experiences of violence and discrimination. A good model for a sexual violence survey might be the “Stop the Sexual Assault” reports developed to track the experiences of humanitarian and development aid workers (Mazurana 2017).

Doing a survey is, in itself, not sufficient: it’s important to develop a plan and timeline to refine lessons learned from the surveys (and from the data outlined above) and to develop action plans based on the findings.

**4. Create a safe and GBV-free work environment.** All entities that deploy rangers, from local offices to national ministries and international federations, should develop and promulgate policies that unambiguously prohibit all types of harassment and GBV. These policies and mandates need to explicitly prohibit harassment and GBV in workplaces and field sites, and interactions among rangers and between them and communities. Mandatory anti-harassment and anti-GBV trainings should be enacted in all settings where rangers work.

Personnel review and an independent grievance mechanism are needed to ensure that people credibly accused of harassment and GBV are investigated and, if found guilty, held accountable as per the legal framework of the country. People who engage in these activities must face serious

employment consequences—and possibly civil or criminal consequences—regardless of their rank or status. Zero-tolerance policies need to be set and enforced.

If there are national laws that prohibit workplace harassment and GBV, ranger organizations should ensure that all personnel are aware of those mandates and develop a localized policy to leverage and amplify them.

In the aftermath of recent exposés of high levels of sexual violence and coercion against humanitarian aid workers and against community women and girls by male humanitarian workers (e.g., the Oxfam crisis in Haiti), women founded a non-governmental organization called Report the Abuse ([www.eisf.eu/theme/managing-sexual-violence/report-the-abuse/](http://www.eisf.eu/theme/managing-sexual-violence/report-the-abuse/)) to monitor violence and provide peer support. A large part of the value of this organization is that it is independent, and its “Stop the Sexual Assault” reports provide a model that could be adapted for the ranger workforce (Mazurana 2017).

**5. Create enabling conditions of employment.** A taskforce (with equal representation of women and men, and equal representation of support and field staff), perhaps established through a regional ranger association, should undertake a needs inventory to identify the locally specific structural changes needed to create the conditions for appropriate integration of women into ranger workforces in the region. Undertaking a gender audit would identify practices that enable or inhibit gender equality in the workforce. This should include the higher-level policy actions described above, but also an assessment of nitty-gritty needs, such as gender-differentiated toilet and sanitary facilities, uniforms, training, and personal safety measures.

It is important to acknowledge that women almost always still have primary responsibility for childbearing and -bearing, household duties, and family needs *in addition* to their ranger responsibilities. Workplace rules and normal practices often disadvantage women while

advantaging men. Unplanned transfers, for example, are particularly challenging for women in the ranger workforce who are not able to relocate far from their family home, especially on short notice. Men, similarly, may not want to be transferred away from their home, but it is more socially acceptable for them to do so. In addition to job transfer policies, a needs assessment should focus on maternity policies, daycare provision, and provision for workers who are pregnant.

**6. Engage donors.** Some of the steps toward creating a more gender-balanced ranger workforce can be acted on with little expansion of resources. Others will require substantial increases in organizational capacity and financial resources. Setting up an ombudsperson office, for example, developing and holding all-office trainings, developing and processing surveys, or providing suitable sanitation facilities for rangers may take greater resources than many country and local offices currently possess. Ranger work in many countries is impoverished, often as reliant on volunteer community assistance as on paid professional staff. Nonetheless, these investments would yield hard-to-measure community benefits in return: providing facilities such as toilets, for example, that benefit both men and women, and that can support gender-balancing goals, will gain considerable community respect and support.

Donors increasingly require safeguarding policies and practices to be in place, or at least to be in credible stages of development. Many donors are keenly interested in gender integration. Campaigns could be developed to encourage donors to target gender safeguarding and equity. Dedicated donor support for gender balancing might be available if realistic planning commitments are on the table.

### **Acknowledgments**

Thanks to the following reviewers: Barney Long, Global Wildlife Conservation; Helen Anthem, Fauna & Flora International; Jamie McCallum, Force for Nature; Matthew Lowton, Zoological Society of London; Mike Appleton, IUCN WCPA; Rob Parry Jones, WWF International. With

contributions from the expert advisory group: Cate Owren, IUCN, USA; Donaxi Borjes Flores, Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas, Mexico; Hamera Aisha, WWF-Pakistan; Rizwana Aziz, Wildlife District Officer, Pakistan; Rohit Singh, WWF International.

