

Dignity Report 2022: Gathering Allies Worldwide December 2022

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About IDinsight

IDinsight uses data and evidence to help leaders combat poverty worldwide. Our collaborations deploy a large analytical toolkit to help clients design better policies, rigorously test what works, and use evidence to implement effectively at scale. We place special emphasis on using the right tool for the right question, and tailor our rigorous methods to the real-world constraints of decision-makers.

IDinsight works with governments, foundations, NGOs, multilaterals and businesses across Africa and Asia. We work in all major sectors including health, education, agriculture, governance, digital ID, financial access, and sanitation.

We have offices in Dakar, Lusaka, Manila, Nairobi, New Delhi, Rabat, and Remote. Visit www.IDinsight.org and follow on Twitter @IDinsight to learn more.

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1. INTRODUCTION



1.1 FOREWORD



When I first came across Tom Wein's clarion call about the importance of attention to dignity, it struck a deep chord: In 30 years working in global health and development, I had seen many well-intentioned efforts fail to understand or respond to the aspirations of the communities being served. Over and over, crowds of women, babes in arms, waiting hours in the hot sun for medical care – only to then be shuttled through to an overworked nurse who had little time to listen to concerns or explain a treatment. Or the bark of a government official instructing a citizen on the importance of form-filling. Or the NGO workers designing programs to suit donors, and conceptualizing “beneficiaries” as objects of charity rather than agents of their own destinies.

The enterprise of development, and work on social problems more generally, has too often failed to fully appreciate, and fully uphold, the dignity of each and every person.

The Dignity Project, created by Tom in 2017, helped us all name the problem: a lack of attention to and investment in dignity as a fundamental value. Now it's time to solve it.

I'm delighted that the Dignity Project has joined forces with IDinsight to create our Dignity Initiative – a step toward greater knowledge, tools, and solutions. With IDinsight's focus on bringing best-fit research methods into the service of decision support for leaders in the public, nonprofit, and philanthropic sectors, we have a special contribution to make. Our Dignity Initiative consists of a robust agenda of inquiry and praxis around the “what” and the “how” of dignity; a network of curious and committed researchers and practitioners; and open-source tools that permit government agencies, funders, and nongovernmental organizations to identify the ways in which we can all do better. We are also finding new ways for IDinsight's own work in data collection and analysis, evaluation, and research to be enriched by attention to dignity as both a means and an end.

This report shares the work of IDinsight's Dignity Initiative and our allies over the past year. In it, you'll find summaries of research, experiences with application of the principles and practices around respect and dignity, personal experiences related to respect and disrespect for dignity, and reflections from our allies across the globe. As a whole, the report manifests a collective commitment to advancing our understanding of how social programs can intentionally and successfully integrate attention to respect, choice, and fairness.

I'm excited that we are able to share this work with the large and growing community of researchers, practitioners, and funders who, like me, have seen (and maybe even participated in) actions that did not fully uphold dignity – people who know that the development community must – and can – do better.

Ruth Levine

Chief Executive Officer - IDinsight

1.2 THE DIGNITY INITIATIVE AT IDinsight



This is a moment for dignity. The whole development sector is reflecting on its failings. We all know that neither localisation nor corporate diversity will deliver the necessary changes to the sector alone. Two UK Parliamentary reports - on the FCDO's strategy and on racism in the development sector - have used our evidence this year to argue for an approach to development assistance that respects people's dignity.

What we have seen in our work is this: the idea of dignity has traction in yoking together these disparate debates for reform and refocusing development assistance on the human hopes of the people we seek to serve. We make real progress with dignity when we can help the sector take practical steps.

That's why we, as IDinsight, invested so much in building tools - survey measures, Dignity Audits, and reflection workshops. So far this year, our survey measures have been taken up by programs serving almost eleven million people. In the first half of this report, we reflect on how to build dignity through tools like these, and all that we've learned from longtime pioneers in this cause.

OUR OBJECTIVES

1. Share our ideas with the sector
2. Refine those ideas through research
3. Lead the community as an accountable institution

2022 has been a year of building community. There is today a brimming network of allies of dignity. We're proud to collaborate with them, and to have many contribute to this report. To harness these tools and continue this research - to ensure that dignity has all the impact on the world that it ought to - we need to continue to come together as a collective movement in a shared endeavor.

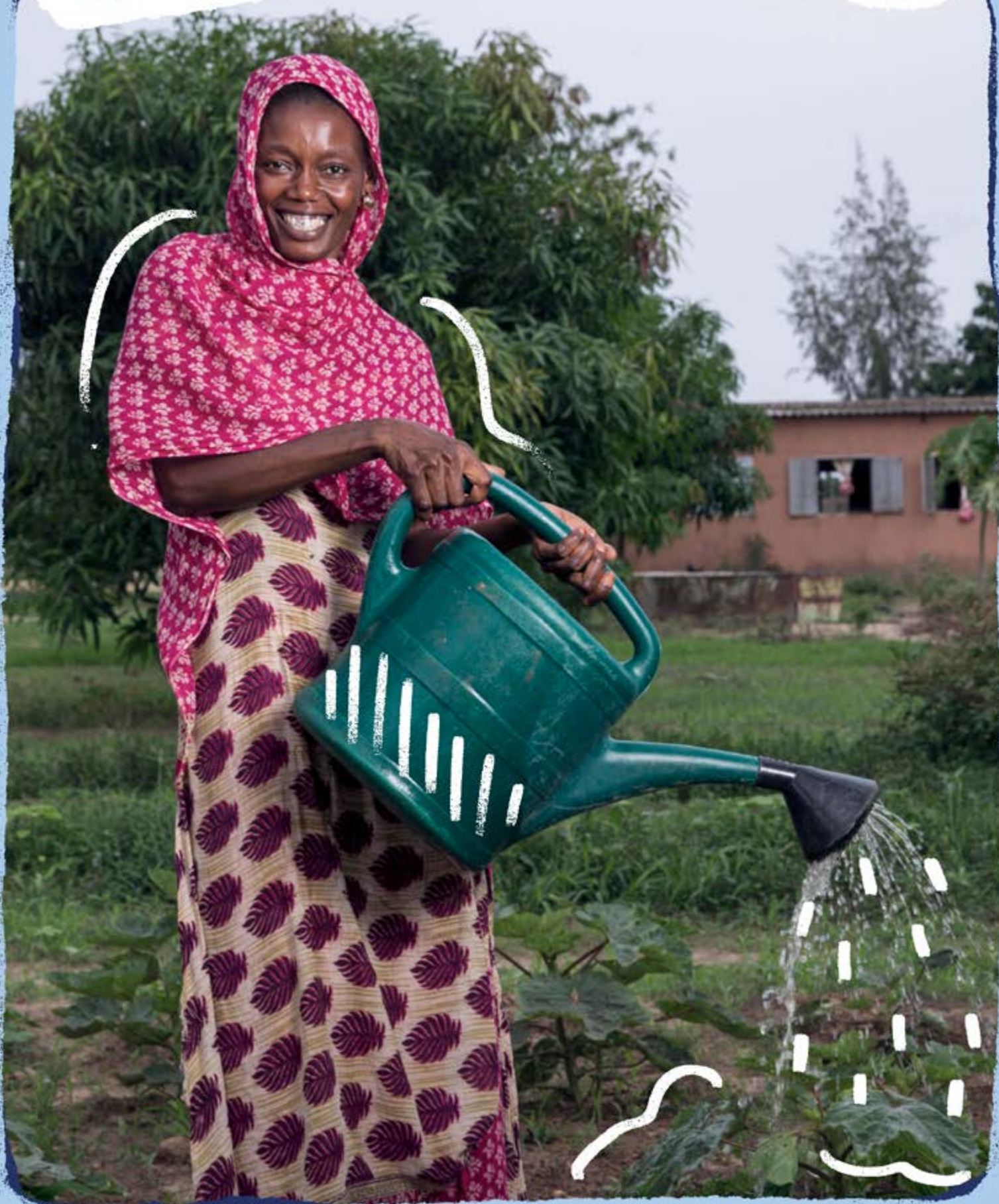
For us, 2023 is going to be the year of solutions. We must build links, start new collaborations, and learn from one another. We will bring forward specific recommended changes to development programs. Only by doing so can we answer the call that people make in our research for bureaucracies and structures of development assistance that routinely perceive the full complex humanity of the people who they seek to serve.

In solidarity,

Tom Wein

Director, Dignity Initiative - IDinsight

2. BUILDING DIGNITY





2.1 MEASURES OF RESPECT

For dignity to have its full impact, we must develop measurement tools. They permit us to track whether programs respect people's dignity and test improvements to programs. In a recent working paper - authored by Tom Wein, Priyanka Khatri and Rachna Bhimani - we propose and validate a 5 question measure of Felt Respect for Dignity in interactions.¹

5 questions you can use for Felt Respect for Dignity

By developing and validating a measure of Felt Respect for Dignity, we can understand quantitatively whether people receiving development assistance, accessing services, participating in research or otherwise interacting with an institution experience respectful treatment that perceives and values their full and complex humanity. Recognition respect is the inherent respect to be given to any person because of the inalienable dignity that they possess. Given that everybody has the quality of dignity, and this cannot be more or less deserved from one person to another, measuring dignity is then a matter of whether the person felt that their inalienable dignity was respected. This concept of measuring dignity therefore follows three principles:



With these concepts and principles in mind, we develop the 5-question scale to measure Felt Respect for Dignity. These five questions form a validated survey scale for understanding people's experiences of respect for their dignity in receiving development assistance, participating in research, or other development interactions. In administering this survey scale, the respondent is asked the following:



Validation Process and Performance

This five-item measure for Felt Respect for Dignity has been validated in three countries (US, Morocco, and China) across three scenarios (financial services, policing, and healthcare). These countries were chosen for their diversity in traditions of dignity, as suggested by theory. To arrive at the proposed five-item measure, we drew on existing attempts to develop measures from the literature. We then identified and refined an initial pool of 24 possible survey items. Using structured consultation with experts and cognitive interviews (in Morocco and China), we whittled this down to 13 items. These items were deployed in a pilot survey across the US, Morocco, and China, asking respondents to recall an encounter with one of three institutions: financial services, policing and healthcare. Finally, we used a series of statistical tests, including testing for coherence (α), factor analysis, and convergent validity.

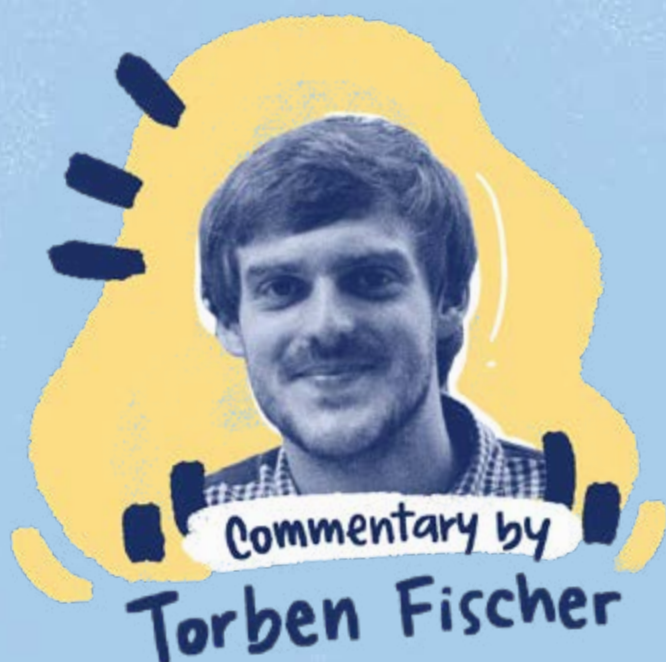


This process produced the five-item measure for Felt Respect for Dignity presented above. The measure held up across the three countries and three scenarios in which it was tested and, given the statistical rigor with which it was developed, gives confidence that it will hold up in other contexts as well.

Future of measurement

In developing measures, we can always do more to validate their performance. The measure is currently deployed in Senegal, India, Uganda, and Ethiopia. In addition to measuring felt respect for dignity in interactions, we may wish to measure two other constructs. The first is a global measure of felt respect for dignity, not specific to any one interaction. This can be used in RCTs where a control group does not have a program interaction to report on or to understand how an intervention might lead to people experiencing more respect from those around them. Secondly, building on the work of Mansur Lalljee, we may want a short, flexible measure of whether people are committed to an ethic of respecting persons.





“What doesn’t get measured, doesn’t get done” – or so goes the saying. Alas, for development actors to track whether their statements on the importance of dignity are followed through on, we’d better be able to measure it. But how do you measure a complex and multi-dimensional construct such as a person’s dignity? Is this even possible in a standardized way across diverse cultural and normative contexts?

It is these big questions that IDinsight’s Tom Wein and collaborators Priyanka Khatry and Rachna Bhimani set out to answer. They start off with a simple, but far-reaching characterization: Dignity is an inherent inalienable trait common to every human.² In other words: we cannot take another’s dignity away. We can however act to disrespect another’s dignity. Making the case that we care about more than [good intentions](#), the authors propose that the most suitable way to ‘measure dignity’ in the international development sector is to measure whether people feel respected in their dignity in interactions with others in the sector.

By design, the authors therefore give a voice to those who participate in development programs and those whose lives are most directly affected by these interactions.

The proposed measure of “Felt Respect for Dignity” follows from a standard process used to define new measurement scales, including literature reviews, expert interviews, in-depth respondent interviews, and a quantitative validation across a diverse set of contexts (here the US, Morocco, and China). At the end of this rigorous validation process stands a simple five question survey module that is administered after the respondent is asked to recall a specific interaction with a development actor as vividly as possible.

No matter whether you’re an implementer in the public or social sector or a research organization, this tool provides you with an opportunity to better understand your program participants’ subjective experience of interacting with your organization in a standardized and validated way.

Torben Fischer

Associate Director, Economist - IDinsight

The views expressed in this commentary are those of the author.





2.2 CULTURES OF DIGNITY: CASE STUDIES OF SUCCESS

Across the development sector, leaders tell us they want to respect the dignity of those they serve. Yet we know that dignity can feel like a vague topic. Some of these leaders tell us they are not sure how to get to grips with it. Others have said they worry that pursuing dignity will come at a cost to effectiveness. To help address these concerns, we profiled five organizations that have worked hard to build dignity into their internal cultures, interviewing senior leaders at each. All are on a journey of constantly reinforcing that value, and we feel we have much to learn from their efforts.

The five are: Goonj, Partners In Health, All Together in Dignity Fourth World, Tostan, and GiveDirectly.



GiveDirectly



Six Lessons from Five Case Studies

We take away six common lessons from this work:

1. **It's not what you do - it's how you do it.** Respectful development assistance can be done at scale, but that brings real risks of dilution, and you've got to constantly reinforce your culture. Goonj's second hand clothing donations might not be what we'd normally think of as respectful but they are getting it done in 27 Indian states.
2. **Dignity takes many years.** Tostan commits to three years in communities; Partners In Health makes open-ended commitments to ministries of health. The time matters in itself, and because it allows you to build mechanisms of participation, feedback, and properly train genuinely grounded staff.
3. **Taking that much time required all these organizations to resist donor pressure** - donor staff may care personally about this agenda, but they are constrained by their structures. All five organizations conceive themselves as humble challengers to the development sector (and sometimes capitalist) status quo.
4. **The ultimate focus has to be on the individual you are serving** - but to achieve that requires careful internal culture setting and equitable policies and structures.
5. **Dignity isn't just about words.** You can't ever divorce it from politics and economics. There is no respectful care if you don't have the right medicines in stock. Still, language matters a lot.
6. **Dignity is essential, but there are complicated tensions to navigate** - you can't provide everything and you have to liaise with governments. Sometimes you are trying to change social norms to ensure one group's dignity is protected, and in doing so challenging existing power structures and traditions in ways that may feel disrespectful to some.

"Dignity is not something that someone can give to someone. Every single person on this earth, whether you are born in a financially poor family, or a financially rich family, or whatever community, color, or geography, each of us is actually born with dignity. Because that's inbuilt. That's given. Now, the society can only do two things. Either it can respect dignity, or it can snatch dignity."

Anshu Gupta, co-founder of Goonj



I have learned so very many valuable lessons from my incredible Haitian colleagues over our years of working together across multiple countries and continents, but the most important by far is the saying, *tout moun se moun*—every person is a person. If one chooses to be guided by the underlying premise that every person is a person, then treating every person with dignity and respect, and reimagining the kind of health system everyone needs and deserves, regardless of race, ethnicity, zip code or income, can and should flow naturally.

As our late co-founder Dr. Paul Farmer noted in his book, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights and the New War on the Poor*, “Medicine becomes pragmatic solidarity when it is delivered with dignity to the destitute sick... By including social and economic rights in the struggle for human rights, we help to protect those most likely to suffer the insults of structural violence.”³

The 6 lessons highlighted through the case studies resonate with our continued journey at Partners In Health to accompany public health leaders to center the rights and needs of the most marginalized in their policy and planning processes.

