

UIAA MOUNTAIN WORKER INITIATIVE

The UIAA – International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation – stands for fair and responsible climbing, mountaineering and mountain tourism.

The Mountain Workers Initiative aligns with:

- Article 4 of the UIAA Articles of Association, purposes and tasks;
- The strategic priorities as defined in UIAA's Strategic Plan 2021 – 2024: "setting, maintaining and improving high standards" and "assisting and supporting national federations and their members";
- The UIAA Profile as approved by the General Assembly 2019;
- The UIAA Core Values of responsibility, respect, credibility, honesty and solidarity;
- Goals as defined in the Strategic Plan: #2 (responsible access), #6 (training), #10 (sustainability), #11 (assisting national federations), #13 (international cooperation), #14 (strengthening relationships).

Background

The UIAA has always acknowledged that the indigenous peoples of mountain areas all over the world have made a decisive contribution to the development of mountaineering and mountain tourism. This has been the case from the initial development of mountain sports in Europe and North America right through to the current situation in the Asia, Africa and Central and South America. On the other hand, adventurers, climbers, mountaineers and travellers have generated income and have contributed to improved living conditions in mountain areas ever since.

Unfortunately and too often, mountain workers aren't treated fairly when it comes to remuneration, safety and living/hygiene standards, although they are a vitally essential element of climbing, mountaineering and mountain tourism. Furthermore, they have enormous responsibility towards their clients, the environment, their own and their client's safety, etc.

Consequently, the UIAA has initiated a process in an effort to improve fair treatment of mountain workers on a global level. With this in mind, the UIAA is proposing and promoting a set of principles, questions and checklists for climbers, mountaineers, member associations and the mountain tourism industry.

The basic idea is to **encourage self-responsibility at all levels** and to help national and regional authorities and stakeholders develop a set of norms to ensure and improve ethical and fair treatment of mountain workers globally.

Mission

- To create **awareness** for authorities, travellers, climbers and mountaineers, clubs, member federations and the mountain tourism industry of problems related to local support workers' fair treatment, compensation and workplace health and safety.
- To offer **guidance** through a general framework of principles, questions and checklists around which individuals, organisers and authorities can assure themselves that good ethical principles are applied for local support workers. That they are treated fairly and equitably and are able to make a decent living for themselves and their families.
- To **motivate** all parties to continuously **monitor and improve** the mountain workers' situation in all parts of the world.
- To regularly **communicate** on best practice and progress on UIAA communication platforms, through UIAA's member federations and through international media.

All climbers, mountaineers, hikers, tourists and mountain travel organisers have a moral responsibility and duty to ensure that mountain workers, directly or indirectly employed, are properly looked after and cared for.

Principles, checklists and questions targeted at ensuring and improving workers' fair treatment, compensation and workplace health and safety

1 **Are mountain workers getting a fair day's pay for a fair day's work?**

A Wages

Is the pay based on the current and generally accepted pay and minimum wage structures in the region, with due consideration given to the efforts, skills, knowledge and responsibility required and expected for the job and the harsh work environment? Fair pay promotes commitment and motivation by the workers and helps ensure a good working relationship.

B Living wage, gratuities

Are wages adequate as a proper living wage without taking into account any gratuities? Tips should be a bonus earned by good or extraordinary service and not an expected rule.

C Hiring practices, agents

Are hiring practices for mountain workers free, fair and transparent? Can contract values or wage amounts be freely negotiated between the parties? Is the hiring of mountain workers controlled by agents to an unnecessary extent? Is the agent's compensation reasonable?

D Fees and taxes

Are any fees or taxes due to local authorities borne by the expedition or the hiring agency? These may not be deducted from workers' wages, unless the laws of the country dictate otherwise.

E Wage review

Are wages regularly reviewed based on the cost of living as defined by the country?

F Compensation for longer hours

If longer hours are required, will these be compensated?

G Training

Is proper training provided for mountain workers to qualify them for their demanding and challenging tasks and the harsh nature of the environment? Is further training provided so that there is a reasonable expectation and perspective of advancement and wage increase?

2 Are adequate working and living conditions in place?

A Compliance with legislation

Do organisers of climbing, mountaineering and trekking activities comply with the legislation of the country in which the activity takes place?

B Working hours

Are working hours, depending on the type of work to be performed, adequately planned to guarantee the safety and wellbeing of workers? Does the planning take into account realistic objectives, appropriate resting times during work and the hours of rest and sleep between days as well as the impact of meteorological conditions?

C Clothing and equipment

Are workers provided - by the organisers/agencies - with appropriate clothing and trekking, mountaineering and climbing equipment to perform their duties? Is the equipment appropriate to the meteorological conditions in which the activity is expected to take place, to the time of year and the terrain and the altitude?

D Water and meals

Is sufficient and safe water (or other beverages) and is a water purification system available? Are all daily meals for the workers provided for the duration of the expedition? Is food provided according to the needs of the workers? Are the places of consumption planned under best possible basic sanitary conditions?

E Medical training, equipment and care

Are medical training, first aid and medical equipment available and appropriate to the activity planned? Is best possible medical care for the mountain workers provided? Is there a sufficient number of staff to care for and accompany sick or injured workers? Is there first aid and medical treatment available at the overnight stops?

F Communication equipment

Is communication equipment available and adequate the conditions and risks in the region?

G Overnight accommodation and equipment

Is adequate overnight accommodation for mountain workers provided with respect to hygiene and comfort in camps and overnight stops? Is adequate overnight equipment for all workers available (good tents, sleeping mats and sleeping bags)?

3 Do organisers provide insurance or are adequate compensation arrangements for mountain workers?

A Search and rescue, medical care

Do mountain workers carry insurance or have authorities and/or organisers made similar compensation arrangements covering search and rescue, accidents and medical care if the country where the activity is being undertaken does not have an adequate public plan in place? This in order to ensure that appropriate care is provided to workers and their families after injury or fatality during the service period.

Do compensation arrangements or does the insurance plan cover mountain workers' evacuation and medical needs to place them back in a situation as close as possible to their conditions before their injury?

B Income during recovery

Do compensation arrangements or does the insurance plan cover an income to provide for themselves and their family during the recovery from an injury adequate to their needs according to the norms of the country?

C Compensation in case of fatality

In the case of a death of a mountain worker, will the family be compensated to cover the lost income and the transportation home and funeral costs?

Definitions:

“Expedition” – any activities in remote areas where one or more local support workers are engaged to provide services.

“Organiser” – a person including but not limited to individuals, expeditions, trekking companies, or tourist operators, howsoever organized, which engages one or more local support workers for the purpose of providing services to an expedition or trekking party.

“Personal Services” – including, but not limited to such as services as dealing with local accommodation providers, language interpretation, portering, installing fixed ropes, cooking, and herding supply animals.

“Mountain Workers, Support Workers” - means local peoples engaged by an organiser to support an expedition to remote mountain regions local to the worker.

“Decent Living”: is here defined as a minimum, as the level of the standard wage guideline for the country, region and community where the workers live and operate.