### **References**

- Aguilar, L., M. Blanco, and P. Zúñiga. 2004. *Gender Makes the Difference*. Protected Areas Fact Sheet. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.
- Aldred, J. 2016. The all-female patrol stopping South Africa's rhino poachers. *The Guardian*, February 26. [www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/feb/26/the-all-female-patrol-stopping-south-africas-rhino-poachers](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/feb/26/the-all-female-patrol-stopping-south-africas-rhino-poachers)
- Allendorf, T.D., and K. Allendorf. 2013. Gender and attitudes toward protected areas in Myanmar. *Society & Natural Resources* 26(8): 962–976. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2012.729295>
- Badola, R., M. Ogra, and S. Barthwal. 2014. Ecodevelopment, gender, and empowerment: Perspectives from India's protected area communities. In *Global Perspectives on Gender and Space: Engaging Feminism and Development*, A.M. Oberhauser and I. Johnston-Anumonwo, eds. New York: Routledge.
- Belecky, M., R. Singh, and W. Moreto. 2019. *Life on the Frontline 2019: A Global Survey of the Working Conditions of Rangers*. Gland, Switzerland: WWF.
- Biermayr-Jenzano, P. 2003. *Maximizing Conservation in Protected Areas: Guidelines for Gender Consideration*. Policy Brief. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN, Population Reference Bureau.
- Büscher, B. 2018. From biopower to ontopower? Violent responses to wildlife crime and the new geographies of conservation. *Conservation and Society* 16(2): 157–169.
- Byrd, E.S., N.J. Olynk Widmar, E.A. Yeager, and J.G. Lee. 2017. Identifying wildlife species believed

to be deserving of protection from hunting by US residents. *Human Dimensions of Wildlife* 22(4): 374–381.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10871209.2017.1318323>

Castañeda Camey, I., L. Sabater, C. Owren, and A.E. Boyer. 2020. *Gender-based Violence and Environment Linkages: The Violence of Inequality*. J. Wen, ed. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

Clancy, K.B.H., R.G. Nelson, J.N. Rutherford, and K. Hinde. 2014. Survey of academic field experiences (SAFE): Trainees report harassment and assault. *PLoS One* 9(7): e102172.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0102172>

CPAM [Center for Protected Area Management], Colorado State University. 2020. Gender and protected areas. <https://warnercnr.colostate.edu/cpam/gender-protected-areas>

Duffy, R. 2014. Waging a war to save biodiversity: The rise of militarized conservation. *International Affairs* 90(4): 819–834.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12142>

Duffy, R., F. Massé, E. Smidt, E. Marijnen, B. Büscher, J. Verweijen, M. Ramutsindela, T. Simlai, L. Joanny, and E. Lunstrum. 2019. Why we must question the militarisation of conservation. *Biological Conservation* 232: 66–73.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2019.01.013>

Edwards, S. 2017. Sexual assault and harassment in the aid sector: Survivor stories. *Devex*, February 7. [www.devex.com/news/sexual-assault-and-harassment-in-the-aid-sector-survivor-stories-89429](http://www.devex.com/news/sexual-assault-and-harassment-in-the-aid-sector-survivor-stories-89429)

Edwards, S. 2017. LGBT, female aid workers at risk of sexual assault, report finds. *Devex*, June 6. [www.devex.com/news/lgbt-female-aid-workers-at-risk-of-sexual-assault-report-finds-90428](http://www.devex.com/news/lgbt-female-aid-workers-at-risk-of-sexual-assault-report-finds-90428)

González, A.M., and A. S. Martin. 2007. Gender in the conservation of protected areas. *Innovations in Conservation Series. Parks in Peril Program*. Arlington, VA: The Nature Conservancy.

Hill Rojas, M., J. Dain, and C. Campbell. 2001. Community conservation and protected area management with a gender perspective: a synthesis. *Women in Development Technical Assistance Project (WIDTECH) Information Bulletin*, August.

IAPF [International Anti-Poaching Foundation]. (n.d.) Akashinga: Nature protected by women. <https://www.iapf.org/akashinga>

Kellert, S.R., and J.K. Berry. 1987. Attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors toward wildlife as affected by gender. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 15(3): 363–371.

Lake District National Park. 2018. *Gender Pay Gap Report*. Kendal, UK: Lake District National Park Authority. [www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/141362/Gender-Pay-Gap-Report-2017.pdf](http://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/141362/Gender-Pay-Gap-Report-2017.pdf)

Mariki, S.B. 2016. Social impacts of protected areas on gender in West Kilimanjaro, Tanzania. *Open Journal of Social Sciences* 4(3): 220–235. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/jss.2016.43028>

Mazurana, D. 2002. International peacekeeping operations: To neglect gender is to risk peacekeeping failure. In *The Postwar Moment: Militaries, Masculinities and International Peacekeeping*, C. Cockburn and D. Zarkov, eds. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 41–50.