Having a culture of dignity has often meant that we’ve made long term, open-ended commitments to communities and health facilities which has ensured continuity in care in the public system, even through election cycles, political transitions, and civil unrest. It has also meant we’ve worked to operationalize dignity in everything we do.

In working to accompany the public health system in any community where we work, we employ a “5S’s” framework to our pragmatic solidarity—investing in staff, stuff, space, systems and support—to help fill immediate gaps and continue to push for the highest standards of care. Planning needs around a patient-centered approach rather than starting with what’s “in the budget” and working backwards, allows dignity to be at the core of our decision-making. It is my hope that others will be inspired to follow this approach as the movement for health equity continues to gain strength.

Cate Oswald

Chief Policy and Partnership Officer - Partners In Health

The views expressed in this commentary are those of the author.





2.3 DIGNITY AUDITS

How can we help organizations uphold the promise they make to respect the dignity of those they serve? How should we uncover the 'dignity hotspots' in an organization? IDinsight has developed the 'Dignity Audit' method to address this.

To keep their promise to uphold the dignity of those they serve, organizations need to build and maintain a deep understanding of how their program is experienced, assess the depth of their own commitment to the dignity agenda, and identify where their programs could do more to recognize the inherent, inalienable dignity of each individual they seek to serve.

The Dignity Initiative team at IDinsight designed the Dignity Audit to support organizations in the sector that want to be more accountable and uncover blockages to being respectful of participants' dignity. As more and more actors in the development sector recognize that respect for dignity is not an automatic outcome of the programs they deliver, the Dignity Audit can be deployed as a learning tool that will highlight what needs to be done to more closely match dignity best practices.

The Dignity Audit Process has two phases:

- Phase 1 – Process Mapping
- Phase 2 – Detailed Measurement

Phase I: Process Mapping

The first step is to gather background information that will help tailor the audit to the organization's needs. This step - called process mapping - is intended to produce two main outputs:

1. **A detailed process map:** A diagram that captures how the program or activity being audited functions from design to final delivery. The level of detail can be adjusted based on the objectives and scope of the audit.
2. **A stakeholder map:** A document that describes key individuals associated with the program, such as program participants, non-participant community members, front-line workers, program managers, and organizational leadership. This document will classify individuals along dimensions of importance to the dignity audit (e.g., decision-making power, how regularly they interact with program participants, etc.).

Key Elements of the Process Map

The Dignity Audit process map should answer the following questions:

1. **Objectives:** What are the program's objectives?
2. **Activities:** What are the main steps involved in the program, and how are they each linked to the overall program objectives?
3. **People:** Who are the key stakeholders, both within and outside the organization? What functions do they serve?
4. **Interactions:** What are the key nodes where interactions occur between program staff/administrators, program participants, and program funders?
5. **Decision points:** Where are program design and operational decisions made in the process?

Phase II: Detailed Measurement

Goals of the Audit Measurement Phase

The goal of the measurement phase of the audit is to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do program participants feel like their dignity is upheld during interactions with the program?
2. What staff behaviors, organizational policies, and program design aspects may be contributing to the experience of participants?
3. What suggestions are made for improving the respectfulness of the program?

Through a series of key informant interviews with both program staff and participants, we expect to derive insights on how participants experience the program, and what more could be done to ensure they feel respected and treated with dignity in every interaction with the program.

We recommend two levels of measurement:

1. Measure dignity outcomes for participants;
2. Measure a core set of (observable) behaviors that likely contribute to program participants' subjective experience.

The first level of measurement focuses on measuring the subjective experience of program participants in terms of outcomes. The second level attempts to understand the presence or absence of specific behaviors and program design elements that may be contributing to participants' experience. These two levels of measurement can be treated as modular – i.e. the second level adds to and helps contextualize the learnings from the first, but insights from the first level can stand alone.

Conclusion

The pain caused by failures to uphold dignity often happens in organizational blind spots. It takes a rigorous and careful method to uncover that pain and begin to correct it. The Dignity Audit method addresses that need.



When we embarked on the Dignity Audit project, we were motivated by the goal of making the dignity agenda more tangible for practitioners. What can organizations and individuals committed to upholding the dignity of those they serve do, concretely?

At IDinsight, we urge our clients and partners to invest in gathering and using right-fit evidence to guide their decisions. Extending this evidence-driven approach to the dignity agenda therefore felt only logical. The Dignity Audit is, in practice, quite similar to a process evaluation. Just as a process evaluation examines whether the program is operating as expected and achieving what was envisioned, the Dignity Audit systematically examines whether the organization is in fact achieving the dignity outcomes it aspires to, where its blind spots are, and what it may need to do better.

Knowing where the issues and wins are, and capturing both their magnitude as well as their drivers, can help make social sector programs more respectful of those they serve. But such evidence-gathering is far from straightforward, especially when the outcome of interest is the 'felt respect' of program participants.

This can be challenging to measure for a variety of reasons - there are important cultural differences in how dignity is defined and understood, it's not always obvious what the most important interactions to investigate are, and getting program participants to be candid about their feedback for organizations that often provide key goods and services in under served communities requires careful framing and expert interview skills. The drivers of dignity outcomes also span every step of the program process - from initial conception and design, to implementation, and evaluation. Getting to a comprehensive picture without making big asks on program staff and participants' time requires doing the difficult work of identifying the right people who - on the organization's side - play an influential role in the program design and delivery, and who - on the participant side - can reliably represent the program experience.

The Dignity Audit offers a set of tools and guidelines that attempts to do this work thoughtfully and rigorously: by paying attention to whose voice gets included and elevated, by ensuring that the Audit is framed less as a threatening evaluation and more as a collaborative effort to align actions with aspirations, and by leveraging the work of scholars across disciplines who have tested and validated credible ways to measure dignity.

As we embark on this journey with organizations in the future, we will reflect on where we can do better and refine our methods along the way. In the meantime, we are excited to share a starting point that can equip organizations who seek to be more accountable with the information they need to do better.

Mallika Sobti

Chief of Staff to the CEO - IDinsight

The views expressed in this commentary are those of the author.



2.4 LOCALIZING DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE IN LINE WITH PEOPLE'S PREFERENCES

The development sector routinely delivers assistance that is different from what people are asking for. To fully respect people's dignity, we can start by simply asking people what they would prefer.

Sometimes, it turns out that they would rather have cash so that they can decide how to spend it themselves. Shapiro (2019) found that while the impact of cash and some types of agricultural aid was roughly equal, people felt cash was more respectful of their dignity.⁴

IDinsight conducted a foundational project with GiveWell called Measuring People's Preferences. Alice Redfern, Martin Gould, Felipe Acero Garay, and Sindy Li report on a survey of low-income individuals in Ghana and Kenya, examining how people trade-off between interventions that would save a life versus giving cash.

The work informed how GiveWell, a funder and recommender of top charities, calculates its 'moral weights' and therefore pushed it to recommend more health interventions - in line with what people in Ghana and Kenya told us they want.



How we did it

This study surveyed 1,800 low-income individuals across four diverse regions in Ghana and Kenya. After extensive piloting on the difficult question of eliciting stable and reliable preferences in a task that is necessarily unfamiliar to the people being surveyed, three main methods were used to capture how respondents trade-off between averting deaths of individuals of different ages and increasing consumption:

- We asked individuals for their willingness-to-pay (WTP) to reduce the risk of death for themselves and their children.
- We asked respondents to take the perspective of a decision-maker in their community and choose between programs that save lives of different ages, and, latterly that save lives and provide cash transfers.
- We also collected qualitative data on beneficiaries' reasoning when making these trade-offs and data on beneficiaries' lives that can be used to inform GiveWell staff's moral weights.

What we learned

We found that respondents asked GiveWell to place a higher value than they had previously done on interventions to save lives, and especially the lives of young children, compared to interventions that bring economic benefits.


- Respondents place a higher value on averting a death than predicted by most extrapolations from studies in high-income countries.
 - Our central estimate of the value placed by respondents on averting death for individuals five and older was \$40,721. That is to say, respondents would rather a life was saved than to receive that amount of money.
 - Respondents consistently value the lives of individuals under 5 more than those 5 and older. Our respondents put an estimated value on averting death for individuals under 5 of \$65,906.
 - In qualitative data, people made two main arguments. The first argument asserts the importance of accounting for the potential held by all individuals to achieve high economic and social value over their life course. A second common argument is that life holds inherent value and, therefore, no amount of money is sufficient to forego the chance to save a life.
- 

Figure 1: IDInsight VSL results by country



Conclusion

This work has helped GiveWell redirect money towards top charities such as Helen Keller International, Malaria Consortium, and Against Malaria Foundation. It has supported their decision to launch a research program on many other health-related interventions, which become more cost-effective under these new updated 'moral weights', which listen better to the people these programs support.

There are other preferences to examine and many more places in which these topics might be studied. The localization agenda may yet realize considerable change to the structures of the development world. Yet it will only meet the hopes we all have for change if it begins by hearing the right people. Research of this kind - technically rigorous and empathetic - can raise the voices of those whom development seeks to serve.

GiveWell



Hundreds of billions are spent every year across the development sector with the goal of improving lives. However, priority setting often starts with a pre-existing agenda, policy, or set of ideas, and decisions are frequently made behind closed doors by individuals with limited local context. How aid money is spent is rarely informed by the preferences of people impacted by it.

The Dignity Initiative highlights that one way to promote dignity in development is to ensure that individuals are listened to and that their opinions are valued by decision makers. Capturing and directly incorporating preferences into development assistance decision-making can help to achieve this.

In this partnership with GiveWell, IDinsight had the opportunity to explore how recipient preferences could be captured quantitatively and given explicit weight when funding priorities are set. As GiveWell's decisions, at present, focus primarily on how to value life-saving interventions compared to income increasing interventions, we piloted a long list of methods to collect technically rigorous data capturing how a typical GiveWell charity recipient values these two outcomes.

Our survey was rolled out to 1,800 individuals across Ghana and Kenya, and found a relative value placed on saving lives (especially of individuals under 5) than predicted by GiveWell staff members. This was incorporated into GiveWell's moral weights which were collated and used to inform an increase in funding allocation toward charities that prioritise health promotion.

Although challenging, this project demonstrated it is possible to capture quantitative data on preferences that decision makers accept and incorporate directly into their process. Just as useful for our decision-makers was qualitative data that provides context and grounding to the numbers they're presented with.

This work opens the door to many more opportunities for others in the development sector to consider the possibility of incorporating the voice of the people they serve at the highest levels of their priority setting. Much more research is needed both to capture preferences across many more outcomes, in many more contexts, and to understand how this can be incorporated into different decision making processes. We hope that as focus on dignity in the development sector grows, more emphasis can be placed across the sector on aligning development assistance with individual preferences.

Alice Redfern

Senior Manager - IDinsight

The views expressed in this commentary are those of the author.





2.5 THE DIGNITY RESEARCH AGENDA

What are the most urgent research questions around dignity? Scholars of dignity from around the world gathered virtually from 12-14 September for the Dignity Research Agenda symposium, hosted by IDinsight's Dignity Initiative.

The symposium featured keynotes from Dr Miriam Laker-Oketta and Dr Alicia Ely Yamin, as well as panel discussions on dignity's value in understanding social movements, state bureaucracies, and research ethics. The symposium also reported recent qualitative findings from Uganda and the USA. During this symposium, we solicited input over several sessions as to the priority research questions that people hope a dignity research field will address. We agreed to organize the emerging research questions around five themes, presented overleaf.

We concluded that while many people study dignity, they are relatively scattered across departments, disciplines and institutions. There is no home for the study of dignity. We therefore issued a consensus research agenda statement, which we reproduce in full at the end of this section. We hope this statement will help people coordinate, collaborate and recognise the value of studying dignity.



Five Themes of Dignity Research

1
HOW IS DIGNITY TO BE DEFINED?

2
HOW CAN RESPECTFULNESS
BE MEASURED?

3
HOW DOES
DIGNITY
& RESPECT
OPERATE?

4
WHAT ACTS INCREASE
PERCEPTIONS OF
RESPECTFULNESS
& WHAT ARE THE
CONSEQUENCES OF THAT?

5
HOW DO ACTORS & SECTORS
REGARD DIGNITY & WHAT ACTIONS WILL
INCREASE SUPPORT FOR A DIGNITY AGENDA?

Consensus statement on the dignity research agenda

We, the cosigners and authors of this research agenda consensus statement, following discussions during the Dignity Research Agenda symposium from 12-14 September 2022, resolve that:

1. The research agenda should focus less on proposing a single conception of dignity. Instead it should make room to chart multiple conceptions building on existing work, with researchers clearly stating what definition they use and how it relates to the understanding of dignity used by their sample.
2. Measurement is a vital part of the research agenda. While many measures currently exist, there are still important gaps where tools still need to be developed. We hold this even as we acknowledge that those measures must be used with due humility about what they can achieve.
3. A large amount of work can be done to deepen our understanding of how people experience and enact dignity and respect in their lives.
4. There are a great many ideas to increase the frequency of experiences that are respectful of people's dignity. Only a handful have been tested in early-stage experiments, and almost none have been tested through experimental methods in real-world situations. There is initial evidence for many possible downstream consequences or correlated outcomes of respectful treatment, but almost none have been examined beyond the United States and outside laboratory or online survey contexts. A number of preliminary steps will help group and model these relationships.
5. It is important to study the uptake and use (or lack thereof) of the dignity concept in different sectors. For some contributors, it is important to actively promote this. Studies, tools and public advocacy may have contributions to make here.

"Dignity is not always easy to define, but it's easy to detect. We know it when we see it, and when we experience it."

➤ Robert W. Fuller



As another dignity enthusiast, I was thrilled to be involved in the discussions that led to the September Dignity Symposium, which helped build this masterpiece of the 2022 Dignity Research Agenda Consensus Statement that is carefully synthesized and widely accessible, in form and content.

The Dignity Project started in 2017 and has continued to do important work now as the Dignity Initiative at IDinsight by connecting scholarly discussions and academic research on dignity issues in our communities with the day-to-day application of dignity in various sectors, from health policy to international aid. The project is also well established in the global South and notably in the African continent, in which issues of structural limitation, notably because of the impoverishment of these communities, make the inquiry on dignity even more vital.

The impetus of the five themes of the agenda grew from a very fun Jamboard activity in which various participants freely shared input on five questions: 1) How can dignity be defined? 2) How can respect be measured? 3) How do dignity

and respect operate? 4) What acts increase the perceptions of respectfulness and what are the consequences of that? 5) How does international development regard dignity and what actions will increase support for a dignity agenda? Questions 1) and 2) reveal a link to the 2021 Dignity Report in which the experience of disrespect in various communities stood out as necessary to think about dignity research. In addition, thinking about disrespect brought up crucial ethical inquiries: who gets to define dignity, who gets to decide the measurement of respect, and are we fulfilling the dignity of the dignity research? Asking those who are concerned about dignity has been a motivation in my own research on dignity in protest (El Bernoussi, 2021), inspired by conflict resolution experts and my two moral giants, Dr. Donna Hicks (2011) and late Prof. Herbert Kelman (1977).⁵

Questions 3) and 4) reveal the admirable and promising ambition of the Dignity Project: To invest in growing dignity research in social studies and operationalize the integration of dignity in our communities so that the experience of disrespect and violence is tackled and reduced. As legal expert and dignity champion Erin Daly noted in her book, *Dignity Rights* (2013), there is a feeling for dignity in our times which predicts major advancements in the operationalization of dignity and respect.⁶ In the same year, anthropologist Laura Nader published, *Culture and Dignity* (2013) to remind us that dignity is about respectful global governance, an aim instrumental to question 5) on the role of international development for a global and inclusive dignity research agenda.⁷

Zaynab El Bernoussi

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The views expressed in this commentary are those of the author.



2.6 GROUNDING RESEARCH ETHICS

Research is on a dignity knife edge: it can be the best chance a person may have to convey their complex life and hopes to those who make decisions about them. Yet all too often, we know that it feels extractive and that the experience of research is one of frustration.

That's why IDinsight has set as an objective of our Dignity Initiative that we must "act as an exemplary and accountable guiding institution". We need to make sure that those we conduct research with enjoy respectful, satisfying contacts with us.

"Respect for persons" has long been central to research ethics. A recent editorial by Nature Human Behavior argues that "Science must respect the dignity and rights of all humans." Yet efforts to discern such principles have frequently skipped over a crucial step: asking potential research participants what they want from research ethics. There is a lack of empiricism in research ethics, and research ethics processes are more often staffed by people who are closer in profile and worldview to the researchers than they are to participants.

The need to study what people want from research ethics is something we explored in a working paper for the Busara Center for Behavioral Economics entitled "Participant Voice First" (Mumo, Owsley & Wein, 2021).⁸ We note the main research questions that agenda is pursuing in the box below.



