



2024/2025 Annual Statement of Research Integrity

IIED is undertaking an annual report on research ethics and integrity in alignment with the [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#) as revised in 2025 and using the annual statement reporting template prepared by the [UK Committee on Research Integrity](#) for the period from July 2024 to July 2025.

Section 1: Key Contact Information

Question	Response
Name of Organisation	International Institute for Environment and Development
Type of Organisation	Independent research performing organisation
Date Statement Approved by Governing Body	
Web address of organisation's research integrity page	https://www.iied.org/research-excellence-impact
Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Anna Schulz Email: ethics@iied.org
Names member of staff who will act as the first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity	Name: Nadine Benson Email: ethics@iied.org

Section 2: Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture

2A. Description of current systems and culture

IIED has been undergoing a change process that has substantially reformed IIED's governance and policies. As part of this process IIED has undertaken the development and review of many policies that underpin IIED's approach to research integrity. Many of these were revised and or adopted in 2024/2025. In addition, IIED also adopted new governance structures—the Research and Learning Committee (RLC) and a revamped Research Ethics Committee (REC)—to provide guidance and oversight of research integrity.

Overarching these changes in July 2024, IIED adopted its [Manifesto for a thriving world](#) which outlines [IIED's institutional values](#), including respect and dignity, care, justice and fairness, ethical partnership, transformational change, and inclusion and equity (See Table 1 below). These values underpin everything IIED does and directly correlate to IIED's approach to research integrity and ethics in line with the [UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#), which is centred around the values of honesty, rigour, transparency and open communication, care and respect, and accountability, the [Montreal Statement on Research Integrity in Cross-Boundary Research Collaborations](#), and the [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#), among others. As part of these values, IIED prioritises trust, transparency, integrity, equity and collaboration, all of which provide important foundations for ethical research across the organisation and in our international research partnerships.

Table 1. IIED Values

Respect and dignity	We build mutual trust and respect local knowledge. We act transparently and with integrity and treat each other with consideration.
Care	We prioritise wellbeing and care towards each other, our partners and collaborators, marginalised groups and the planet.
Justice and fairness	We address social, economic and environmental injustices and unfair power dynamics, embedding decoloniality principles in our everyday actions and outputs.
Ethical partnership	We proactively seek to collaborate with others, break down silos and share power with our partners.
Transformational change	We do everything we can to deliver impactful and systemic change that addresses major environmental, economic and social challenges and inequity.
Inclusion and equity	We approach gender justice and anti-racism through an intersectional lens, where equity and inclusion are championed through daily active allyship.

The following sections will provide an overview of IIED's policies and systems, communications and engagement, and monitoring and reporting for 2024-2025.

Policies and systems

IIED transitioned to a new governance structure during May 2024. The existing Research Strategy Team (RST) and Research Ethics Committee (REC), both of which reported to the institute's Strategic Management Team (SMT), were replaced by the Research and Learning Committee (RLC), which reports to a new constituted Strategy and Leadership Council (SLC), and a renewed Research Ethics Committee reporting to the RLC. One of the central roles of the RLC as outlined in its terms of reference is to 'ensure the successful leadership and management of research quality and integrity – including developing a shared understanding of research quality and good practice, ensuring consistently high and ethical standards'.

There are a broad range of policies at IIED that support or touch upon research ethics. The core policies include the Policy on Integrity and Ethics in Research, Research Partnerships, and Policy Engagement (Research Ethics Policy) and the Peer Review Policy, as well as other policies addressing safeguarding, GDPR, conduct and disciplinary procedures, and others. A full list of policies and their relation to IIED's research ethics processes are listed below in Table 2. At its core these policies comprise an ethics ecosystem at IIED that guide research conduct and behaviour, including guard rails to prevent and address research misconduct. At the core REP establishes a process of research ethics review before project initiation that supports the identification and mitigation of associated ethical issues, including around research partnership, GDPR and safeguarding. The policy requires additional reviews conducted annually for any project identified as high risk. Importantly, the REP outlines that research should be designed, undertaken and reviewed to ensure integrity, quality and transparency throughout the research process.

Communications and engagement

Staff engage with IIED ethics policies through communications from RLC, REC and training sessions by the people team, and the policies are accessible through an online library. All new staff are given a suite of ethics-related induction sessions, including one on research at IIED, which covers the REP and research ethics process, as well as mandatory, annual training on GDPR and business compliance, which covers GDPR, whistleblowing and safeguarding. Additionally, training sessions are held around the release of new policies, and IIED recently organised a series of sessions for managers following the updating of its safeguarding policy. Updates on new policies are communicated to staff during weekly all-staff meetings and ethical issues, such as partnership, are integrated into conversations during semi-annual learning events. IIED, as an organisation, recognises the importance of continuous professional development and the role that informal learning opportunities can play in supporting a culture that supports research integrity and ethics.

