

## Ethics and Research Policy

Refugees International Women Empowerment Foundation (R.I.W.E.)

Varna, Bulgaria

2026

### 1. Purpose

Refugees International Women Empowerment Foundation (R.I.W.E.) conducts research, consultations, and analytical activities related to migration, refugee protection, gender equality, trafficking risks, and social inclusion.

This Ethics and Research Policy establishes the ethical principles and safeguards guiding all research, data collection, and analytical work carried out or supported by R.I.W.E., particularly when working with vulnerable populations such as displaced women, migrants, and survivors of violence.

The policy aims to ensure that research activities are conducted in a responsible, ethical, and respectful manner that protects the dignity, rights, safety, and confidentiality of all participants.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all research and analytical activities conducted by or on behalf of R.I.W.E., including:

- surveys and questionnaires
- interviews and focus groups
- community consultations
- participatory research initiatives
- policy analysis based on field data
- research collaborations with external partners

The policy applies to:

- staff members
- consultants and researchers
- volunteers
- project partners involved in research activities

### 3. Core Ethical Principles

R.I.W.E. research activities are guided by the following ethical principles:

Respect for Individuals

All participants must be treated with dignity, respect, and cultural sensitivity.

#### Voluntary Participation

Participation in research activities must always be voluntary and based on informed consent.

#### Do No Harm

Research methods must minimise any potential psychological, social, or reputational risks to participants.

#### Confidentiality and Privacy

Personal data and sensitive information must be protected and handled responsibly.

#### Integrity and Transparency

Research findings must be presented honestly and without manipulation or misrepresentation.

### 4. Informed Consent

Participants must be informed about:

- the purpose of the research
- how the data will be used
- whether participation is anonymous or identifiable
- their right to decline participation or withdraw at any time

Consent should be obtained verbally or in writing before participation begins.

When appropriate, participants may be provided with additional information about the organisation and the research objectives.

### 5. Protection of Vulnerable Participants

Given that many R.I.W.E. research activities involve vulnerable populations, additional safeguards must be applied when working with:

- refugees and displaced persons
- survivors of gender-based violence
- individuals exposed to trafficking risks
- young people or socially vulnerable individuals

Researchers must ensure:

- trauma-sensitive approaches
- avoidance of intrusive or harmful questioning
- availability of information about support services where relevant

## 6. Data Protection and Confidentiality

R.I.W.E. commits to protecting participants' personal data and sensitive information.

Measures include:

- anonymisation of survey responses whenever possible
- secure storage of collected data
- restricted access to research data
- use of aggregated data in public reports

Personal identifying information will not be disclosed without explicit consent unless required by law.

## 7. Ethical Data Use

Research data collected by R.I.W.E. will be used exclusively for:

- analytical and research purposes
- policy recommendations and advocacy
- awareness raising on issues affecting vulnerable populations

Data will not be used for commercial purposes.

## 8. Collaboration with Partners

When conducting joint research with partner organisations, R.I.W.E. promotes adherence to similar ethical standards.

Partners are encouraged to:

- follow ethical research practices
- respect confidentiality obligations
- protect vulnerable participants

Where appropriate, ethical considerations will be discussed at the project design stage.

## 9. Transparency of Research Outputs

R.I.W.E. aims to communicate research findings responsibly.

Public reports will:

- present aggregated and anonymised data

- avoid exposing individual participants
- reflect the perspectives and experiences of affected communities respectfully

## 10. Monitoring and Review

This Ethics and Research Policy will be periodically reviewed and updated as the organisation expands its research activities and partnerships.

Approved by:

Ivanna Khodos

Founder

Refugees International Women Empowerment Foundation (R.I.W.E.)

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