Mazurana, D., and P. Donnelly. 2017. *Stop the Sexual Assault Against Humanitarian And Development Aid Workers*. Boston: Feinstein International Center, Tufts University. <http://fic.tufts.edu/publication-item/stop-sexual-assault-against-aid-workers>

OHCHR [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights]–Nepal, 2010. *Investigating Allegations of Extra-Judicial Killings in the Terai: OHCHR–Nepal Summary of Concerns, July 2010*. Kathmandu: OHCHR–Nepal.

Oxfam. 2018. *One-Oxfam Policy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*. Nairobi: Oxfam.  
[www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/one\\_oxfam\\_psea\\_policy\\_en.pdf](http://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/one_oxfam_psea_policy_en.pdf)

McVeigh, K. 2019. WWF accused of funding guards 'who tortured and killed scores of people.' *The Guardian*, March 4.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/mar/04/wwf-accused-of-funding-guards-who-allegedly-tortured-killed-scores-of-people>

USAID [US Agency for International Development] Office of Women in Development. 2001. GenderReach Project. *Gender Matters Quarterly*, 3.  
[http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PNACP513.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNACP513.pdf)

USDOJ [US Department of Justice]. 2018. *Criminal Victimization Revised 2016*. Washington, DC: USDOJ.  
[www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv16.pdf](http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv16.pdf)

US National Park Service. 2017. *Technical Report: Work Environment Survey*. Washington, DC: National Park Service.  
<https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/upload/NPS-WES-Technical-Report-20170929-Accessible.pdf>

van Eeden, L.M., K. Slagle, T.M. Newsome, M.S. Crowther, C.R. Dickman, and J.T. Bruskotter. 2020. Exploring nationality and social identity to explain attitudes toward conservation actions in the United States and Australia. *Conservation Biology* 34(5): 1165–1175. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.13488>

World Ranger Congress. 2019. *Chitwan Declaration*. International Ranger Federation Congress, Nepal.  
[www.internationalrangers.org/wp-content/uploads/Chitwan-Declaration\\_2019\\_EN.pdf](http://www.internationalrangers.org/wp-content/uploads/Chitwan-Declaration_2019_EN.pdf)

WWF [World Wide Fund for Nature]. 2001. *Social Dimensions in a Biological World: Integrating Gender and Conservation in Priority Ecoregions*. Washington, DC: WWF Conservation Strategies Unit. [http://wwf.panda.org/about\\_our\\_earth/all\\_publications/?4262/Social-Dimensions-in-a-Biological-World](http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/all_publications/?4262/Social-Dimensions-in-a-Biological-World)



The Interdisciplinary Journal of Place-based Conservation

Co-published by the [Institute for Parks, People, and Biodiversity](#), University of California, Berkeley and the [George Wright Society](#). ISSN 2688-187X

Berkeley [Institute for Parks, People, and Biodiversity](#)



### Citation for this article

Seager, Joni, Gillian Bowser, and Anwasha Dutta. 2021. Where are the women? Towards gender equality in the ranger workforce. *Parks Stewardship Forum* 37(1): 206–218.

*Parks Stewardship Forum* explores innovative thinking and offers enduring perspectives on critical issues of place-based heritage management and stewardship. Interdisciplinary in nature, the journal gathers insights from all fields related to parks, protected areas, cultural sites, and other place-based forms of conservation. The scope of the journal is international. It is dedicated to the legacy of [George Meléndez Wright](#), a graduate of UC Berkeley and pioneer in conservation of national parks.

*Parks Stewardship Forum* is published online at <https://escholarship.org/uc/psf> through [eScholarship](#), an open-access publishing platform subsidized by the University of California and managed by the California Digital Library. Open-access publishing serves the missions of the IPPB and GWS to share, freely and broadly, research and knowledge produced by and for those who manage parks, protected areas, and cultural sites throughout the world. A version of *Parks Stewardship Forum* designed for online reading is also available at <https://parks.berkeley.edu/psf>.

*Parks Stewardship Forum* is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).

The journal continues *The George Wright Forum*, published 1981–2018 by the George Wright Society.

Designed by Laurie Frasier • [lauriefrasier.com](http://lauriefrasier.com)



### On the cover of this issue

Family exploring tidepools at Cabrillo National Monument, California. | [GEDAPIX](#)

The entire issue is available at <https://escholarship.org/uc/psf>.