Participant voice first: research questions for research ethics

1. What are the experiences, understandings, and preferences of our research participants, including those who are most likely to be excluded from such conversations when it comes to the respectfulness of our research?
2. How can we improve the experiences of research participants (including those who are most likely to be excluded from such conversations), better align with their understandings, and incorporate their preferences into our research agenda in ways that make it more respectful of their dignity?
3. What combination of protocols, measures, systems, and practices (including IRB processes) will ensure that we maintain those improvements across all of Busara's projects, including those employing remote research methods, and allow other research implementers to do the same?
4. What is the relationship between ethical practice and data quality?
5. How do the answers to these questions vary across gender, racial, national and economic groups?

What participants want from research

In a qualitative study with 26 participants from Kenya, led by the Busara Center, we learned that while participants overall had a respectful experience, they asked for three main changes:

1. Participants want to be involved in research in meaningful ways.
2. Participants want researchers to share results.
3. Participants want researchers to improve consenting processes, with a clearer explanation of what to expect from each study.

"Busara researchers are the best as they first call you and ask if you are willing to participate and they don't force you. It shows they value us and they don't want to infringe on our rights."

Male, 38 years old, Kibera

How to secure consent

If participants want good consent, how exactly should we go about it? Most experimental studies of improvements to consent processes have yielded null results. Yet, in a recent collaboration with Digital Green in Andhra Pradesh, India, IDinsight's researchers have been reimagining how consent could work.

Participants told us that they wanted consent to reflect a more ongoing relationship of trust - not a one-time signature. That means time to explore and reflect together, time to ask questions (in a group, not one by one), and a chance to withdraw, discuss and adjust the relationship later on. They wanted a video to get the details, with an identifiable representative there in person to discuss it with. We'll be recommending changes, and we discuss our findings from this study in more detail in Section 3.5 of this report.

How to give feedback

The Busara Center conducted another study, testing the impact of this feedback. Through structured qualitative interviews with 19 former research participants in Kenya, we identified five features people wanted from feedback.

Requested features of research feedback

1. Reminder of what this refers to
2. Thanks for participating.
3. Who the results were conveyed to
4. What the main results were, in very brief form
5. Forecast of what may happen as a result of this work

We shared this information in an SMS - the cheapest-possible feedback medium - with 200 of the 400 participants in a recent Busara project focused on community forestry conservation. We then surveyed 338 members of this group. This experiment revealed that even this low-cost version of feedback had notable impacts:

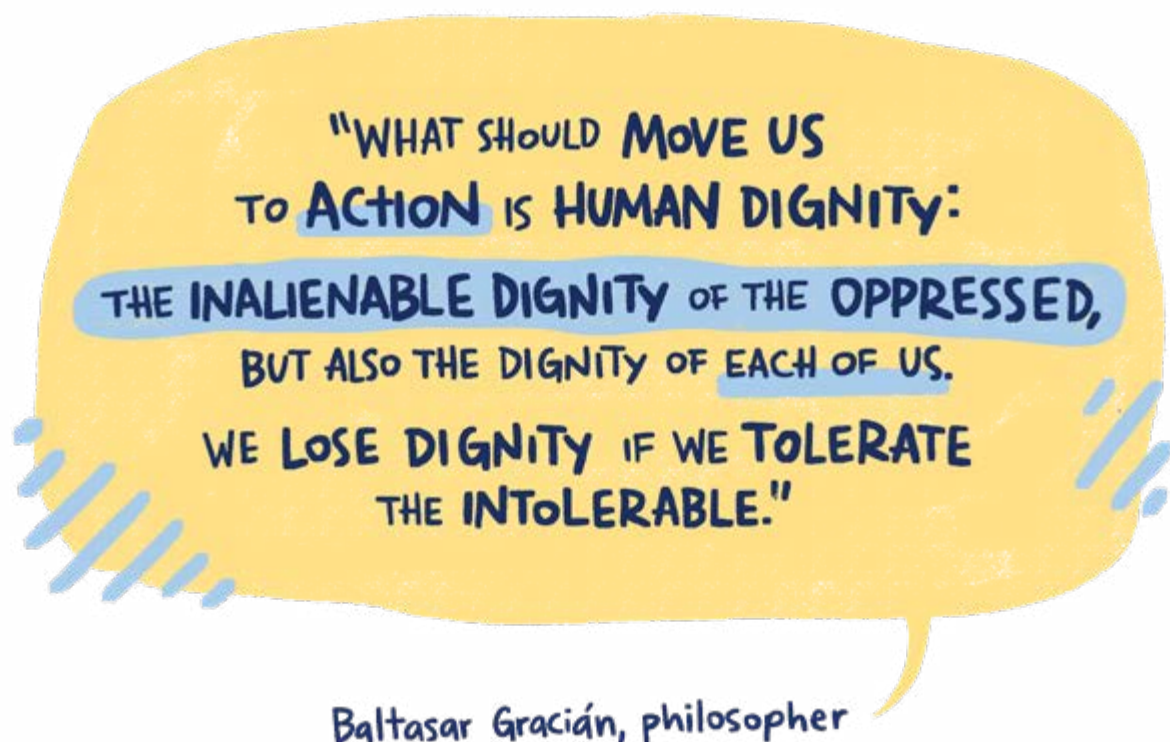
- Giving participants feedback makes them significantly more likely to say they were treated respectfully ($p < 0.01$), and significantly less likely to say that they find it difficult to speak up in community meetings ($p < 0.05$).
- It has no significant impact on their desire to recommend Busara, their likelihood to change something in their lives as a result of their findings, or their motivation to conserve the forest. (Desire to recommend Busara and the motivation to conserve the forest were already very high).

This provides a baseline that even simple forms of feedback can have an impact on at least some desired outcomes. Future research by the same team, supported by Feedback Labs, will test the relative impact of different modes of feedback.

Conclusion

Feedback and consent are two areas of research ethics, and much of the research so far has only been conducted in Kenya. Other people in other places may have different concerns and different preferred solutions. Central to all this work, wherever it is undertaken, is the principle that the voices of those potential research participants must guide respect for persons and the dignity agenda in research.

"He'd get mad about it. He said, 'They just took us up here and made guinea pigs of us.'"
- Ralphine Pollard Harper, daughter of Charlie Pollard, an unwitting member of the Tuskegee study of untreated syphilis.





Dignity and research ethics

When I think about dignity and research ethics, I think about the dignity everyone has by virtue of being knowers. We are all entitled to dignity because we have morally important features. One of those features is that we are knowers – we hold knowledge; we produce knowledge; we interpret knowledge. This is not a common way of grounding the concept of dignity in research ethics. But it puts a lot of things in perspective. If research participants' dignity as knowers is respected, it means they are seen as a legitimate audience of knowledge generated from them and about them. It means they are regarded as interpreters of knowledge, such that the way in which they understand and move through the world is reflected in knowledge that is generated from and about them. They see themselves in the new knowledge that is reflected back to them, as its legitimate audience. The process of feedback is not just about reporting back, but also sense-checking. Do our interpretations align with yours? Where do they differ? Whose priors need updating? Whose frames need adjusting?

The process of research doesn't feel extractive when people's dignity as knowers is respected. The research feels jointly created; jointly owned. But considering people's dignity as knowers should kick in long before data collection. Our choice of research question can show that we respect people's dignity as knowers – or not. If research participants consider our research as necessary, if they understand what it is about, if they know what we will do with the result, if it is their question – then, again, the research is not seen as extractive, but it is seen as something that contributes to a conversation that they are a part of; a conversation they want to have. The current ways in which we think about what constitutes research ethics does not quite account for respecting people's dignity as knowers. It is traditionally taken for granted that conversations about holding, producing, interpreting knowledge was an exclusive preserve of socially or physically distant self-described experts. The rest were, at best, sources of data. An important research agenda for dignity in research ethics must include how to change our current defaults towards dignity-based practices. A lot has to change to get there.

A good way to start is by recognising that the benefits of dignity-based practices far outweigh their costs; the benefits in getting our assumptions, interpretations and interventions right; in serving people optimally.

Seye Abimbola

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The views expressed in this commentary are those of the author.





2.7 GLOBAL MOVEMENTS FOR JUSTICE

The Dignity Initiative aims to create a world in which the global development sector routinely fully respects the dignity of those whom development seeks to serve. We hope to ensure that in their interactions with governments, NGOs and researchers, people feel recognized, have agency, and are fundamental equals to those who may have more privilege. When we imagine a just world, it is these types of human relationships that characterize it.

The development sector, like many others, has been evolving too slowly towards justice. Great inequalities - especially of gender and race - haunt the work of this sector. Thinkers and practitioners in development have been wrestling with how to transform relationships that remain burdened by colonial history and modern inequities.

We acknowledge the leadership that the diverse movements for gender and racial justice have taken. Dignity has been important to many of those social movements, and is an idea that can contribute alongside other big ideas to advancing those movements. We believe that dignity can work in parallel to these movements in reforming the development sector, and in support of these movements in providing useful tools and evidence.

Dignity in the words of social movements

Dignity has been a rallying cry and an analytical lens for many social movements around the world. In last year's Dignity Report, the Kenyan feminists at FEMNET told us that dignity is central to their values, and explored why they and their allies across the African continent had called on governments to deliver a dignified response to the pandemic. The need to be treated in line with their dignity has been a central claim of the movement for gay rights in the United States (according to research by Engel & Lyle, 2022).⁹ It has been equally important in the many movements for fair treatment by Dalits and other oppressed caste and identity groups in India, as research by Indrajit Roy (and others) shows.¹⁰ In the 2011 Arab Spring protests, cries for dignity were heard across the Middle East and North Africa, with it being a particularly important theme in the revolutionary discourse in Egypt at that time, as research by Zayneb El Bernoussi shows.¹¹

"Without dignity there is no freedom, without justice there is no dignity."

Patrice Lumumba

Dignity's unique contribution, alongside other ideas

Many ideas have been proposed to help the international development sector move towards global justice. Thoughtful funders have been putting agency, empowerment, and localization at the center of their statements and strategies. Almost all actors in development have instituted inward-looking efforts at diversity, equity, and inclusion. This vital, valuable work inches us towards a more just world. We support these efforts, and we think the project for dignity has a place alongside these ideas.

Dignity offers some unique contributions that make it particularly valuable to consider alongside these other ideas. Dignity is about our moral duty towards all humans we encounter. It centers people and their experiences without invoking abstract systems or equilibria. It focuses on their innate value, sidestepping their current relative socio-economic status. It is a familiar term that means something to people all around the world - though local understandings will always vary. It articulates an important moral challenge to the status quo in an invitational way that brings people at all levels on board. It uses language that already has traction in our sector but that has not (at least not yet) been diluted into a technocratic buzzword. Dignity builds on long traditions of use and a vast body of research. When we use it, we create productive spaces for the right conversations and solutions. It is for these reasons that we employ dignity, in our work alongside these movements towards a more just development sector.

Actions towards justice at IDinsight

IDinsight is guided by our values of humility and service, amongst others, in pursuit of impact. We developed our thinking in these areas in our statement on “Reducing power asymmetries in the social sector: an IDinsight organizational priority”, which continues to structure our efforts.

In our new strategy, we have committed to collaborating more effectively with social movements for justice. We understand we can structure engagements so that our research expertise can be put at the service of those efforts. In recent months, we have launched collaborations with feminist campaigners in Kenya and in support of women parliamentarians in East Africa.

A commitment of the Dignity Initiative is to work to ensure that IDinsight acts “as an exemplary and accountable guiding institution” for the work on dignity. That means making internal changes to uphold our promise to respect the dignity of those within the organization, and process changes to improve how we interact with those outside - especially research participants. Our efforts to do this are primarily discussed in Section 2.6 on research ethics.

**"DIGNITY TO ME IS BEING TREATED AS
A RESPECTED PERSON WHO DESERVES
EQUALITY, FREEDOM, KINDNESS,
UNDERSTANDING, AND TO BE TREATED AS IF
I AM A REASONABLY INTELLIGENT PERSON.**

**I EXPERIENCE DIGNITY MOST WHEN I'M WITH
MY CLOSE FRIENDS, BUT ALSO WITH THE
MAJORITY OF PEOPLE OUT THERE."**

Woman, 32, USA



Planting Back Dignity into the 'Valley of Darkness'

Just over a decade ago, when I joined high school, I embarked on a prolonged journey of self-denial. I denied who I was and was ashamed of where I come from. I distanced myself from Mathare at every opportunity to introduce myself to others. There was no dignity in coming from the ghetto. To be a boy from Mathare was to be a vermin – to be filthy and unworthy of honour. It was the first time I was starting school far away from home, and with kids from different backgrounds. Before that, I had only studied alongside kids in my community, with whom we were always taught that Mathare is the Valley of Darkness and that we must transform it into the Mountain of God.

Our only outside interactions involved the American Christians who sponsored our education through a local charity NGO. The white missionaries frequented Mathare in droves to marvel at the residents' tenacity and to photograph the miracle of hope. I must say this at the outset, or else the story I'm going to tell will make no sense.

Mathare is an informal settlement distinguished by shanties, a canopy of rusty brown tin roofs, and a network of winding, narrow alleys. The surrounding environment is a furnace of agony, often associated with drugs, crime, violence and trash. Having been taught that we came from a valley of darkness, my peers and I gradually adapted to the white charitable visitors, assuming the roles of professional beggars who peddle the currency of hopelessness.

Years later, I met Gitu wa Kahengeri, a veteran Mau Mau war hero, who strangely changed my entire perspective. I introduced myself and Gitu would say to me: 'Young man, Mathare was the cradle of the freedom struggle.' He went on about how his generation had used Mathare to mobilise resources and advance the struggle for Kenya's liberation. How green the place was and how sad it is that that part of the story remains largely untold.

Never before had I felt so proud of my origin. Back home, I began to reflect with friends about our untold histories and how they play a big part in denying us a sense of worth. How not accurately knowing where we come from, hinders where we can go. How all the issues we grapple with as poor young men in the ghetto – unemployment, drugs, police violence – are all intertwined. And how most of our esteem problems were deeply rooted in our environment.

Something had to change. We collectively decided to not allow our shabby environment to serve as a reminder of our status of poverty or otherwise. For so long, it was normal to live around garbage. The only time trash was ever cleared was upon cosmetic government and NGO interventions. No incentives for permanent solutions and nothing out of our own volition.



Our resolve was therefore laid bare. We would aim to plant trees in Mathare, to foster a link between a healthy environment and the quality of life. Planting trees in memory of all our colleagues who fell to police bullets would also restore our dignity and enable us to demand the right to life from a state that minimises it. In the long run, developing our neighbourhood through these greening efforts would allow us to feel better about it and about ourselves. It is a direct address to a void of representation – where we say ‘yes’ to dignified lives and the right to security, when the system says ‘no’.

Kanyi Wyban

Writer and Musician

The views expressed in this commentary are those of the author.

**"OVERCOMING POVERTY
IS NOT A GESTURE OF CHARITY.
IT IS AN ACT OF JUSTICE.**

**IT IS THE PROTECTION OF A
FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT,
THE RIGHT TO DIGNITY AND
A DECENT LIFE."**

Nelson Mandela



2.8 AUDITING DIGNITY INSIDE IDinsight

Could a dignity lens point us to further progress on an already strong internal culture? The Dignity Initiative has a mandate to ensure IDinsight is an accountable and exemplary home for this work. Our analysis suggests three areas for IDinsight's teams to pay greater attention.

IDinsight has always been committed to building a strong internal culture, harnessing a community of leaders to contribute to social impact. We're proud of that work. In our most recent team health check, our teammates on average rated the statement 'Overall, I am satisfied with IDinsight as a place to work' as 4 out of a possible 5. The statement 'I feel motivated, inspired, and valued on my team' scored 4.1.

Our outgoing Chief Operating Officer, Rebecca Sharp, shared with Stanford Social Innovation Review what she thought was the core of building that successful culture.¹² She pointed to four domains. Algorithmic hiring rubrics help find diverse talent, reduce screening time, reduce bias and allow applicants to show their skills. Rubric-driven performance management identifies top talent amid growth, if done through an annual review with a mid-way cycle, and increases the objectivity of performance feedback, while promotion committees reduce bias. Pulse checks support team health, well-being and work-life balance, allow course correction for unhappier groups, and make for more efficient use of leader time and resources. Finally, regular compensation and benefits reviews create fair benchmarking against local peer organizations, ensuring compensation is aligned with values and improved staff retention.

What could a dignity lens add to an already thoughtfully built culture?

As always, we started with the data. We reviewed key questions from our Global Survey. We reviewed results from a survey of experiences with enumerators in India (discussed in detail in Section 3.6 of this report). We consulted with IDinsight's three DEI working groups (Recruiting, Work Culture, Training, and Career Development). We reviewed input from a session on shaping the dignity agenda with the whole East and Southern Africa team (we've since held a similar workshop with our West and North Africa region). Finally, we built on interviews we had done with people from across the organization about what they saw as the dignity hotspots. To this data, we applied our 'Three Pathways' lens to determine where would people like more recognition, more agency and more equality. This led us to three 'hotspots' where we wanted to make progress.