Table 2. IIED Research Ethics-Related Policies

Policy	Adopted/ Reviewed	Notes
Research Ethics Policy (REP)	Nov 2022	Foundational policy for research ethics and integrity at IIED.
Peer Review Policy	Jan 2020	A central component of research integrity and ethics. Supports strong quality control.
Data Protection Policy	Aug 2023	Brings IIED into compliance with UK GDPR requirements. As a research organisation this applies to all personal data collected during research. This policy is explicitly linked to the REP.
Data Retention and Storage Policy	Oct 2021	Explicitly linked to the REP. Outlines where and how specific types of data can be stored and used.
Equitable Representation on Panels Guidance	Apr 2025	Not linked to the REP. This guidance supports IIED and partners to ensure diverse representation on panels.
Anti Harassment and Anti-Bullying Policy	Oct 2019	Not specifically linked to REP, however the behaviours addressed in this policy undermine a constructive research environment.
Code of Conduct	Mar 2025	Requires the highest degree of ethical conduct by all employees. Requires all employees and related personnel to communicate and use information in compliance with the REP and the Data Protection Policy.
Safeguarding Policy	Dec 2024	Details IIED's approach to safeguarding to protect and safeguard everyone working with IIED and programme and research participants. Also elaborates IIED's approach to safeguarding when working with research partners.
Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy	May 2022	Zero tolerance for bribery, fraud and corruption. Does not specifically mention REP but has significant bearing on the behaviour and obligations of IIED in its research activities and its relationship with research partners.
Conflict of Interest Policy	Aug 2024	Requires employees, trustees and associates to declare conflicts of interest.
Equity, Inclusion and Justice Strategy (2024-2029) and Equity, Inclusion and Justice Policy	Mar 2025	References the REP as addressing EIJ in research.
Due Diligence of Partners Policy	May 2025	Outlines the way in which IIED works with academic and research partners, including due diligence assessments. Defines due diligence processes related to partners, including linking into research ethics processes, and ensures partners are aligned around core values and ethical practices, GDPR requirements and safeguarding.
Partnership Statement	Apr 2019	This document describes IIED's approach to partnerships, in particular research partnerships.
Donor Due Diligence Policy	May 2025	Does not specifically mention REP but does aim to ensure that donors for our work are aligned to our mission and values and are undertaking due diligence themselves.
Procurement Policy	May 2025	Outlines the process of procurement, requires research teams to ensure procurement meets ethical and sustainability requirements.
Complaints Procedure		An older policy that provides a vehicle for internal staff to make a complaint against IIED, including related to research ethics and integrity. The whistleblowing policy is a more up to date vehicle.
Whistleblowing Policy	Mar 2025	This policy creates an online tool for whistleblowing, including related to any breach of internal policies and procedures, and lays out a procedure for investigation.

Serious Incident Reporting Procedure	Dec 2024	Defines the process for reporting serious incidents to the UK Charity Commission, which includes personal data breaches and safeguarding incidents, which are also governed by research ethics-related policies.
Data Breach Policy	Aug 2023	Outlines the process once a data breach has occurred. Does not mention the REP, but safeguarding data is a core feature of the REP.
Disciplinary Procedure	Mar 2025	Linked to the REP. Outlines the disciplinary procedure for gross misconduct and general misconduct. Violations of the REP could result in deployment of the disciplinary procedure.
Environmental Policy	Aug 2024	Not linked to the REP currently.

Culture, development and leadership

Leadership around research integrity and ethics is undertaken by RLC and REC, and issues of equity, inclusion and justice (EIJ) are addressed in IIED's EIJ Committee as well as the race and racism and gender justice working groups. IIED has been undergoing a period of change as part of institutional restructuring—as a result IIED's ethics governance systems and institutional bodies are still new, having come into effect within this reporting period.

Monitoring and reporting

IIED has several processes in place for monitoring and reporting. When project ethics reviews identify higher ethical risks, these projects undergo annual ethics reviews. As part of monitoring, IIED has a whistleblowing policy that enables anonymous reporting of breaches of research ethics and integrity standards.

Additionally, IIED undertakes the preparation of an annual Statement of Research Ethics to report transparently on its management of research ethics and integrity issues. These processes allow for the identification of potential research ethics and integrity breaches, as well as supporting IIED to adapt and improve its research ethics and integrity processes over time. The preparation of annual statements lapsed during the change process; however, the new governance systems will put in place processes to assure that annual reporting requirements become a routine part of IIED's ethics architecture. Beyond formal structures, governance arrangements and policies, IIED recognises that the context in which IIED executes research is rapidly evolving. This includes a diminishing ODA budget, the rise of mis- and dis-information and the advent of AI. IIED supports a culture of reflection, discussion and debate that reflects on how researchers conduct research with integrity and ethics in a changing world. This is supported through, for instance the creation of a Teams channel to facilitate ongoing conversations around AI.

