

Ethical Standards and Code of Conduct

Policy Owner	Scientific & Strategic Advisory Board
Approved By	ARNECH Scientific & Strategic Advisory Board
Effective Date	2021
Next Review Date	January 2027
Version	3.0
Applies To	All ARNECH staff, consultants, subcontractors, and field teams
Last Updated	January 2025

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the ethical standards and behaviours expected of everyone who represents ARNECH Research and Consulting Office ("ARNECH") staff, consultants, enumerators, subcontractors, and Advisory Board members in the conduct of research, evaluation, and consulting engagements.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all ARNECH personnel and third parties engaged on ARNECH projects, in all countries of operation, including fieldwork conducted on behalf of clients, donors, and research partners.

3. Policy Statement

ARNECH is committed to the highest standards of integrity, honesty, and professionalism in every engagement. All personnel are expected to:

- Obtain and comply with research ethics approval before any data collection involving human participants
- Obtain informed consent from participants, respecting their right to decline or withdraw at any point
- Report findings honestly and accurately, without fabrication, falsification, or selective omission
- Treat participants, colleagues, partners, and communities with respect, dignity, and cultural sensitivity
- Avoid any behaviour that could bring ARNECH, its clients, or its funders into disrepute
- Act with independence and objectivity, free from undue influence by clients, funders, or personal interest

4. Roles and Responsibilities

- The Scientific & Strategic Advisory Board is responsible for approving this policy and overseeing research ethics and integrity across ARNECH's portfolio.
- Unit Heads are responsible for ensuring project teams understand and apply this code of conduct, and for escalating ethics concerns.
- All staff and consultants are individually responsible for their own conduct and for reporting concerns about the conduct of others.

5. Procedures

- All studies involving human participants are submitted for ethics review by an appropriate institutional or national ethics committee prior to fieldwork.
- Field teams receive a briefing on this code of conduct, informed consent procedures, and reporting channels before deployment.
- Consultants and subcontractors are required to sign an undertaking to comply with this code as a condition of engagement.
- Breaches are recorded, investigated, and where substantiated, may result in termination of engagement and referral to relevant professional or regulatory bodies.

6. Reporting Concerns and Breaches

Concerns about ethical conduct may be raised with a Unit Head, the Scientific & Strategic Advisory Board, or through ARNECH's confidential whistleblowing channel (see the Anti-Fraud, Bribery, Corruption and Whistleblowing Policy). Reports are treated confidentially and investigated promptly, with protection against retaliation for those raising concerns in good faith.

7. Training and Awareness

All new staff and consultants complete an induction covering this code of conduct and research ethics principles. Refresher briefings are provided ahead of fieldwork for studies involving vulnerable populations or sensitive topics.

8. Related Standards and References

This policy is aligned with the following external standards and frameworks:

ALLEA European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity — <https://allea.org/code-of-conduct/>

WMA Declaration of Helsinki — Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects — <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-declaration-of-helsinki-ethical-principles-for-medical-research-involving-human-subjects/>

9. Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed by the Scientific & Strategic Advisory Board at least every two years, or sooner where changes in law, donor requirements, or organisational practice require it. Comments and proposed amendments may be submitted to the Policy Owner at any time.

Registration certificates, financial statements, and full policy documentation are available on request for prospective partners, clients, and funders as part of due diligence.