Recognising enumerators and life in the field	The project experience dictates agency	Policies are how we keep promises of equality
Enumerators feel treated respectfully by IDinsight. But they report facing safety threats and gender bias in the course of their work. They have a much different experience of IDinsight than other staff and limited paths for career progression. Other staff do not hear from them as often. IDi staff worry about the justice of their compensation. Being in the field means discomfort for everyone, fear for some, and sharply different norms from life in the office and the city.	Projects are 'what we do'. Which project you are staffed on, who you work with, and how it was budgeted has a huge effect on your life - it affects your work experience right now, your future career, your personal life and sometimes your mental health.	There can be no let-up in our efforts to build an inclusive culture. Class, education, and sexual orientation are places we could be more diverse - especially at more senior levels. Policies are seen as the key tool to do that. Team members ask for a clear understanding of the lifecycle of a policy, the reasoning behind decisions, and the chance for ongoing input - especially if they are more junior.

We presented these ideas to IDinsight's Global Operations team. All three hotspots come with difficult implied judgments and trade-offs. The workshop we held on this did not result in us upending our current approach - nor should it. It takes time to make these judgments and to build a consensus on the right approach. In this workshop for the Operations team, we brainstormed how to address each of these hotspots. Even while the work is ongoing, we share these conclusions as part of our commitment to transparent, reflective work in building a culture of dignity within IDinsight. In closing the workshop, members of the Operations team were invited to take 'The Dignity Promise' - presented at the end of this section - to continue this work to build and uphold dignity in their work.

Three tips to stay people-centered amidst non-profit growth

IDinsight's Director of Global Operations, Beth Chikobe, recently wrote a blog post sharing how her team has remained people-focused during six years of growth from 60 to 250 team members.

She wrote:

"We learned a lot during this first big push towards growth, but there is one email exchange that stands out most prominently in my memory. It was after candidates had accepted our offers. We had patted ourselves on the back. We were checking off the final to-dos of the hiring drive. One of those to-dos was sending rejection emails to all the applicants who didn't make the cut. I remember opening our Careers email account to find a striking response to one such email. It read something like this:

"Dear Faceless HR Robot,
I never want to work for an organization that addresses people as
"Applicant".
You work in the development space; be a bit more human."

My first reaction was to write it off and assume the candidate was disappointed or frustrated they weren't chosen for the role. But deep down, my reaction was, "Ouch, [Applicant] is right." I was the Faceless HR Robot. I was so intent on getting stuff done ("GSD", for those in the know) that I missed a key moment to be human and to put other humans first."

Beth's three tips for putting people first are:

1. Build systems that account for the mess and enable the best of your people
2. Whatever you think is implicit about your organizational values and culture, make it explicit
3. Learn as much as you can from every growing pain

Read more in her [blogpost](#).



Insight's DIGNITY PROMISE

"I COMMIT TO SEEING THE DIGNITY
IN EVERY PERSON I ENCOUNTER.

I WILL ALWAYS SHOW THEM
THE RESPECT THEY DESERVE,
AS A FELLOW HUMAN LIKE ME.



I WILL LEARN ABOUT AND
ADVOCATE FOR DIGNITY.



I WILL CHALLENGE THOSE WHO
FAIL TO ACT RESPECTFULLY."



...



Commentary by

**Elizabeth Chikobe, Anne Chege Mwaura
& Subha Ganguly Shahi**

As the Operations team at IDinsight, we are grateful for the opportunity to reflect and act upon ways we can improve internal measures of dignity. Participating in the workshop facilitated by the Dignity Initiative team allowed us to grow our understanding of the issue in order to better address these challenges.

We acknowledge that addressing dignity within our organizational operations will continue to be a work in progress and we're committed to doing this work. We've also made some effective strides towards our goal. Here are some operational work streams where we are infusing dignity into our systems and processes:

Compensation Benchmarking: We're completing a compensation review and will update IDinsight's compensation philosophy and practices as a result. Specific attention was paid to reviewing salary bands for Field Managers. Our hope is that with updated compensation, we can improve satisfaction and retention of these critical members of our team.

Professional Development: Our Operations team is working closely with our Data on Demand team to more clearly define pathways for "Regional Coordinators" (who function as lead enumerators) to advance into "Field Manager" roles.

Staffing: Our Operations team in India developed a policy by which client-facing team members can request to opt-out of a project after a specific period of time. One of the primary goals of this policy is to increase agency for team members with regards to how they are staffed on projects. This has been well-received by team members, and therefore we are considering a similar organization-wide policy.

Policy and Benefits: In collaboration with IDinsight's Legal, Finance, DEI Working Group, and client-facing teams, the Operations team is developing a Policy Review Committee by which we formally review and adopt organizational policies. We're hopeful this representative committee will enable organizational policy language to be more clear, unambiguous, and consistent with IDinsight's values.



The committee will particularly focus on how to most effectively communicate policy developments to the organization.

IDinsight Operations team members continue to think about ways we can build and uphold dignity, and look forward to future opportunities to learn from The Dignity Initiative.

Elizabeth Chikobe

Director, Global Operations - IDinsight

Anne Chege Mwaura

Director, Africa Regional Operations - IDinsight

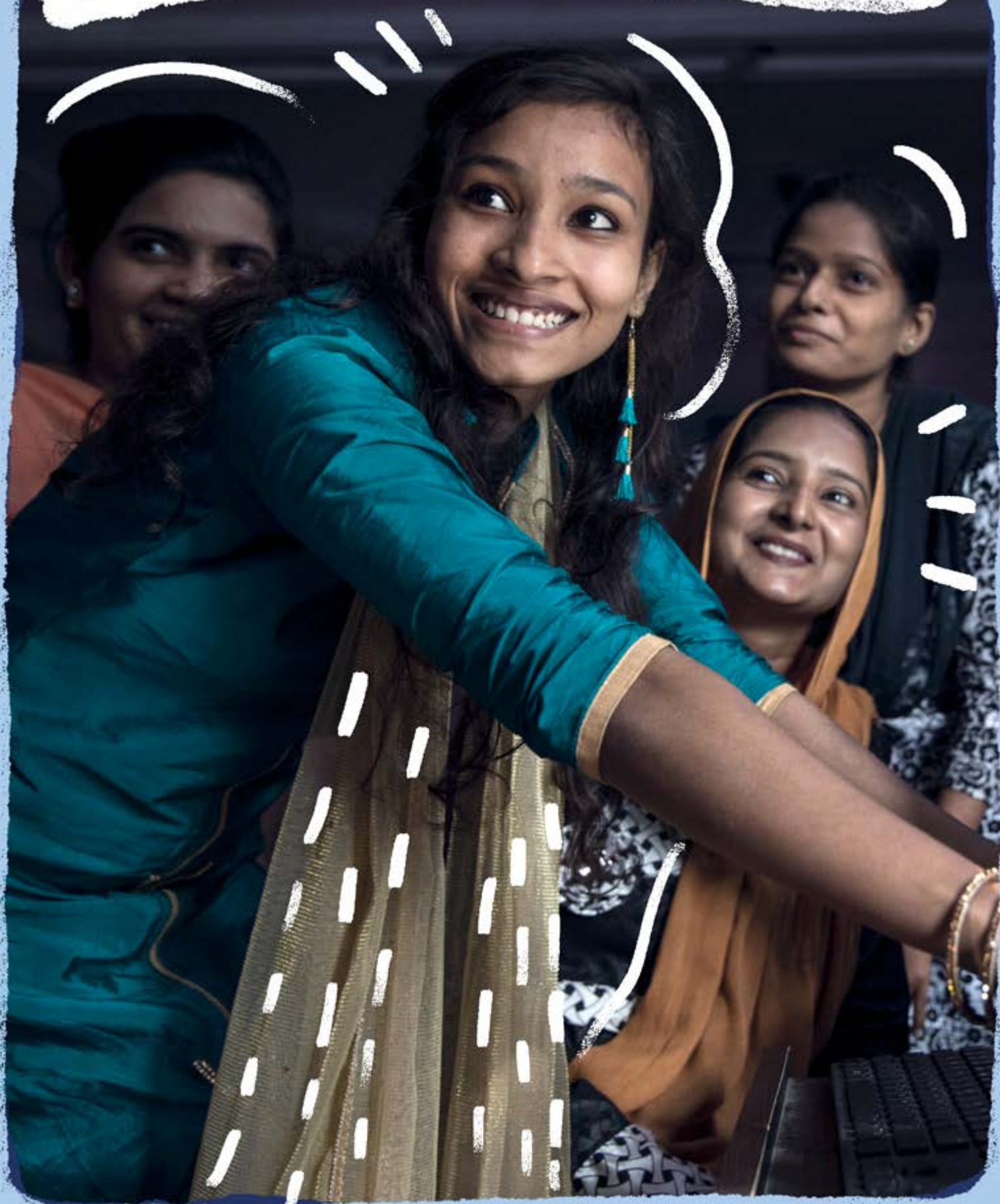
Subha Ganguly Shahi

Director, India Operations - IDinsight

The views expressed in this commentary are those of the authors.



3. Our LATEST Research





3.1 STORIES OF DIGNITY

While there is plenty of philosophical research on the concept of dignity (which we discuss elsewhere in this report), to root our approach to dignity in peoples' lived experiences, we must start with the human stories that constitute the dignity experience. Further, we must place at least as much weight on human voices as on the work of philosophers. In this section of the report, we center these human experiences by sharing some stories of dignity gathered through a qualitative study carried out by IDinsight's Dignity Initiative team.

The study

The datasets analyzed in this study drew on seven datasets from the US collected online from 2020 to 2022 by Cait Lamberton, Neela Saldanha and Tom Wein. The study gathered 4,282 stories of dignity, allowing us to anchor this conversation in lived experiences.

IDinsight identified the following research questions to guide the analysis of this data:



- **How do people describe dignity?:** What descriptions of dignity align with each of recognition, agency, and equality? What descriptions of dignity are not explained by recognition, agency or equality, and what links them together?
- **What are people's dignity experiences?** What is the relationship between people's dignity experiences and each of recognition, agency and equality? What experiences of dignity are not explained by recognition, agency or equality, and what links them together?
- **To what extent do descriptions of dignity experiences align with a mainstream Western philosophical idea of dignity?** How do they relate to other popular and philosophical traditions of dignity? Can we see evidence of both merit-based and moralistic conceptualizations of dignity? If so, where do we see each?
- **To what extent do descriptions of dignity experiences align with a dignity cultural syndrome?**

Painful experiences of disrespect

IDinsight found that respect and disrespect were experienced in a large variety of ways, as was expected, but with a few common threads linking these experiences together.

A large majority of respondents who told stories of disrespect (n=1,173, 70.3%) described this as a lack of recognition. People wish to feel accurately seen and heard (see Section 2.1) and most respondents did not experience this. This lack of recognition manifested itself in several ways, including a lack of acknowledgment of one's presence or of one's true identity. Consider the following example:



"I've frequently been refused dignity on the basis of disability and mental illness. Threatened with being institutionalized for having a physical disability that was presumed to be made up despite numerous doctors confirming the diagnosis and not questioning whether it needed treatment. I was hit for it, I was demeaned for it, I've been told I was useless and doing nothing for society. I've seen people condemn all people with disabilities in this way, stripping us of our dignity and assuming we're liars, even when we use mobility equipment - especially those of us who are young. In my late teens and early twenties it was especially heinous. I was completely bedridden and frequently threatened by family members who insisted I was just lazy despite being in too much pain to even bathe myself properly. I had to use baby wipes to shower for over a year. That alone felt like an indignity, nevermind how those who were supposed to be close to me reacted to my inability to properly function on my own."

[Woman, 28]

While this person's story details a more explicit display of disrespect for one's dignity, the story below shows the more subtle and pervasive ways people experience disrespect for dignity based on their identity:

"I can't think of a specific case, but I feel sometimes as a female who looks young I'm not always taken seriously or respected by others. It's easy to just write off my suggestions or my opinion, even my knowledge over a subject, because I can come off as meek so that must mean I'm wrong or my opinions don't matter so you can talk down to me or completely ignore me."

[Woman, 33]

Other common expressions for lack of recognition were related to a lack of acknowledgment of one's accomplishments (especially in professional settings) or of one's worth as a human being (i.e., feeling like being treated as an object instead of a human with feelings).

"I'm a recovering addict with a drug felony conviction. As a result, anytime I have to disclose this information, my dignity is not respected. Before my final conviction, I began a job through a temporary service. I worked hard and the employer decided to offer me a full time job which required a background check. The company was able to see my charges and said they could not hire me because of this. Something that I deeply regret and have worked hard to overcome continues to follow me.

When this happened, I felt less than and very hopeless. This job only paid minimum wage, yet they still weren't going to hire me because of my past. I've been sober for over 5 years and never been in any more trouble but every time I job hunt I fear that I will experience this indignity again."

[Woman, 39]

As demonstrated in these stories, there are many ways that one might experience disrespect of dignity, but in all cases, it leads to negative consequences for the sense of self. From feeling "demeaned", feeling like your opinions "don't matter," and feeling "hopeless", these stories make it clear what is at stake when we disrespect the dignity of others.



Hopeful experiences of respect



How do people describe having their dignity respected?

A large majority of those who expressed having their dignity respected said it in relation to feeling seen and heard (n=1,363, 76.6%). One common way respondents indicated feeling seen was through having their presence acknowledged, such as welcoming them, inviting them to be part of a group, respecting them because of their status, accepting their true identity, recognizing their accomplishments, or recognizing their worth as human beings.

Consider the following examples:

"The first that comes to mind is when I joined my Hindu friend for lunch once, in which they were joined by other Hindus from their temple. I, being Catholic, felt a bit out of place, especially when we got on the topic of religion. But they respected my beliefs, even though I was the minority in that situation and the topic soon shifted to all the similarities between our two beliefs. It was a very comfortable and enlightening experience."

[Man, 22]

Another respondent shares their experience of being seen and heard in the workplace:

"In my current job, I feel like my dignity is constantly respected by my peers in the way they listen to my ideas, welcome me at meetings and overall show appreciation for me working with them. I feel like they respect my values and my beliefs, even when they differ from others and they respect my time and my work-ethic."

[Woman, 24]

Other respondents shared their feelings of dignity regarding how others treated them in terms of general kindness and consideration. For example, some respondents mentioned acts of kindness, being polite, and respect for one's time as respectful. For some respondents, this included small, random gestures such as holding the door open for someone or being on time as signs of respect for some respondents, while some others expressed exceptional kindness, compassion, and empathy during moments of need or vulnerability:

"It was after a hurricane where I had slept in the barn where I was working so someone would have access to feed and check on the animals in case the roads were impassable. The storm was bad, and after rounding up, feeding, and treating some small wounds on the animals I was a mess. Some neighbors came to see if we needed help. I was tired, dirty, and shaky but they were so kind. They didn't draw attention to the stress, just treated me with compassion and came to check on me like any kind person would. It made me feel much more dignified."

[Woman, 44]

I was having a meeting with my boss after I had been passed over for a promotion. Despite my best attempts, I got emotional and began crying. She was understanding and said that she understood how I was feeling and that I was allowed to be having those emotions. It was nice to have a boss who didn't expect me to be a robot and acknowledge how difficult of a moment that was for me.

[Woman, 33]

Another respondent expressed a situation in which they felt their dignity was under attack, and some intervened to defend them:



"Honestly I'm not entirely sure. Besides basic privacy, I don't think there are many people that have respected my dignity as a person, if at all. Nor can I really recall too many instances. But I think there was one time in memory, when I was being picked on for my hair in high school. Now, my hair has a tendency to puff out when it's long and it's been washed, and people, for some reason, wanted to throw spitballs at it. Not once did I fight back, I honestly didn't feel there was any point in me trying as no teachers or the principals would deal with them and just blanket it with "be nice to the bullies they've lived a hard life :(" even though these bullies were far better off than I was, had money for extracurricular activities, and other things that little poor teenage me couldn't afford because I hardly had money for myself at the time, but I digress. Then a substitute teacher, who I had known for him having a creative writing class that was booting out of the school system, actually saw what had happened and stood up for me in the class, in front of everyone, shaming them for their behavior. And that was the last time I had spitballs in my hair. With that in mind, it makes me want to stand up for other people that have had it rough, that deal with unfair circumstances."

[Woman, 27]

This anecdote demonstrates that respect for dignity goes beyond general kindness and courtesy. An experience in which this person's dignity was under attack was transformed into one they recall when thinking about when their dignity was respected, all because someone chose to defend them.

The path forward

Respondents indicated feelings of pain, worthlessness, and shame when their dignity is not respected by others, while those who did feel as though their dignity was respected described feelings of empowerment and appreciation. The IDinsight Dignity Initiative, alongside our allies, hopes to contribute to a world where no one has to experience the pain of not having their dignity recognized. We recognize that this is a longstanding movement and one that will continue for generations to come. These stories show us that, in the meantime, it is important for us to commit ourselves to championing respect for the dignity of others, especially those who have the least protection.



3.2 CASH TRANSFERS WITH RESPECT

Unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) are payments provided to a group or individual with no requirements as to how the funds must be used, nor do they require any other action from the recipient. UCTs are becoming an increasingly popular social protection strategy in many low- and middle-income countries. UCTs differentiate themselves from other common forms of development assistance (such as loans or in-kind provisions) in that they allow recipients to identify their own needs instead of a development organization attempting to identify a specific need for them.

