

Institute of Domestic Violence, Religion & Migration (IDVRM) Safeguarding Policy

1. Purpose and Aims

The Institute of Domestic Violence, Religion & Migration (IDVRM) is a specialised evidence and practice platform dedicated to producing innovative research and intervention approaches to domestic violence and interconnected forms of violence in religious, migrant and ethnic minority contexts internationally. IDVRM's staff and affiliated members may directly or indirectly engage with vulnerable populations, sensitive data and community stakeholders. Hence, safeguarding is deeply embedded as a priority within IDVRM's operational framework.

The current Safeguarding Policy outlines IDVRM's commitment to upholding the highest standards of safeguarding across all areas of its work, ensuring that it takes all necessary measures to create a safe and secure environment for all individuals engaged in its activities, including staff, volunteers, partners, consultants and communities. The policy reflects our commitment to our [Core Values](#), as outlined thoroughly in our Code of Practice, including decolonial reflexivity, survivor-centred and trauma-informed research and practice and robust research ethics and integrity.

2. Commitment to Safeguarding against any Form of Abuse or Exploitation

At IDVRM, we believe that:

- All people, but especially victims and survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence and other forms of violence, have the right to live free from harm, abuse and exploitation.
- The welfare and safety of children, adults at risk and survivors of violence is paramount and everyone's responsibility.
- Safeguarding is everybody's duty and this includes staff, associates, partners and clients.
- Any research and international work must be based on a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of abuse, modern slavery, forced labour, human trafficking or other exploitative practices.

This commitment applies across all levels of operational activity including our organisational practices, services delivery, research and intervention programmes and collaborative projects.

3. Scope

Our Safeguarding Policy applies to anyone joining IDVRM in any capacity or affiliation, paid or unpaid. It covers all individuals associated with IDVRM, including staff, members, consultants, volunteers and honorary research associates, as well

as institutional partners and collaborators, funders and donors. The Safeguarding Policy refers to all IDVRM's activities, including:

- Research programmes and activities we lead, are part of or support
- Interventions and programmes we deliver in communities independently or on behalf of our clients
- Consultancy services we provide to clients, whether as a collective or individually under our IDVRM affiliation.
- Any other knowledge exchange or community engagement activity not covered by the above.

When we work in partnership with third parties, we expect the latter to follow the same standards, and we have processes in place to ensure this as outlined in IDVRM's Due Diligence Policy.

4. Safeguarding Standards Informing IDVRM's Safeguarding Policy

IDVRM's Safeguarding Policy is aligned with EU regulatory conventions, standards and guidelines, including the following:

- EU Charter of Fundamental Rights
- European Social Charter
- EU Victims' Rights Directive (2012/29/EU)

And UK-specific frameworks:

- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Care Act 2014
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Respect UK standards
- Women's Aid England Quality Standards
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act
- Charity Commission Safeguarding Guidance
- UK Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing regulations

As a UK-based organisation, IDVRM must abide by UK law and standards, but we understand that legal frameworks may differ around the world. While we take a context-specific approach to developing appropriate safeguarding protocols according to country, context and collaboration, all our projects' safeguarding protocols must follow the broad principles outlined in this policy regardless of geography.

5. IDVRM's Safeguarding Principles

IDVRM's safeguarding approach is informed by five guiding principles. These principles are aligned with IDVRM's Core Values and operational commitments to ensure a comprehensive and integrated approach to safeguarding. Our approach to safeguarding is based on:

- **Survivor-centred Principles:** IDVRM prioritises the voice, agency and wellbeing of victims and survivors of violence in all its activities. By adopting a survivor-centred, trauma-informed approach, IDVRM ensures that victims and survivors of violence engaged in IDVRM activities are supported to make their own decisions, are given comprehensive and accessible information before consenting to participate in research and are treated at all times in a manner that respects their privacy and dignity and minimises the likelihood of re-traumatisation, stigmatisation or retaliation.
- **Power-sensitive and Decolonial Principles:** IDVRM acknowledges that all relationships are governed by power asymmetries, but especially when research participants or programme beneficiaries are vulnerable groups in underrepresented or minority communities. IDVRM's decolonial ethos centred on positionality reflexivity aims to subvert colonial legacies and power imbalances between researchers, delivery partners and communities, acknowledging historical inequalities that have and often continue to hinder inclusive and equitable knowledge production and programme delivery in religious, ethnic minority and migrant communities.
- **'Do-no-harm' and Beneficence Principles:** IDVRM aims to engage in activities that are methodologically sound, context-appropriate and the least intrusive and most beneficial for the individuals involved. This is embedded within its survivor-centred, trauma-informed practice, which emphasises do-no-harm principles, respect for informed consent and privacy and protection of the dignity of all individuals.
- **Duty of Care and Action-Oriented Principles:** The Institute is committed to balancing the need for confidentiality with the duty to protect, ensuring that it has appropriate measures and procedures in place for disclosing and reporting safeguarding incidences. This includes establishing mechanisms for individual support and referrals, such as signposting to appropriate organisations, and where applicable, exercising a duty to report to Adult and Children Social Services in the UK context.
- **Collective Responsibility and Personal Accountability Principles:** IDVRM is committed to promoting the highest standards of safeguarding, ethics and integrity in all its activities by instilling and fostering a sense of collective responsibility among all its members. This commitment extends to ensuring that all staff and team members are deeply familiarised with and are prepared to adhere to IDVRM's safeguarding, data protection and research ethics