2B. Changes and developments during the period under review

The period of review includes the adoption and implementation of key elements of IIED's ongoing change process and therefore broad changes have been made to the structures related to culture, governance and practice of research integrity and ethics at the institute. This includes the adoption of a new set of guiding values, implementation of a new governance structure, review and in some cases revision of major policies, as outlined above, the culmination of work towards an equity, inclusion and justice policy, and piloting new systems around research ethics misconduct.

Nearly all the systems described under policies and systems underwent change, development or adoption during the period under review and those changes are outlined in section 2A. In addition to changes to governance, IIED has also made several important changes to its people management, including the hiring of a talent and organisational development manager who centralises responsibility for training within the organisation. This is expected to strengthen compliance with mandatory ethics training session and support further training for staff in ethics and research integrity.

2C. Reflections on progress and plans for future developments

The reporting period under consideration included the culmination of IIED's change process, uncertainty around institutional structure, and standing up new governance systems. The change process at IIED

Table 3. Key Activities February 2024 – May 2025

Review of the 2022 UKRI Funding Assurance Report and the 2021 Research Ethics External Reviews
Updated the REC terms of reference to reflect UKRI and external review recommendations, including a broader, learning-based approach to research ethics
Developed a comprehensive Research Ethics Approach and Annual Workplan to implement recommendations from UKRI and the external review and prepared a corresponding budget for FY24
Strengthened the REC by bringing together researchers from a range of disciplines and introducing for the first time dedicated expertise on AI-related ethical issues
Developed a plan to update the current Research Ethics Policy to align with the UK Concordat and IIED's new institutional values, including decolonial and feminist approaches
Created institutional tools and process to address plagiarism within IIED, and tested the tools and process with two plagiarism cases brought to the REC
Conducted four full ethics reviews
Facilitated one broader research ethics engagement (Ethical Dilemmas Café) at an all Institute Retreat

slowed progress on revision of the REP and Peer Review policies and associated processes such as the development of new research ethics review and peer review forms, as well as templates for informed consent and others. This is in part a sequencing issue, as the values, new governance processes and institutional structure need to be in place to undertake the policy reviews and revision.

However, while the REP policy and processes have not been updated yet, IIED has very successfully integrated the REP into numerous other policies. This has created an ecosystem of policies that bear on research ethics and integrity and that supports integrating research ethics and integrity considerations across IIED's policy and governance systems. Additionally, more ambitious plans for completely new ethics systems that would embed research ethics fully into our learning processes are envisaged in the future.

Section 3: Addressing research misconduct

3A. Statement on processes that the organisation has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct

As part of its policy ecosystem IIED has whistleblowing procedures to support the reporting of alleged research misconduct. The REP outlines consequences of research misconduct, and additionally serious misconduct around data collection and use, safeguarding, other behaviours such as harassment and bullying are addressed in separate policies. Most research misconduct is dealt with through a REC investigation and where misconduct is found the REC provides guidance to staff on how to improve research integrity through its findings. Where serious misconduct has occurred, including around safeguarding, data collection and use, and gross misconduct, such incidents go through IIED's disciplinary procedure and statutory reporting of the incidents occurs as required by law.

3B. Information on investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken July 2024-July 2025

During the reporting period, IIED had two instances of alleged research misconduct, both of which related to plagiarism. One of the cases related to an internal document not for external publication and the other to a published report. Both instances of plagiarism were identified at draft stage before publication. As IIED did not have a process in place to address plagiarism, REC developed and trialled a robust new procedure. The process includes documentation of the incident, a preliminary review and assessment by REC, a process to engage with the individuals involved, and as appropriate issuing recommendations for corrective action and/or escalation to the RLC and SLC to take decisions and/or disciplinary action. The cases were formally investigated by the REC, through this new procedure which

upheld that plagiarism had occurred and REC recommended corrective action. Those involved were counselled by senior colleagues to ensure that no similar issues arise.

Table 3. Alleged Misconduct at IIED

Type of Allegation	Number of Allegations			
	Number of allegations reported to the organisation	Number of formal investigations	Number upheld in part after formal investigation	Number upheld in full after formal investigation
Fabrication				
Falsification				
Plagiarism	2	2		2
Failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations				
Misrepresentation (e.g. data; involvement; interests; qualification; and/or publication history)				
Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct				
Multiple areas of concern (when received in a single allegation)				
<i>Other</i>				
Total:	2	2		2