GiveDirectly is one of the leading organizations in the UCT space, and they center the dignity of participants in their mission and operational model. In this section, we reflect on how participants in GiveDirectly's UCT program define dignity, and whether or not they felt that GiveDirectly's interventions were respectful of their dignity.

The project

GiveDirectly provided UCTs of 1,000 USD to all 10,000 households in the Kiryandongo refugee settlements and 5,000 nearby Ugandan host community households. The funds were distributed via mobile money for privacy and security reasons, as per prior recipient feedback. While participants were not required to spend the money in a particular way, the cash transfer was accompanied by additional services, including community sensitization meetings, nudges for potential transfer use, and financial and digital literacy training.

In parallel to IDinsight's impact evaluation of this UCT program, IDinsight conducted a qualitative study on the dignity experiences of people in Uganda's Kiryandogo refugee settlement, both generally and related to their GiveDirectly experience. The study included a sample of 51 respondents composed of South Sudanese refugees and Ugandans and varied in gender and age of the main respondent, household size, and ethnicity.

As a part of the dignity study, respondents answered questions about the definition of respect, the extent to which they felt their interactions with GiveDirectly were respectful of their dignity, and how GiveDirectly might improve their systems to make participants feel more respected - among a number of other dignity-focused questions.

What we found

Respondents generally understood respect as earned based on status or behavior and not necessarily inherent to everyone. When asked about how they defined respect, a majority of respondents associated respect with character traits (such as maturity, humility, trustworthiness, or politeness) or specific behaviors (such as treating others well, being a role model, and avoiding fights). When asked about who was respected by all people, most respondents indicated that people with authority (elected local councils, religious leaders, etc.) or high socioeconomic status (rich or highly educated people) were the most commonly respected. Few respondents mentioned that all people deserved respect.

Almost all respondents felt respected by GiveDirectly. Most respondents indicated that GiveDirectly was respectful in their interactions. IDinsight examined this respect using our framework of respect for dignity across the axes of recognition, agency, and respect. This measure of respect is discussed in further detail in Section 2.1.

Recognition

Generally, respondents indicated an appreciation for the politeness and care exhibited by GiveDirectly staff, especially through greetings and their steadfast response to any participant challenges. Additionally, GiveDirectly hires Ugandan and South Sudanese refugee staff in its host villages, allowing participants to express themselves freely in their native language.

Agency

Respondents indicated an appreciation for UCTs because they were free to use the funds however they liked, without asking for any follow-up or specific action from the recipient. Recipients are in complete control of what they do with the funds. Some respondents also appreciated that GiveDirectly asked for their consent to participate in the program.

Equality

Respondents appreciated that GiveDirectly took the time to send their staff members to each household, as opposed to participants having to wait in long lines at their offices. Respondents also appreciated GiveDirectly's commitment to flexibility and communication with program participants. Ugandan respondents generally expressed a preference for UCTs over in-kind aid provisions, while South Sudanese refugees expressed a preference for in-kind support. Across all respondents, the majority prefer UCTs, primarily because they offer participants the opportunity to exercise their autonomy to plan and achieve their individual goals. Respondents also tended to prefer lump sum cash payments over monthly installments, making it easier to plan for the full sum and direct it to various needs at once. However, when disaggregating by whether the respondent is Ugandan or South Sudanese refugee, we found that the majority of South Sudanese respondents preferred in-kind provisions over UCTs.

GiveDirectly participants would like to see improved transparency about the organization's operations. Although most respondents currently feel respected by GiveDirectly, they offer suggestions related to operational transparency. For example, GiveDirectly might consider disseminating more information about selection criteria for benefiting communities, providing more clarity about the timeline of grant distribution, and more communication about the rationale for some of their programmatic decisions.

Implications

Respondents in this study expressed a generally positive experience of respect for dignity when engaging with GiveDirectly's staff. While the sample size and time limitations of this study mean that the evidence is limited, the findings do indicate that GiveDirectly's operational norms could be a valuable example for other organizations seeking to improve their approach to dignity in their program implementation. Even so, respondents' recommendations for improved respect for dignity indicate that, even for exemplary institutions, respect for dignity is always an ongoing, interactive process. Moreover, the definitions of dignity provided by respondents contribute to ongoing research about the definition of dignity across cultures. This study provided insight into what respect meant to refugee and Ugandan GiveDirectly participants. More specifically, they understand it to be earned, not necessarily inherent.

The findings of this study also support suggestions in previous dignity reports that organizations should consider opting for UCTs over in-kind provisions, as they are seen as more respectful by participants. However, the findings of this study also act as a reminder that dignity, and respect for that dignity, can and will evolve based on context. For example, while Ugandan respondents indicated a preference for UCTs, refugees preferred in-kind support, which could be an invitation for more research on what dignity looks like in humanitarian contexts in particular.



The study on the experiences of Give Directly cash transfer clients in Kiryandongo addresses two issues around dignity, one related to the intervention itself and the second related to the treatment by staff. How do these insights compare to the evidence from large-scale, national cash transfer programs in Africa?

In national programs, small transfers (\$10-20 per month) are provided bimonthly in cash, coverage is much larger (e.g. 800,000 households in Kenya, 1 million in Zambia), and targeting is based on government policy that is subject to a political process. Both the structure and value of the transfer as well as the need to service a large number of people in a low-capacity environment could affect the dimensions of dignity addressed in the Kiryandongo case study.

Qualitative evidence from six national programs across Africa provides compelling insights on how cash affects the lives of the ultra-poor and serves to enhance their dignity.¹³ A key theme from these studies is how cash allows recipients to become more engaged in their communities, enabling them to contribute to family rituals like burials and naming ceremonies, and even to help their neighbors from time to time, rather than being the ones that always need help, which brought about feelings of 'pride and responsibility'.

The interview transcripts reveal that these feelings of pride are contrasted with shame, particularly from having to beg from neighbors or relatives, or to take out loans ("...since LEAP came there is no more shame").¹⁴ Another strong theme in the transcripts is how recipients were previously 'embarrassed by their appearance' in public, but now felt comfortable going out and even attending events or going to church because they could afford clothes.

Finally, the interviews across 400+ program recipients in six countries, men and women, young and old, highlight the power of choice that is enabled by cash, exemplified by the range of activities that the cash is used for, from school fees to non-farm enterprise to fertilizer to a new roof or mattress, each family now able to address the issue that is most important to them.

Mixed methods data across these same six countries highlight a few important issues in program operations that affect dignity.

One important theme is the limited understanding of program rules and eligibility criteria, with many recipients unclear as to why they were selected over others in their village. In addition, in five of the six countries, a majority of recipients believed the transfers to be conditional though all are unconditional, information they said they received from social welfare workers themselves. Related to this is a lack of knowledge about redress or grievance procedures within the program. Finally, in some countries, inconsistency in payments is cited as a major concern as it significantly impinges on the ability to plan and to depend on the transfer. All three concerns can affect dignity insofar as they limit the rights of recipients to advocate for themselves and limit their autonomy with respect to the transfer itself.



The issues around program delivery arise in part because of the sheer scale of national programs, and the associated capacity of national ministries, which is a key difference from the Kiryandongo case study.

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The views expressed in this commentary are those of the author.

"WHEN YOU ARE ALL HEALTHY,
EVEN IF YOU ARE HUNGRY, IT IS BETTER THIS WAY.
YOU WILL CONTINUE SURVIVING AS YOU WOULD HAVE
SURVIVED ANYWAY WITHOUT THE NEEDS...

**WHEN PEOPLE ARE ALIVE AND HEALTHY,
EVERYTHING ELSE IS BETTER.**

BUT WHEN PEOPLE DIE,
A GAP THAT IS **IMPOSSIBLE TO FILL**
(CANNOT BE FILLED BY ANYTHING ELSE, EVEN CASH)
IS LEFT THERE."

Female, 42, Migori, Kenya



3.3 VACCINATING THE WORLD

What is the role of dignity in bringing about equitable access to healthcare? Global health has been among the fields to take dignity most seriously. Much valuable work has been done to understand dignity concerning maternal, end-of-life, and ICU care in particular. Recent years have hammered home that there is no greater healthcare challenge than ensuring people take up the astonishing vaccines that medical science provides. Yet we have seen reluctance among many to do so. Could it be that their past healthcare experiences are playing a role in that decision? What does a dignity lens tell us?

The project

The Busara Center collected survey data on respect and vaccine uptake in Kenya, the Philippines, and Nepal in 2021 (n= 1241, 628, 499, respectively). This was part of their larger Vaxup collaboration with Common Thread and Save the Children. IDinsight's Dignity Initiative collaborated with them to understand the dignity aspects of this work. Participants answered questions about demographics, healthcare, coronavirus, and more. As part of that, they answered the following question:

"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Whenever I interact with healthcare professionals, they always treat me with respect and dignity."

What we found

Being treated with respect and dignity is associated with significant, but very small magnitude, increases in vaccine uptake.

In the effort to vaccinate the world, every improvement counts. Still, the impact of past dignity experiences in encounters with healthcare workers was not large. In the Philippines, a 1-point increase in agreement is associated with a 1.39% increase in the odds of vaccine uptake, in Nepal with a 1.03% increase, and in Kenya with a 0.28% increase (all $p < 0.01\%$).

Most people report feeling treated with respect and dignity by medical staff.

Dignity experiences with healthcare workers were commonly reported. 97% agree or strongly agree in the Philippines, 94% in Nepal. Fewer feel treated in a way that respects their dignity in Kenya - only 81% said they were treated with respect for their dignity.

Different demographic groups have different dignity experiences, and which ones benefit varies by country.

When we examined how this varied by demographic subgroup, interesting differences emerged - with no clear pattern across countries. In Nepal, older and less educated respondents feel less respected. In Kenya, younger and female respondents feel less respected. In the Philippines, there are few demographic differences in experiences of dignity and respect from healthcare workers.

Dignity experiences are correlated with accurate health beliefs.

Being treated with respect and dignity by health workers is negatively correlated with incorrect beliefs and positively correlated with some correct beliefs in the Philippines and Nepal. In the Philippines, it is also negatively correlated with trust in news media and religious leaders, while being positively correlated with national elected officials. (This analysis was not possible in Kenya). This generates interesting hypotheses for future research - the importance of dignity may not be in direct vaccine uptake, but in important supporting beliefs that, in turn, affect vaccine uptake.

Implications

The coronavirus pandemic has brought into focus many aspects of respectful interactions. Inequalities have been made still more stark. Interpersonal respect has frayed amid political polarization. The rituals of life that we most value have been disrupted. Services normally administered face-to-face have been replaced by digital experiences. Healthcare workers have been under severe pressure, eroding their ability to provide holistic care. If we are to continue to work to end this pandemic everywhere in the world, dignity will surely come to play a role - even if its direct impact on vaccine uptake does not appear large in this data.



Dignity is not the only reason people make health-systems choices: access, best-treatment, urgency, experience, inertia, and fear may all swamp concerns for respectful treatment, especially in the short run and especially in conditions of limited choice. Health care markets suffer from multiple failures.¹⁵ Making high-quality care available and affordable is part of the dignity picture; human decency matters, but dirty clinics with no supplies and few competent staff are incredibly urgent to deliver health in ways consistent with dignity. We need a robust conversation of how affordability and availability are themselves constitutive of dignity-affirming health-systems interactions because (potential) patients cannot have real agency without them¹⁶.

When workers in a health system treat (potential) patients in ways consistent with their dignity, this has intrinsic value—respectful experiences are good in themselves, as each person deserves such treatment by dint of being human.¹⁷ But dignity-affirming treatment may further have instrumental value, with each interaction a small ‘policy choice’ that may inform and influence later system-engagement decisions, with benefits both to individuals and to society.¹⁸

Health-systems interactions are wide ranging, from public health announcements to engagement with insurance companies, to arriving at, experiencing, and being followed-up with after a clinical or home-based encounter with a frontline health worker. All of these can be (re-)designed for dignity, taking into account the needs and preferences of different groups and individuals—as indicated by *Vaccinating the world*.

A disrespectful experience can leave a negative mark that shapes whether and how an individual or community engages with health care going forward. Perhaps you have had one—an experience that could range from a rude health worker with a poor ‘bedside manner,’ to not feeling ‘not heard’ by a care worker, to systematic dismissal of pain, all the way to physical abuse.¹⁹ Our definitions of what people can expect and demand from a health-system interaction, and therefore how we conceptualize offences against dignity, need refinement. But regardless of the shape of the experience, we have suggestive evidence that disrespect and betrayed trust can echo across a lifetime and over generations (Alsan & Wanamaker, 2018; Lowes & Montero, 2021).^{20,21,22} The work in *Vaccinating the world* hints at this relationship, with a small but significant positive association between agreeing more strongly with the statement “whenever I interact with healthcare professionals, they always treat me with respect and dignity” receiving a Covid vaccination.



Vaccines—perhaps especially in an emergency—provide an important case to consider in understanding dignity-affirmative health systems, especially the meaning and role of agency.²³ Agency can be seen as one of three key pathways for dignity, along with equality and representation. Agency includes having choices, a meaningful chance to consent, and the chance to shape one's experiences. The definition of choice in health care is contested but it takes as an assumption that the goal is to be healthy, part of Nussbaum's conceptualization of dignity (Nussbaum, 2011).²⁴

Dignity is affirmed when we provide people with as many pathways as possible to reach that capability. In pursuit of that goal: a patient (and their support structures) are given full, accurate information about the range of options available to them and, with guidance from a trusted, competent professional, choose a course of action and, where relevant, medication and technology that is best-fit for them. Almost each word in this sentence is contestable; a full consideration of dignity will require us to unpack the role of information asymmetries and authority: who determines the range of possible courses and who is a trusted, competent professional?

Vaccination, with its strong emotions, authority-claims and ramifications for the safety of others, throws this into sharp relief, suggesting that vaccination is an essential test case for understanding the potential for dignified engagement with public health guidance and directives. There may be public-good reasons to restrict complete agency in some conditions, so that most individuals are not offered a yes/no choice about vaccination, unless medically indicated. Versions of this, such as soft mandates and opt-out approaches, may not be inconsistent with dignity—but we need both more conceptual and empirical work to articulate if this is true and why. Under a condition of constrained agency, the system would move people towards vaccination but individuals have choice over, for example, when, where, from whom, and with what amount of information they receive a vaccination. As should be clear, achieving even this constrained agency requires the world to guarantee available, affordable, safe, effective vaccine supplies—we have a long way to go.

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The views expressed in this commentary are those of the author.





3.4 ENHANCING RESPECT FOR DIGNITY WITH DATA & EVIDENCE: THE CASE OF TOSTAN IN SENEGAL

For many development practitioners, the concept of dignity can seem nebulous and hard to marry with technical ideas related to the use of data and evidence. When designing programs, it is important to center the voices of the intended participants to create a foundation for respect within the program's design. Data and evidence can be a powerful tool for further enhancing respect for dignity as it offers a concerted opportunity for program implementers to hear directly from participants what is and is not working for them. One particularly pertinent example of this is IDinsight's partnership with Tostan.

Tostan is a Senegal-based organization aiming to empower communities across Africa to "develop and achieve their vision for the future and inspire large-scale movements leading to dignity for all." Tostan facilitates human rights-based, participatory training and education programs, most notably through its flagship Community Empowerment Program (CEP), which aims to support and empower communities to lead their own development initiatives.

IDinsight completed five engagements with Tostan since 2019. Working with an organization that has dignity at the center of its operating model has allowed us to reflect on how data and evidence can be used to respond to the needs of those they serve in a respectful way. In this section, we reflect on two of the engagements we've completed with the NGO and what they have taught us about data and dignity.

The projects

In 2020, Tostan received funding from the MasterCard Foundation to implement a two-year project for strengthening economic resilience in resource-poor communities as they responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a part of this project, Tostan developed a microgrants initiative, through which they provide financial support in the form of unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) of 75.000 XOF (approximately 110 USD) paid in three installments to 2,120 households in Senegal. IDinsight partnered with Tostan to conduct a process evaluation of the novel initiative.

Shortly following the conclusion of the microgrants project, IDinsight launched a mixed-methods evaluation of Tostan's Strengthening Democracy and Civic Engagement ([SDCE](#)), an innovation to the aforementioned CEP. SDCE sets out to strengthen the capacity of municipal and district councilors to effectively carry out their roles while simultaneously building the advocacy skills of citizens so that they might make their voices heard by their elected officials. SDCE does this via training and capacity-building sessions for elected officials on municipal councils (CMs) and Community Management Committee (CMC) members.²⁵ IDinsight carried out a mixed-methods evaluation, drawing on aspects of both a process evaluation and a needs assessment, to provide Tostan with community-based insights on how to strengthen the innovation. While the projects were quite different in terms of learning goals, at the core, both were interested in using data and evidence to gain a clearer picture of what program participants were experiencing, in order to strengthen their programs according to expressed needs and experiences of those they seek to serve.