policies. Members and staff are expected to report concerns or incidents promptly and are provided with sufficient training on IDVRM's safeguarding protocols and reporting procedures prior to any engagement.

6. Responsibilities of IDVRM staff and affiliated members

All IDVRM staff and affiliated members, including research associates, partners and third parties we provide services to, agree to:

- Follow IDVRM's Code of Practice, Safeguarding, Data Protection and Research Ethics policies at all times.
- Promote the safety and wellbeing of everyone involved in IDVRM's activities, including team members, research participants, programme beneficiaries, collaborators and other third parties.
- Prioritise the voice, agency and wellbeing of victims and survivors of domestic violence and interconnected forms of violence and take all necessary measures to minimise re-traumatisation, stigmatisation, privacy breaches and retaliation.
- Always act to prevent harm, abuse and exploitation in the organisational and community context, including sexual abuse, exploitation and harassment.
- Maintain strict confidentiality in communication with the Director and other team members, sharing personal and sensitive data only through authorised channels and in line with IDVRM's Data Protection Policy.
- Immediately report any concerns or incidents related to harm, abuse or exploitation, including modern slavery, trafficking, harmful practice or other unethical practices, to the Director, Dr Romina Istratii (romina.istratii.work@gmail.com), or the IDVRM's Safeguarding Lead if this role has been assigned.
- Uphold the highest standards of ethics and integrity in all aspects of research and programme delivery, including undergoing timely ethical reviews according to IDVRM's Research Ethics Policy, maintaining transparency and accountability in research and programme delivery, and showing respect for all research participants, beneficiaries, partners and communities.
- Engage with communities and collaborators as equal and respected partners and uphold the highest standards of transparency and ethical behaviour when engaging with local authorities, collaborators and community stakeholders.

7. Safeguarding in Research

IDVRM leads independent research projects and regularly hosts researchers conducting affiliated research. This section adapts IDVRM's safeguarding standards to research practices specifically. In research, we emphasise:

- **Survivor-centred and ‘Do-no-harm’ Principles:** IDVRM may conduct research with or related to vulnerable populations, including victims and survivors of domestic violence and interconnected forms of violence, migrants and refugees and members of underrepresented or minority communities. Individuals belonging to these communities may be at risk or re-traumatisation, ongoing abuse, persecution or detention. We are mindful of the potential harms and risks of such research and aim to prioritise at all times the wellbeing and safety of the research participants, avoiding research where the potential risks outweigh the potential benefits.
- **Informed Consent:** We recognise that research participants may have limited knowledge about their rights in research, including around data disclosure and use, withdrawal from research, confidentiality and anonymisation. We ensure that informed consent is achieved in all research activities by considering and addressing carefully linguistic, cultural and communication barriers.
- **Power Asymmetries:** We are aware of power asymmetries between researchers, research participants and other community stakeholders and that this can impact a participant’s decision to participate in the research and the information they share. All IDVRM researchers are asked to consider carefully power asymmetries as part of IDVRM’s ethics review process and to take measures to achieve diversity and inclusivity of different perspectives and experiences in their research.
- **Disclosure of Abuse:** We recognise that research participants may disclose domestic violence or other forms of abuse that they are experiencing at the time of research. All our research projects are guided by clearly set safeguarding protocols, agreed with the collaborating parties prior to the start of the research. These identify procedures for handling disclosures safely, including legal and ethical obligations according to country legal frameworks and IDVRM’s Ethics Policy. In addition, in-house training is offered to all research teams prior to the start of any research.
- **Data Protection:** IDVRM may store and publish sensitive research or personal accounts of domestic violence and interconnected forms of violence, data around immigration status and data about participants’ religious or ethnic affiliations for analytical purposes. We minimise the risk of breach of identity by ensuring confidentiality in research where appropriate and possible, and by anonymising thoroughly all data handled by IDVRM. All research collaborators outside of the UK are asked to thoroughly anonymise any data they share with IDVRM prior to its analysis.
- **Children and Young People:** IDVRM avoids direct research with children. However, we recognise that sometimes individuals perceived as adults in communities may be children by international definition and that their age may not be reported accurately. In such instances, or when research involves children accompanying mothers or guardians participating in research,

IDVRM requires researchers to put in place additional safeguarding measures to ensure that children do not experience adverse consequences due to the research and that researchers are trained and prepared to follow child protection procedures if child abuse or neglect is disclosed in accordance to country-specific legal frameworks.