What we found

Tostan's microgrant initiative affirmed that UCTs allow participants to determine how to best meet their own needs, even in a crisis context. Prior to collecting data from microgrants participants, we asked Tostan how they expected beneficiaries to spend their funds. Most staff members indicated that they would expect most people to spend their funds on urgent needs such as food, healthcare, and education, especially given the COVID-19 realities. While these were indeed the most commonly identified spending categories, we also identified other spending patterns, such as productive purchases (such as agricultural inputs or business supplies) and other miscellaneous needs such as soap, clothes, and even birth certificates for children. While Tostan could partially predict the urgent needs of communities, it designed the microgrants initiative so that participants had the freedom to choose beyond these predictions.

There is room for additional research on how Tostan's partner communities define and understand dignity. The IDinsight team used the Dignity Scale as a part of the SDCE innovation to understand how village chiefs and health and education workers felt about their interactions with elected officials. While the average response on the dignity scale items related to feeling valued, respected, and listened-to were all above a 3.5/4, scores hovered closer to 3/4 regarding feeling as though they were supported and treated with dignity overall. These findings invite additional research on how dignity is understood in the Senegalese context in particular.

There is always room for improvement in respect for dignity, and using data and evidence is a useful tool for organizations looking to enhance respect for dignity in their programs. Tostan sets a strong example by actively seeking participant input on how they can better tailor their programs to community needs. The continuous dialogue with participating community members serves to constantly refine program activities. Data from both engagements indicated an overall sense of satisfaction with Tostan projects. The evaluation presented an opportunity to collect additional participant perspectives on how Tostan programs could be made even more accessible and respectful of their time and needs. For microgrants, this meant more transparency for non-recipients on how recipients were selected and further tailoring the distribution process to beneficiary needs. For SDCE, this meant expanding the training audience and translating the training materials into even more languages so that it could reach more people (as it is already available in Pulaar).

Implications

Tostan is an organization that centers participants in each aspect of their program, maintaining constant dialogue with participant communities during the design, implementation, and evaluation stages of an intervention. Our work with Tostan has therefore provided an example of the importance of listening and dialogue when designing and implementing programs. This is even reflected in the way that respondents speak about their experiences after Tostan programs. For example, respondents expressed feelings of pride and excitement after the participatory SDCE training.

Further, our collaboration with Tostan has demonstrated the role that data and evidence can play in efforts to further enhance the information and perspectives gathered in these dialogues. Tostan and IDinsight's continued partnerships have thus allowed both IDinsight and Tostan to reflect on how we can use data and evidence to enhance dignity. Our partnerships over the past year have shown us that, in organizations seeking to strengthen respect for dignity, data and evidence are powerful tools that can help support efforts to center community experiences in programmatic decision-making.





The concept of dignity is at the very core of Tostan's work. So much so that the Tostan logo includes the phrase Dignity for All. We are pleased that the report notes that "Tostan sets a strong example by actively seeking participant input on how they can better tailor their programs to community needs" and mentions ways in which Tostan respects the dignity of those touched by its activities.

The learnings that point to the use of data and evidence to identify further ways in which the program and innovation can be made even more accessible and respectful of participants' time and needs are appreciated. However, it is hoped that in the future there can be a deeper exploration of how data and evidence can serve to make even more evident whether programs increase dignity among program participants and in their ecosystem and – importantly – how they do so. For Tostan, there is great satisfaction in seeing dignity among program participants increase as a result of its programs, especially among groups who previously had less voice, agency, influence and leadership – including women.

The methodology that Tostan uses in its Community Empowerment Program includes: placing the focus on communities defining their vision of well-being and ways to pursue it, informed by new knowledge and skills acquired through the program; highly participatory methods; safe spaces to play out new roles that increase the dignity of women and others who had little voice, influence, agency and leadership; organized diffusion within communities that enables class participants and members of Community Management Committees to become teachers and be appreciated for the content that they share which increases well-being; and promotion of collective action starting from village clean-ups that make village proud and create confidence to engage in more ambitious collective actions.

The same programmatic principles and methodology apply in the SDCE innovation referred to in the text. Tostan saw that as a result of the participatory methodology and the reference to human rights and responsibilities, women District Councilors who took part in the training increased their voice over the course of the training. Also, at the end of the training, they manifested greater pride as well as confidence and determination to carry out their roles to promote the well-being of the communities in their district.

It would be interesting to focus on data and evidence that enables the measurement and a deeper exploration of the process that leads to increased dignity.

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The views expressed in this commentary are those of the author.



3.5 HOW TO ASK FOR CONSENT

A pillar for ethical research across sectors is informed consent. In order to achieve informed consent, respondents in a study must be invited to participate and offered all of the necessary information related to how their information will be used, along with any potential risks or benefits associated with their participation. Respondents are free to confirm or deny their consent and can withdraw it at any point during the study.

The requirement of informed consent is guided by the research ethics principle of “respect for persons”, and is linked to the central facets of respect for dignity, especially regarding agency. IDinsight partnered with Digital Green (DG) to study the process of farmers consenting to share their personal data as participants of an information-sharing platform. Digital Green is committed to the principles of informed consent from relevant stakeholders in all its areas of work.

We want to highlight their support in designing consent tools, measuring comprehension around them, and continuously reflecting and engaging in constructive discussions on ways to improve the consent process. DG’s initiative in this field is noteworthy in the landscape of development organizations involved in collecting personal data.



The project

Digital Green (DG) is a global development organization seeking to empower smallholder farmers to lift themselves out of poverty, often employing innovative technology. DG is also working on developing an open source data sharing platform called FarmStack (FS), which allows all stakeholders to share their data transparently, while ensuring that farmers have control over their data. Customized advisories based on different data sources will be used to support farmers by providing real-time soil, weather, and market-related information. Farmers' consent is collected for sharing their data through FarmStack.

DG launched a pilot of two consent tools in three districts of Andhra Pradesh (India): Guntur, Vizianagaram, and Srikakulam from March to June 2022. The development of consent tools is grounded in DG's long-term experience with community-based videos, adopting this innovative approach to promote informed consent. The consent tools evaluated included two applications developed by DG, both featuring a consent video and a button for giving/rejecting consent: 1) a stand-alone application and 2) a built-in feature of the Kisan Diary Enterprise (KDE) application.²⁶ Consent was collected from farmers by Community Resource Persons (CRPs), who are employees of the local NGOs promoting the FPOs. IDinsight conducted a process evaluation of this pilot to understand the extent to which the farmers could recall and explain the consent tools and their experience during the interaction.

The process evaluation had three components: i) Quantitative surveys with farmers who have given consent to share their data with FarmStack, ii) Follow-up qualitative surveys with farmers who have given consent (same pool of respondents), and iii) Qualitative surveys with CRPs, who were the primary administrators of the informed consent process.

What we found

Among the farmers who recalled the consent process, a significant proportion did not internalize it: DG provided IDinsight with a list of farmers who had consented to participate in FarmStack. Among those who confirmed to have given consent, less than half of the respondents said they saw the consent video. A third of farmers were unaware of their right to refuse consent, and if aware, some stated that refusal would impact their relationships with FPOs, the government or local NGO.

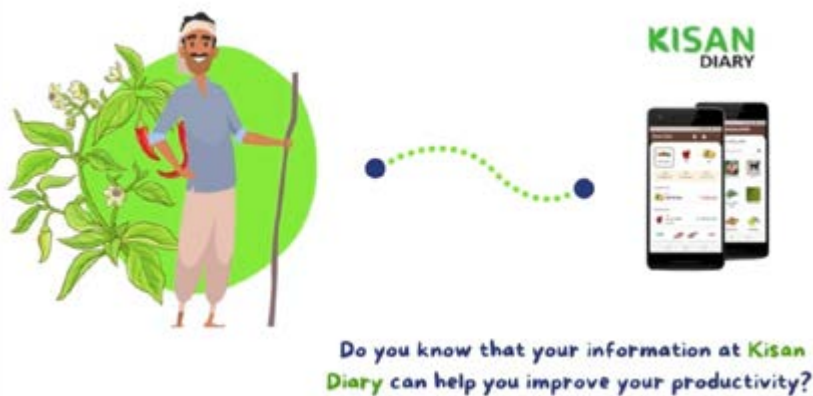
Pre-existing relationships with the CRPs and trust emerged as important factors in the consent process. Farmers reported high comfort levels during the interaction with CRPs and did not perceive risks associated with data sharing. Some farmers mentioned trust as the reason they have given consent, felt comfortable or did not feel the need to ask questions. However, some farmers said their relationships with the CRPs could be harmed if they denied consent. It is crucial to note here that trust should not replace the internalization of the benefits and risks associated with data sharing, and the duty of ensuring farmers are granting informed consent remains with the CRPs.

Some key aspects of consent content were unclear to CRPs and farmers alike. Both farmers and CRPs had a limited understanding of data sharing, consent & confidentiality. Farmers were not fully aware with whom their personal data would be shared, and very few respondents knew the correct modality to withdraw their consent through a helpline number.

Implications

Ensuring informed consent is key to respecting participants' agency in development programs and is, therefore, integral to respect for dignity. The findings of the DG process evaluation provide essential lessons for understanding how development practitioners might ensure that the consent process is understood and internalized by program participants. Notably, we learn that it is vital to dedicate the necessary time to ensuring that participants and those administering consent (CRPs) have a thorough understanding of the content. Currently, this is an additional task for the CRPs and they are spending extra time explaining consent to the farmers. Among others, some recommendations that DG is reflecting on operationalizing include follow-up reminders to farmers of their right to withdraw consent, strengthening and standardizing the script used in CRP training, and streamlining the language of consent videos.

Digital Green





Joel Wambua & Patrick Forscher

In the modern era, informed consent is enshrined as one of the centerpieces of ethical research conduct. Defined as a procedure that gives sufficient **information** for people to weigh the costs and benefits of participation, in a format that is **easy to understand**, and that preserves the **voluntary nature** of the participation decision, informed consent strives to uphold the principle of respect for persons that is enshrined in the Belmont Report.²⁷ Informed consent is considered so important that this principle is now enshrined and codified in the laws that govern research with human participants, such as the Common Rule in the United States, Directive 2001/20/EC in the European Union, and, closer to where we in Busara do the majority of our work, the KEMRI consent guidelines in Kenya.^{28,29,30}

This codification of informed consent in law means that the principles of cost/benefit analysis, understandability, and the voluntary nature of the decision are almost inextricably embedded in research regulatory frameworks. The interventions that are usually tested therefore exist within these frameworks.

Take the interventions highlighted in the case study. These interventions rely heavily on a consent video, which presents information in a more vivid format than the typical written form

that is the basis of many consent procedures dictated by most regulatory frameworks. However, the basic elements of informed consent remain the same: provide information on the costs of benefits of research, in a format that's easy to understand, and in a way that emphasizes that consent is a voluntary decision undertaken by an individual participant. This intervention therefore does not depart from or disrupt the regulatory frameworks that are already in place.

This sort of format-based intervention is a reasonable idea. However, insofar as the existing regulatory frameworks do not address more fundamental misunderstandings that can arise between researchers and participants, this type of intervention also cannot prevent any harms that arise from those misunderstandings.

For example, in the settings where Busara operates, research projects occur directly alongside humanitarian and development-focused projects. Sometimes these projects are conducted by the same organization. This is, quite understandably, a confusing state of affairs for our participants, who may enter a research setting expecting to receive humanitarian aid.



Sometimes the misunderstandings run even deeper. Due to the heavy use of computers in some of our experiments, some of our participants have expressed the belief that Busara is holding computer classes. Or, our participants have viewed our consent forms as binding contracts that prevent early withdrawal from an uncomfortable study – an understanding that runs directly counter to the consent form’s purpose.

The prevalence of these kinds of misunderstandings – a problem that is well-documented in development-focused research on consent – as well as the variety of them, speaks to the vast gulfs in context that separate the researchers and researched.^{31,32,33} Although we believe that changes in the format with which information is delivered can assist with bridging these gulfs in context, ultimately, we believe these sorts of interventions cannot be complete solutions because they do not – and cannot – address the ultimate cause of the misunderstandings. Nor will they create much change in the vast regulatory framework that already exists, and that often treats the consent form itself as the site of reform rather than the gulfs of context that ultimately separate the researcher and participant worlds.

One of the surest bridges across gulfs in context is a personal relationship. We therefore believe that treating the connections between participants and researchers as relationships that need to be built and managed is one of

the approaches that is most likely to prevent or mitigate harms that arise due to gulfs in context. This theme also emerged in the brief, which underscored that pre-existing trust was key to gaining consent from the farmer participants – although a purely positive relationship may not be enough because, as also highlighted in the brief, positive relationships can lead people to not fully consider the risks of participation. The idea of treating research as an ongoing relationship also mirrors one of the more consistent themes that emerges from guidance about consent in low-resource settings: that consent should be treated as a process that unfolds as the relationship with participants develops.³⁴

Overall, although changes to consent format and design can surely be a part of creating an appropriate participant-researcher relationship that minimizes the risks of social harms, we believe they are not substitutes for it.

Patrick S. Forscher

Research Lead - Culture, Research Ethics, and Methods (CREME)

Busara Center for Behavioral Economics

Joel Wambua

Research Specialist - Ethics Agenda Lead

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The views expressed in this commentary are those of the authors.



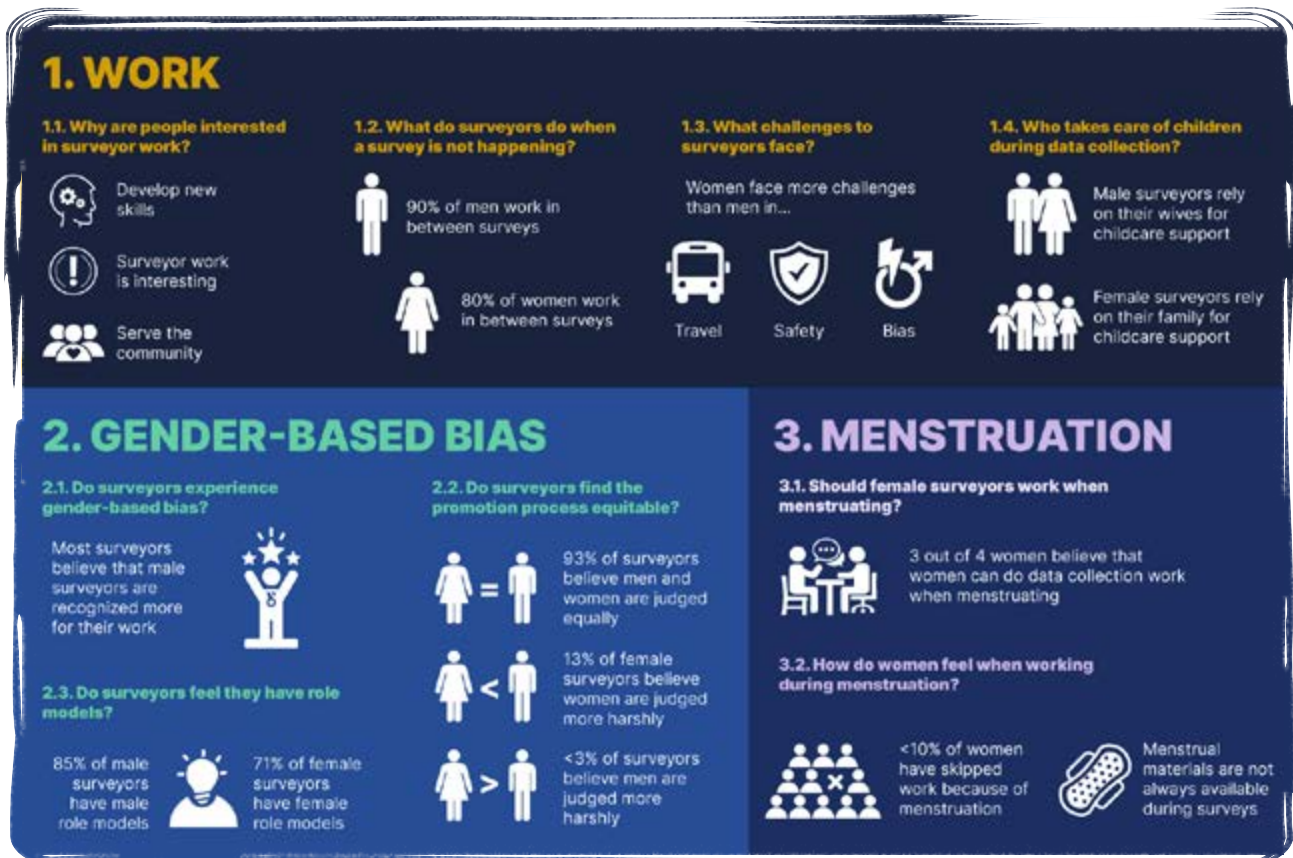


3.6 LIFE AS AN ENUMERATOR

The hardest job in research is surely to be the person who actually conducts the interviews. Many enumerators tell us they feel deep pride in contributing to research, but they also note that the role comes with difficult conditions and draining hours.

For this reason, IDinsight's Mitali Roy Mathur and Lipika Biswal surveyed our network of enumerators in India to understand their experiences - especially that of female enumerators. (We hope to repeat the work in Africa in 2023). Three hundred twenty-two enumerators shared their experiences. Overall they told us that they feel IDinsight treats them with respect. An average of 86% of female surveyors and 89% of male surveyors agreed with six items designed to test their experiences of respectful treatment. There was no statistical difference between men and women in their satisfaction with work. Overall, there were low levels of reporting that female surveyors are disrespected by supervisors, or by other surveyors (both male and female). There was high satisfaction with IDinsight's sexual harassment policies.

However, we also saw some important failings in respectful treatment - both in their relationship to IDinsight, and in their wider experience of work. 67% of women (and 62% of men) agreed that male surveyors are more recognized for their work, while 16% of women and 22% of men said that male surveyors receive more respect. 85% of male surveyors said they had a male role model, compared to just 71% of female surveyors with access to a female role model. Perhaps most important was the environment in which surveyors work. A statistically significantly higher percentage of women report facing challenges with travel ($p = 0.0374$), sexual harassment ($p = 0.0055$), and skill development ($p = 0.0656$).



IDinsight is committed to subjecting ourselves to the same rigorous scrutiny that we employ when studying impact in all our work. This contributes to our ongoing work to reduce power asymmetries in the social sector.

Four steps to increasing women's participation in field management in India

Vinod Kumar Sharma is Senior Field Manager at IDinsight. He wrote a recent blogpost, outlining four steps he saw as necessary to make sure this research has impact.

1. Provide more opportunities for women to be monitors or team leaders
2. Ensure additional management support to the women team leaders
3. Focus on professional development
4. Build a culture of adopting female leadership in field teams

Read Vinod's blog post [here](#).

"I have experienced situations wherein if a female and male field manager are leading the project together, the field team prefers to report to a male field manager and not me"

IDinsight Senior Field Manager, Lipika Biswal

In this case, we have learned important lessons about the lives of all our enumerators, and about the barriers female enumerators face. In response to this research, we have already hired more women in leadership positions and are working to improve promotion processes based on our experiences in all-female teams. We are taking steps to provide appropriate work accommodations, tackle gender-based bias, ensure inclusivity around provision of menstrual products, and continue to track data on these questions.

"This blog is a result of a passion project. We surveyed our surveyors to understand the gender dynamics of surveyor teams in India so we could effectively improve the experience of our surveyors. We hope that these findings will be used to enhance the diversity, equity, and inclusion of surveyors at IDinsight and other organisations."

Mitali Roy Mathur and Lipika Biswal





This commentary reinforces the concerns and the call for action presented in the section “Life as an enumerator” of the 2022 Dignity Report.

In a [survey](#) that [my coauthors and I](#) are running, as part of a [project](#) about ethical challenges faced by staff in development research, we interviewed more than 600 enumerators, field supervisors, research assistants, Ph.D. students, and principal investigators. The main objective of this survey is to shed light on the working conditions, job satisfaction, and emotional well-being of local and international research staff.

Focusing on the experiences of enumerators and the security doing their work, we have found that 18% have suffered at least one car accident (of them, more than half suffered an additional accident). Of the ones that haven't, 20% have been scared it might happen. A quarter of the enumerators surveyed have been robbed, and 14% feel that their most recent experience during data collection has been dangerous. Additionally, 15% experienced fear of death. A non-negligible 6% of enumerators who answered the survey experienced some type of sexual harassment at work, all women.

Most of the enumerators (93%) are hired with short-term contracts, and almost half (47%) don't have health insurance or unemployment protection. Furthermore, 30% of the respondents who worked as data collectors feel unfairly paid, and about the same percentage feel they work inadequate hours in the field. In addition, more than half of the enumerators felt emotionally drained from their work in the previous month.

Enumerators' work is the basis for all primary data collection studies. It is inherent to the nature of development research that performing this job often involves traveling to remote locations or working in contexts of poverty or limited statehood, which increases the risks to which they are exposed. At the same time, researchers and organizations are responsible for enforcing “safe and secure working environments” (Sustainable Development Goal 8.8) for all research staff. However, limited attention is being paid to these issues, especially those in the lower hierarchy level (as identified in a recent systematic review).³⁵

These surveys are an essential first step to help us understand the research staff's conditions and concerns and which actions can be taken to improve this reality. Donors and researchers must prioritize ensuring that enumerators are treated with dignity by ensuring they work in a safe and respectful environment.

Ana Garcia Hernandez

Postdoctoral Researcher, Climate Change and Development

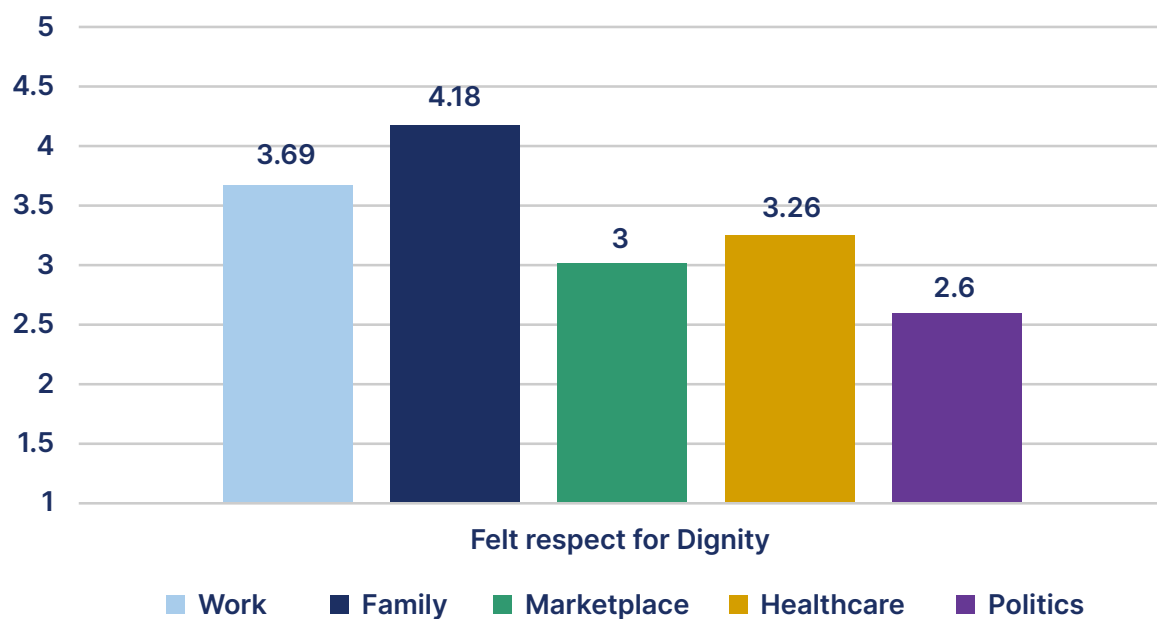
RWI - Leibniz Institute for Economic Research

The views expressed in this commentary are those of the author.

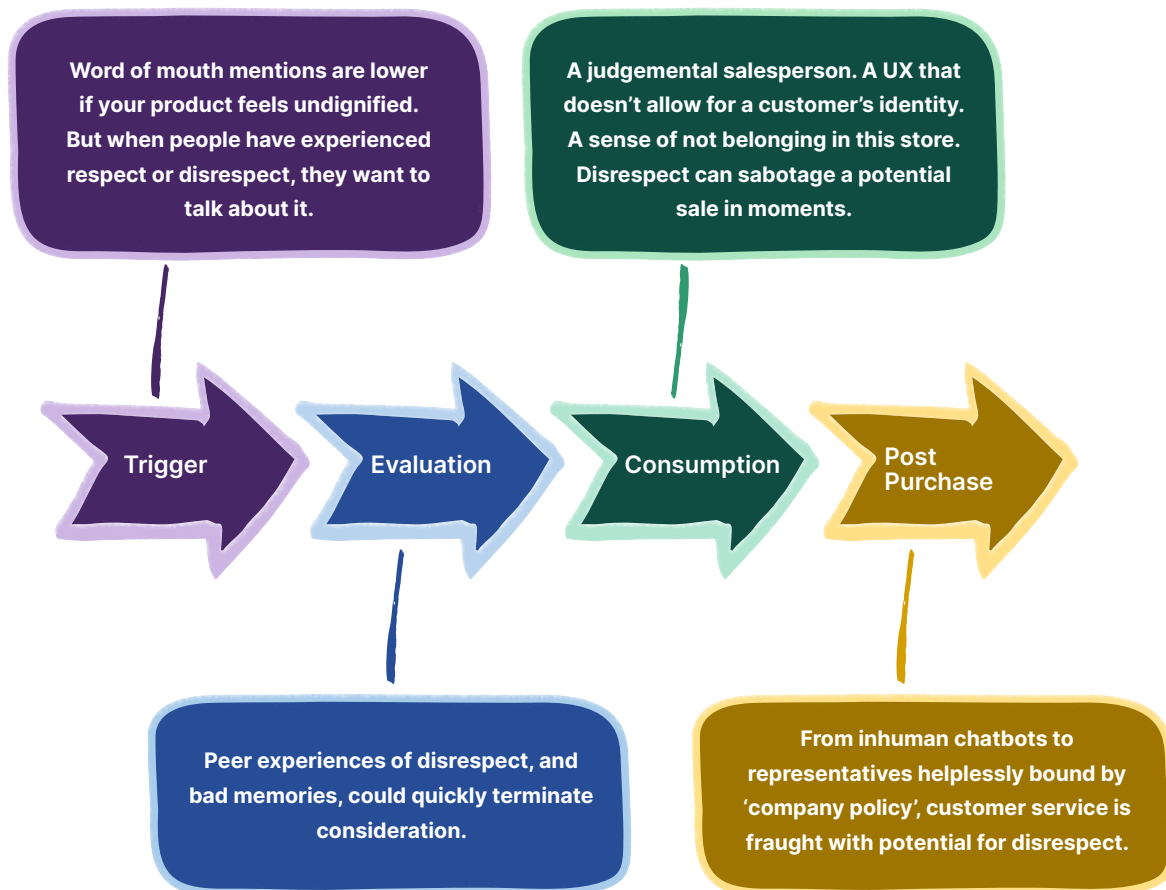


3.7 MARKETPLACE DIGNITY

Much of this report has focused on interactions with nonprofits and government. Yet disrespectful encounters with the private sector are just as common in people's lives. When we asked US respondents where they most often face disrespect, the marketplace was one of the worst-performing domains of life - second only to politics, and worse even than their experiences of the USA's dismal healthcare system.



'The Dignity Imperative', a forthcoming book from Wharton Business Press by Cait Lamberton, Tom Wein, and Neela Saldanha examines people's experiences of respect and disrespect across the consumer journey, from purchase trigger to evaluation to consumption to the post-purchase experience.



The book presents new experimental evidence from six online surveys of more than 5000 Americans. We learn from this work that:

- The marketplace is an area where people frequently experience disrespect, and more respectful adverts are rated as more persuasive.
- Writing about disrespect makes people less happy, less trusting, more reflective, and less keen to participate in future research. People are more empathetic after writing about dignity.
- People won't recommend a lifesaving medical device if they worry it compromises their dignity to do so, harming word-of-mouth promotion.
- The three pathways to dignity are born out in this US evidence, and even small, cheap efforts to pull those levers can make a big difference to people.
- Recalling respect makes people want to help others. Experiences of respect have a bigger impact than disrespect. People would pay to avoid someone who disrespected them.

Taken together, these pieces of evidence make for a clear business case for taking action on dignity in the private sector - whether that is by regulators, consumer representatives, or the companies themselves. The table below, reproduced from the book, demonstrates the extent to which different types of businesses can pursue dignity - showing that consumer retail businesses can lead the way, while the service sector and extractive businesses may find it harder. The book is filled with advice on how to do so - much of which we hope will apply to other types of organizations, including those aiming for social impact rather than profit alone.

	Representation	Agency	Equality
Addictive Consumption (e.g., tobacco, gambling)	Easy: Advertising can easily reflect customer base; feedback is easy to capture	Difficult: The addictive nature of the substance is so inherent to product's value that it is doubtful whether addictive industries can ever embrace dignity	Difficult: Access is broad; regulations govern distribution, but the product has a power over customers even when the company makes efforts to promote equality
Extractive Consumption (e.g., data-extracting social media and entertainment)	Difficult: Offering customers the ability to be not seen and not heard undermines business proposition	Easy, unless use becomes addictive	Difficult: Algorithms necessarily privilege some speakers over others
Volitional Consumption (e.g., most consumer packaged goods)	Easy	Easy	Easy
Service Consumption (e.g., public services, healthcare, financial services, charitable organizations)	Difficult: Identifying and hearing the customers with the greatest needs may be challenging, prior design choices (e.g., exclusion from research, etc.) may make them nearly invisible	Difficult: Yielding too much control may undermine customer well-being, and regulatory compliance limits some innovations	Difficult: Inherent power dynamics create hierarchies that privilege the firm over the recipient



Making Marketplace Dignity Real: Putting the People back in Purpose

On one hand, the marketplace offers us huge opportunities to affirm dignity. If viewed under Martha Nussbaum's capabilities framework, the systems in which we exchange value enlarge the pathways we can take en route to dignity affirmation: markets can offer us more options in health, more ways to learn, create exposure to experiences that allow us to grow, present forums within which to achieve security, and give us chances to contribute to the communities in which we live.

On the other hand, however, the marketplace threatens to reduce peoples' innate and immeasurable value with the numbers on their bank statement, their credit score, or their pile of loyalty points. As such, the marketplace can become the source of massive insecurity, exacerbate inequality, and deprive people of voice.

What becomes clear when we study marketplace dignity is that whether we build marketplaces that affirm or deny dignity is a matter of choice.

As we've talked with companies, we find that many of them recognize that just as no choice architecture is neutral, no marketplace experience is neutral with regard to its implications for dignity. But there are a few challenges – and, we believe, real solutions.

First, designing for dignity only happens if there is buy-in throughout an organization. Only when corporate leadership fully engages the drive for dignity, recognizing it not only as part of their overall sustainability and ethical commitment but also as a means of strategic differentiation, can people throughout an organization align in its development.

Second, designing for dignity has to be practical: companies need to see that there is a systematic, rigorous way to think through the opportunities they have to affirm dignity. The three-part framework that has been developed is helpful here – each part of a consumer journey can be analyzed, and opportunities identified, to bolster or shift practice in ways that optimize for dignity.

Third, felt dignity has to be measured. If measured and tracked, firms can understand where the efforts they're making are beginning to matter. They can also, with careful analysis, see the relationship between felt dignity and other key performance indicators.

Last, dignity needs to remain a topic that can be discussed without reference to partisan politics. This is eminently possible, if we remain anchored in objective measures of agency, equity, and representation, and keep felt dignity as our north star.



One piece of good news is that these challenges aren't ill-defined or difficult to address. A second piece of good news is that marketplace actors seem extremely interested in doing so.

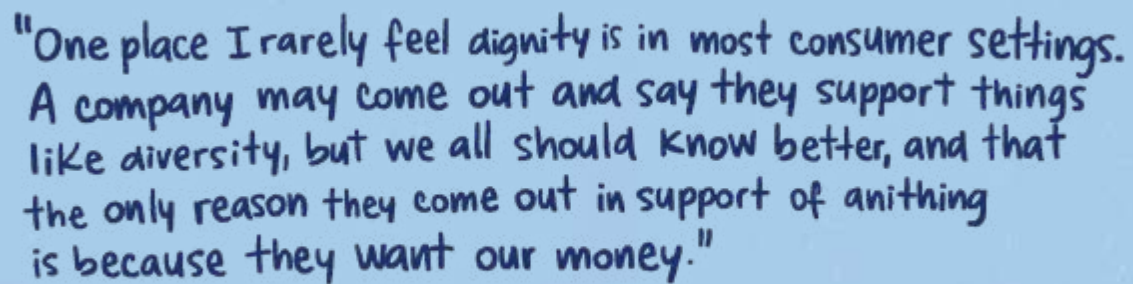
The question remains, though, which firms will take the lead in this area – in ways that are comprehensive, consistent, and rigorous – rather than in ad-hoc actions or lofty statements. We're biased, but we believe those that take on a systematic approach to designing for dignity will be on the right side of society, and of history, in ways that extend their contribution to the world far beyond their products and services. And we can't think of a better brand purpose than that.

Cait Lamberton

Alberto I. Duran President's Distinguished Professor


Professor of Marketing - Wharton, University of Pennsylvania

The views expressed in this commentary are those of the author.



"One place I rarely feel dignity is in most consumer settings. A company may come out and say they support things like diversity, but we all should know better, and that the only reason they come out in support of anything is because they want our money."

45 online panel participant, 2021





3.8 PSYCHOLOGY OF DIGNITY

What light does dignity shed on human psychology, and vice versa?