- **DBS and Background Checks:** In line with IDVRM's Employment Policy, all staff and volunteers, including honorary Research Associates, based in the UK who engage directly in research with vulnerable groups must complete appropriate DBS checks. Staff and volunteers based internationally may need to complete equivalent background checks. IDVRM reserves the right to run additional checks for staff and volunteers outside of the UK.

8. Safeguarding in Interventions Engaging Communities

IDVRM delivers evidence-based interventions in diverse communities of the world, which are typically co-created and co-delivered with community-based partners and institutions. Safeguarding priorities are integrated in the design, delivery and evaluation of all IDVRM's projects. We emphasise:

- **'Do-no-harm' and Beneficence Principles:** Similar to our research programmes, IDVRM may complete interventions with or related to vulnerable populations, including victims and survivors of domestic violence and interconnected forms of violence, migrants and refugees and members of underrepresented or minority communities. Individuals belonging to these communities may be at risk of re-traumatisation, ongoing abuse, persecution or detention. We are mindful of the potential harms and risks of such interventions and aim to prioritise at all times the wellbeing and safety of all beneficiaries.
- **Informed Consent:** We recognise that beneficiaries may have limited knowledge about their rights, including around data disclosure and use, withdrawal from programmes, confidentiality and anonymisation. We ensure that informed consent is achieved in all community-based interventions by considering and addressing carefully linguistic, cultural and communication barriers.
- **Power Asymmetries and Fair Treatment:** We are aware of power asymmetries between IDVRM, delivery partners and different community stakeholders and that this can impact who participates in a project. All delivery partners are asked to consider carefully power asymmetries as part of IDVRM's ethics review process and to take measures to achieve diversity and inclusivity of different perspectives and experiences in their research. We also ensure that our interventions are methodologically sound, that the criteria for participation are fair and clear to all and that alternative provisions are made,

where possible, for those community members excluded from the intervention.

- **Careful Selection of Partners and Collaborators:** Our interventions are typically co-created and co-delivered with community stakeholders and grassroots organisations, including universities and non-governmental organisations. This ensures that meaningful and beneficial interventions are designed to reflect the priorities and the conditions of the communities we serve. We select collaborators based on long-term relationships of trust and a record of past collaboration or aim to identify new collaborators through our close networks who can vet for the collaborators' alignment with IDVRM's Code of Practice and policies.
- **Due Diligence Checks for Partners and Collaborators:** Before entering into formal collaboration agreements, IDVRM undertakes necessary due diligence checks on partner institutions as set out in IDVRM's Due Diligence policy. This includes requesting clients to provide, where applicable, their:
 - Ethics Policy (or equivalent)
 - Data Management and Protection Policy (or equivalent)
 - Safeguarding Policy (or equivalent)
 - Modern Slavery Statement or Policy (or equivalent)
 - Anti-fraud, whistleblowing, or risk management policy (if available)
- **Disclosure of Abuse:** We recognise that beneficiaries may disclose domestic violence or other forms of abuse that they are experiencing in the context of community-based interventions. All our projects are guided by clearly set safeguarding protocols, agreed with the delivery partners prior to the start of the research. These identify procedures for handling disclosures safely, including legal and ethical obligations according to country legal frameworks and IDVRM's Ethics Policy. In addition, in-house training is offered to all delivery partners prior to the start of any IDVRM-led intervention. Where interventions are co-created and co-delivered, a safeguarding protocol is agreed collaboratively prior to the launch of the intervention.
- **Data Protection:** IDVRM may store and publish personal accounts of domestic violence and interconnected forms of violence, data around immigration status and data about participants' religious or ethnic affiliations for analytical purposes. We minimise the risk of breach of identity by anonymising thoroughly all data handled by IDVRM. All delivery partners outside of the UK are asked to thoroughly anonymise any data they share with IDVRM prior to its analysis.
- **Children and Young People:** IDVRM avoids direct work with children in community-based interventions. However, the Institute recognises that sometimes individuals perceived as adults in communities may be children by international definition and that their age may not be reported accurately. In such instances, or when interventions involve children accompanying mothers

or guardians who are beneficiaries, IDVRM requires delivery partners to put in place additional safeguarding measures to ensure that children do not experience adverse consequences due to the intervention and that delivery partners are prepared to follow child protection procedures if child abuse or neglect is disclosed in accordance with country-specific legal frameworks.