We summarize approaches to this in a chapter in the forthcoming new edition of the “Cambridge Handbook of Consumer Psychology”. The chapter is entitled “Consumer Psychology and Dignity: Ancient Ideas and Emerging Demands” by Tom Wein, Sakshi Ghai, Cait Lamberton and Neela A. Saldanha.

The discipline has a long tradition of writing against the behaviorism of B.F. Skinner, which he put forward most forcefully in his 1971 work ‘Beyond Freedom and Dignity’.³⁶ Psychologists have looked at dignity at three levels of analysis: intrapersonal, interpersonal and cultural which are elaborated on further in the table overleaf. Even Skinner came to agree with them by the end of his life.³⁷



Intrapersonal

- This research aligns (often implicitly) with the idea that dignity means the worth inherent to all people.
- "Prejudice denies individual human dignity and breaks the fundamental unity among people".³⁸
- Research explores how social identities, stigma, and self-affirmation build up or damage people's sense of self-esteem commensurate with their dignity.
- This then affects people's ability to participate fully in social processes
- Dignity can bring new moral force to ideas of self-integrity and self-esteem and help organize thinking and interventions on how to combat identity threats.

Interpersonal

- Social psychologists such as Mansur Lalljee have examined respect, and how that functions as a norm in different groups. This includes work to develop and validate measures of whether people are committed to an ethic of respecting other persons.³⁹
- In the lab, respect predicts positive intergroup actions and responses to moral transgressions, mediated by emotion and self-evaluations.
- This view of dignity has been useful in studying partisan environments such as politics, sport, inter-ethnic relations, and life at work, where there are strong incentives to fail to recognise the dignity of people.
- This area of research connects to wider studies of status, inclusion, and wellbeing. It has inspired interventions to combat interpersonal stigma and discrimination.

Cultural

- Psychologists - and before them, anthropologists - have provided considerable empirical evidence to suggest that there are three cultural 'syndromes'. These are 'dignity', 'honor' and 'face'. This contrasts with previous work by cultural psychologists to sort cultures into individualistic and collectivist, though it suffers from some of the same reductiveness.
- In this view, compared to honor and face cultures, in dignity cultures people have an internal valuation of the self. People in these cultures argue that dignity is inalienable.
- Leung & Cohen (2011) suggest that this allows individuals to enter contracts with the law, with conscience mandating good behavior. In these societies, those who do not have this solid internal sense of dignity are regarded as untrustworthy.⁴⁰
- Differences among people holding different cultural syndromes have found in body language, self-evaluation, microaggressions, negotiation, anger and shame.
- Measurement tools for categorising people according to cultural syndrome have been developed.⁴¹

As we have discussed elsewhere in this report, we suggest that psychologists and others adopt a non-merit-based respect for the inherent worth of people as they engage in social processes.

We present evidence in our book chapter that there are three pathways to doing so: recognition, agency, and equality. In an online experiment with 400 Americans in July 2021, we varied whether participants experienced high or low recognition, agency, and equality. We then asked if people felt their dignity had been respected and the follow-on effects of this. An index made up of the three levers did predict participants' sense of respectfulness ($r = 0.71$).

When people reported higher felt respect, they exhibited more trust that they would be paid on time, they were more willing to spend additional time on the research ($b = .38$, Wald chi-square $< .0001$), and were more likely to say that they would support future research, even for free ($p = .003$).

In future research, we believe we must:

1. break down disciplinary silos: this literature can be incorporated more fully into other parts of psychology and social science
2. use the tools of psychology to understand dignity, examining psychological processes, emotions, and the roles of identity, status, and interpersonal networks in dignity experiences
3. collect more empirical evidence, especially from beyond the laboratory. This should include examining the interactions of culture, individual person and situation in dignity experiences.

"Human rights rest on human dignity. The dignity of man is an ideal worth fighting for and worth dying for."

Robert C. Maynard



Catherine Thomas

The Psychology of Dignity chapter by Wein, Ghai, Lamberton, and Saldanha proposes a socioecological framework for the study of dignity—one that situates individual experiences within their broader interpersonal, intergroup, and cultural contexts. This is a more holistic assessment of what dignity is and how it illuminates two key features of dignity at the interpersonal and sociocultural levels, respectively—the collective responsibility for affirming dignity and the sociocultural patterning of its denials versus affirmations.

On the interpersonal level, the authors write, “Dignity can bring new moral force to ideas of self-integrity and self-esteem.” This is precisely because, unlike studies of self-esteem that have often focused on the ways individuals can shore up their own internal sense of self-worth, dignity is a shared responsibility. It is an interstitial feature—one that resides between a person and the other people and pervasive ideas in their cultural contexts. In this sense, affirming dignity is a collective endeavor in which everyone has the moral responsibility, as the authors suggest, to expand the circle of those considered worthy of dignity.

The interpersonal interactions where dignity is most often to be denied often involve interactions across divides of power and status, including intergroup and intercultural interactions. In other words, the extent to which dignity is affirmed or denied in interpersonal interactions often reflects intergroup dynamics and inequities. For instance, in the case of international aid, many program designers and donors are from Western, middle class sociocultural contexts while recipients are not. Given this, programs inherently occur across cultural and economic differences and ones which can reinforce dominant WEIRD cultural practices and ways of being. A focus on dignity would suggest that such programs must instead actively recognize and affirm local cultural practices and priorities in their design.

One next step to study the psychology of dignity may then be to identify across diverse cultural contexts the ways of being, values, and aspirations (which reflect ‘cultural syndromes’) that people care the most to be recognized, and then to determine how interpersonal interactions and institutional practices might better reflect those ways of being. For instance, Kryś et al. (2022) and Kryś et al. (2020) have begun documenting the different priorities and goals for societal progress of different societies, such as expanding human rights, eradicating poverty, or advancing religiosity.^{42,43} Attending to such diversity in values is not only important to the scientific study of dignity. It can also serve as an affirmation of dignity itself, particularly when it advances more equitable and inclusive interactions and institutions.

Catherine Thomas

Department of Psychology, Stanford University
The views expressed in this commentary are those of the author.



3.9 DIGNITY AROUND THE WORLD AND THE SECTOR

Dignity is practiced and studied all over the world. The Dignity Initiative has been fortunate to be in community with a whole group of allies. We've learned a great deal from organizations already practicing cultures of dignity and wrestling with how to put these ideas into practice. In Section 2.2 of this report, we reflect on learnings from long-standing leaders in this field: ATD Fourth World, Partners in Health, GiveDirectly, Goonj, and Tostan.

In addition, the Dignity + Debt network has showcased organizations like Mission Asset Fund who refuse to do business as usual. Africa No Filter and Dubai Cares' Dignified Storytelling initiative apply dignity principles to communication. Lachlan Forrow and colleagues from Harvard have done much to help us understand how this should work in a medical context, helping found Dignity Alliance Massachusetts. Our founding Dignity Collective advisors hail from several of these organizations: Jonathan Glennie, 'Dapo Oyewole, Fred Wherry, Alicia Ely Yamin, Neela Saldanha, Moky Makura, and Caroline Teti. Other notable initiatives in this field include the UNICEF/McGill Dignity Project, which brings together philosophers, anthropologists, neuroscientists, and epidemiologists, and has lately published an excellent series of podcast interviews. Pekka Himanen's Global Dignity organization has long worked to bring ideas of dignity to schools in more than 80 countries, organizing the annual Global Dignity Day on the third Wednesday of each October.



In collaboration with Catholic Relief Services, important research has been led by Paul Perrin and others at the University of Notre Dame on integrating dignity into development practices.

Dignity has an inherent ethical throughline, a focus of organizations like Chloe Schwenke's Center for Values in International Development, The Transfer Project studying social protection, and the Accountability Initiative at the Center for Policy Research in India. The same is true for multiple standard-setting and monitoring organizations in the humanitarian sector, such as Ground Truth, Sphere, and the Core Humanitarian Standard Alliance. The Accountability Research Center at American University, Feedback Labs, and the Transparency and Accountability Initiative are all hives of expertise on areas of great relevance to dignity, even if that is not always the term they use.

There is a whole community campaigning for more ethical research practices. They have prompted us to consider how we at IDinsight are building an accountable and exemplary institution to host this initiative. Among these are Şeyş Abimbólá, Douglas Mackay, and the convenors of the Nethix community - Alex Avdeenko, Ana Garcia Hernandez, and especially Heather Lanthorn. Parallel efforts come from the Busara Center's CREME team (Busara first incubated our project back in 2017), and also working on this are 3ie's TREE initiative and the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data's Data Values Project. If organizations like IDinsight are to advocate for dignity, we must ensure we are doing our own work in a way that exemplifies the promises of dignity.

Scholars from all disciplines work on dignity. We cannot list them all. Specifically, this dazzling group of psychologists have been important collaborators of ours: Neela Saldanha at Yale, Cait Lamberton at Wharton, Catherine Thomas at Stanford, as well as Sakshi Ghai and Priyanka Khatri. We have been fortunate to collaborate with Zaynab El Bernoussi, Indrajit Roy, Jeffrey Paller, and other scholars leading thinking on the politics of dignity. Many more from around the world deserve mention, and we were grateful to welcome a great number of them to the Dignity Research Agenda symposium in September 2022.

There is immense opportunity for us to all mutually benefit from the work and learning of others. It's how we will progress. We hope that dignity can be a field of thriving collaborations and mutual learning - so if any of these people could support your work to advance dignity, please get in touch, and we will try to arrange introductions.

"No matter where the human heart beats,
it beats for dignity."

- Samantha Powers





At a recent event, one of our speakers asked participants what data means to them. For some, data means surveillance yet for some data is their only chance to get counted and therefore count. Regardless of the definition data has undertones of power and yet, data can be a tool to address power imbalances.

For this piece, data includes public sector data from national statistical systems, administrative sources, civil society organizations, and more. It also includes privately held data that is personal or sensitive in nature. These data are produced and held around the world by international institutions, nongovernmental organizations, for-profit companies, and advocacy organizations and can be used for decision making that is in the public interest. The opportunities and the threats of technology and the almost real-time data it can support and generate became very real to us during the pandemic. We suddenly required real time information to make decisions: the pandemic spread, access to vaccines and even food availability in our markets. Technology helped us, and the need for data was suddenly apparent to people who had never thought about it before. Without that data, we were powerless and helpless. But the pandemic also showed, very starkly, that we can't separate the technical and the ethical.

We should not accept data and technology that do not safeguard people's privacy or that do not ensure meaningful consent from people. Data systems that are futuristic and fair need to be designed with people at the centre. Data producers need to ask people what they want data to do for them and give them power to determine how they are represented in data. The Data Values project aims to reimagine a fair data future. A fair- and dignified- data future is one where:

People have a say in how they are represented in data.

More effort goes into making sure people are involved at all stages of data - including in decision making about how data is used and governed. Many more people have data confidence and skills. For us to create a fairer data future, people need to be able to understand how data impacts their lives and have the confidence to talk about data and ask questions. We all create cultures of transparency, data sharing, and use. We all take a systems wide approach and ensure that funding supports these systems and more participatory approaches. More funding must support participation and inclusion from start to finish.

But putting values at the heart of data should also drive us to look inwards to our organizational systems and processes. We must work to ensure our processes put the above five principles to practice. That is the only way that we can truly walk the talk and give people power over their data and ensure that data gives people dignity.

Karen Bett

Policy Manager, Data Equity and Inclusion at the Global Partnership.

The views expressed in this commentary are those of the author.

4. CONCLUSION





4.1 LOOKING AHEAD TO 2023

The Dignity Initiative works to share ideas with the development sector, refine those ideas through research and ensure that IDinsight is an accountable home for this work. Through 2022, we've been proud to build up a network of allies, flesh out the research base, and provide tools like Dignity Audits and validated measures to advance dignity in organizations.

In our view, we have seen a cohort of practitioners and especially scholars start to coalesce around ideas of dignity this year. New hubs are arising to coordinate their work, and new evidence helps show the impact of a dignity approach. The dignity agenda looks more potent now than it did a year ago.

Now we're looking ahead to 2023.

In IDinsight's Dignity Initiative, we believe we must double down on our efforts to be accountable to those we serve and to align our work with their preferences and needs. We want to support our allies to influence all the many sympathetic people across the development sector who are ready for the changes dignity can bring. We hope to build deeper relationships across the sector to that end. 2023 should be the year of solutions.

We think more concrete, specific recommendations about actions on dignity can be derived from the research so far. We want to make sure the many ideas we've generated about improving dignity and respect in IDinsight's work with participants translates into real and lasting changes to working practices across the organization. We will be guided throughout by the research agenda we laid out (described in Section 2.5 of this report). We also want to hear from you. In January, the Dignity Initiative will be setting out its plan for the year. What would you like to see included? Is there a particular collaboration that you would like to see go forward?

These activities will be in support of progress in the wider dignity agenda. This rosy base which our movement has built in 2022 must now translate evidence into impact for sympathetic practitioners and policymakers. As a group of allies that believe in dignity, we can thereby work to bring more of these sympathizers on board with these ideas and their potential.

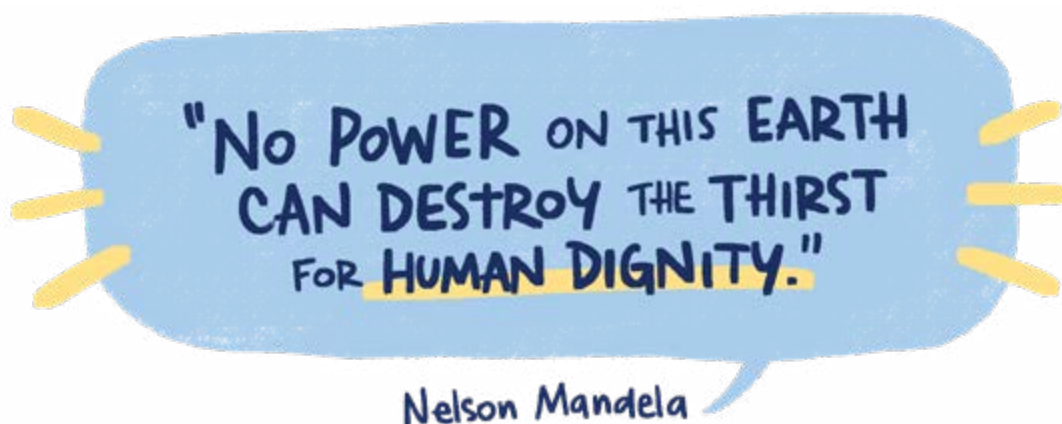
At the same time, we must guard against the technocratic dilution of these concepts that has beset efforts such as empowerment - we must insist on the transformative and deeply political nature of the dignity agenda, even as we take opportunities for incremental progress. We must keep learning from leaders in the dignity field, from global movements for social justice, and from those whom development seeks to serve. That lens must inform all our advocacy and all our learning.

With that focus, we can look forward to still more progress in the new year.

The Dignity Collective

IDinsight's Dignity Initiative gathers allies of this work regularly under the banner of the Dignity Collective.

Stay in touch with this and learn about upcoming events, opportunities to contribute, new tools, and evidence, by signing up for our monthly dignity newsletter.



4.2 Afterword



In my medical career, I have observed the indignities endured by patients undergoing care in resource-constrained settings. I remember seeing, in one hospital, severely ill children having to share cots, with their mothers having nowhere to sleep – they often slept under the cots, and with no bedding. In an attempt to obtain life-saving care for their children, these mothers were stripped of all dignity. This was not the way to deliver care, even in resource-constrained settings. These situations highlighted for me the need to do more even when delivering a much-needed service. Services must be delivered in a way that ensures recipients feel dignified and respected.

I am thrilled that at IDinsight we get to influence the development sector to be more respectful in its work. Research and development sectors are notorious for not involving target communities in agenda-setting; they also regularly fail to check how these communities experience their services. IDinsight's Dignity Initiative works to develop systems and tools to help us become more thoughtful and respectful in how we engage the people and communities we seek to serve.

Some of these tools, such as our survey measures and Dignity Audits, are already available to share with others in the sector that also want to do better.

Going forward, we plan to incorporate a dignity lens in more and more of our work – IDinsight's East & Southern Africa (ESA) Strategy 2022–2024 has a target to ensure we apply a dignity lens to what we do. We aim to build our capacity to incorporate dignity into our work through continuous training and reflection. We will include a dignity lens in our data collection processes – an area that is notorious for dignity lapses. And finally, we will intentionally implement dignity-specific projects.

It is not enough to advocate for evidence-informed policy. At IDinsight, we will work towards using our dignity approach to create a world in which the global development sector routinely acts respectfully towards those whom it seeks to serve. No longer should it be the norm to have children sharing cots and mothers forfeiting their own dignity for a chance that their child will receive the care they need. Eventually, we hope to help move the needle in helping funders and others use a dignity lens as a major criterion in determining what activities are funded and how success is measured. It will not be a straightforward journey, and we are eager to learn as we go.

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4.4 CREDITS

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IDinsight's Dignity Initiative aims to uphold people's dignity in global development through the provision of tools, advice, and new research to support leaders to build programs, services, and funding streams that affirm the dignity of those they seek to serve.

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