9. Safeguarding in Consultancy Services to Third Parties

IDVRM is committed to ensuring that the highest safeguarding standards are also upheld during the provision of consultancy services to external clients. In such cases, we emphasise:

- **Due Diligence for Clients:** Before entering into formal consultancy agreements, IDVRM undertakes due diligence on clients where necessary. This includes requesting clients to provide, where applicable, their:
 - Ethics Policy (or equivalent)
 - Data Management and Protection Policy (or equivalent)
 - Safeguarding Policy (or equivalent)
 - Modern Slavery Statement or Policy (or equivalent)
 - Anti-fraud, whistleblowing, or risk management policy (if available)
- **External Checks and Risk Assessment:** IDVRM reserves the right to conduct external sanction and risk checks (e.g. UN Sanctions List, UK Sanctions List, terrorism financing lists, open-source media analysis) and more comprehensive credit and risk assessment checks where it is deemed necessary. IDVRM reserves the right not to enter in a contractual relationship with clients who have built wealth on colonial practices without being transparent about it or taking reparative actions, are on sanctions-terrorism lists, are implicated in fraud, engage in extremist ideology or harmful political activity, or lack transparent financial reporting records.
- **Clients Must Condone IDVRM's Safeguarding Policy:** Clients engaging IDVRM directly for consulting services must acknowledge and condone IDVRM's Safeguarding Policy. IDVRM reserves the right to decline entering in a contractual relationship with clients that do not adequately meet IDVRM's safeguarding standards. Where there are points of divergence between the client's and IDVRM's safeguarding policies, the Director and Safeguarding Lead will convene to agree on whether services will be provided and the most appropriate policy to follow for the specific consultancy.
- **Sub-contracted Members Operating under Clients' Safeguarding Policies:** Where IDVRM staff or associates are sub-contracted individually by external clients, they will be expected to follow the clients' safeguarding policies and procedures. As IDVRM affiliated members, they should ensure that their actions are aligned at all times to IDVRM's Safeguarding Policy. Where there are disagreements between policies, sub-contracted staff should

inform the IDVRM Director or Safeguarding Lead if the role has been assigned. The latter will advise on appropriate action.

10. Reporting Concerns and Incidents

- Any safeguarding concerns, disclosures or incidents must be reported immediately to the IDVRM Director, Dr Romina Istratii (Romina.istratii.work@gmail.com), and the Safeguarding Lead if this role has been assigned.
- Each research and intervention project led by IDVRM or affiliated members must develop a safeguarding protocol as part of IDVRM's ethics review process, which must identify clear steps and procedures to be taken in each context.
- The Safeguarding Lead for the specific project, in consultation with the Director, are mandated to take appropriate action, which may include internal management or referral to an appropriate agency depending on the legal standards of the country where the research or intervention is being implemented.
- Where there are urgent concerns about on-going or imminent abuse or harm, these will be referred to external agencies as soon as possible by the Director or Safeguarding Lead to ensure that immediate action is taken.

11. Support and Training

- IDVRM will provide safeguarding and ethics training as part of staff induction and onboarding, or at the start of a collaborative agreement or project. Such training will make clear how staff can communicate safely any safeguarding breaches.
- Ongoing training will be also provided to staff on handling disclosures safely, trauma-informed approaches and safeguarding awareness, specially as the policy is updated and situations change.
- IDVRM recognises the risk of vicarious or secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, burnout, or re-traumatisation for team members and researchers exposed to traumatic experiences. IDVRM is committed to supporting the well-being of its staff by encouraging flexible working hours, regular breaks and by providing support where possible, such as through confidential 1-1 meetings to discuss any concerns and develop a plan to address them.

12. Monitoring and Review

- Relationships with partners, funders and clients will be reviewed annually or upon any new information being brought to IDVRM's attention. Partners must notify IDVRM of any safeguarding risks as they arise, as outlined in the IDVRM Due Diligence Policy.

- The Safeguarding Policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure that these are updated accordingly to UK, EU and international standards and reflect IDVRM's lessons and experiences on the ground.

13. Breach of Policy

- Breaches of this Safeguarding Policy will be addressed by the Director together with the Safeguarding Lead and Advisory Board.
- Consequences may include review and possible termination of the role or relationship.
- Serious breaches may be reported to appropriate external bodies (e.g. academic, regulatory, safeguarding authorities).
- If any breach comes to IDVRM's attention, the individual or organisation will be given a written warning and the opportunity to explain such breaches. If the issue remains unresolved, a second warning will be issued before termination of the role or relationship. If the individual is a member of staff, termination will follow the procedure identified in the IDVRM Employment Policy.