



Measuring Respect for Human Dignity: Guidance for Development and Humanitarian Programs

Background

The first guiding principle of Catholic Relief Services is that “all human life is sacred and possesses a dignity that comes directly from our creation and not from any action of our own.” Upholding the dignity inherent in every human being is at the core of CRS’s work, and the agency has found that its humanitarian and development efforts are more effective and truly transformative when they recognize the human dignity of vulnerable and marginalized individuals.

Beyond its prominence in Catholic social teachings, human dignity is also a universal principle that often serves as a foundation of social and economic development. Research by the University of Notre Dame found that many major relief and development agencies refer to dignity in their mission or vision statements.

However, CRS and other development actors have yet to systematically measure respect for human dignity as part of their accountability efforts. Lack of measurement prevents development actors from tracking how programs and policies uphold participants’ dignity, limits analysis and understanding of the relationship between dignity and program outcomes, and reduces the ability to incorporate human dignity considerations concretely into program design and implementation.

With support from GHR Foundation, CRS has partnered with the University of Notre Dame to develop two measures of respect for human dignity across programming sectors. These measures are built upon [a review of the literature on the dimensions of human dignity](#).

CRS held discussions with an external advisory group and an internal group of technical advisors from multiple sectors to identify concepts from the literature review that were commonly represented in the literature and were most relevant to CRS programming. The measurement tools subsequently focus on the priority concepts of acceptance, seeking understanding, acknowledgement, humiliation, inclusion, respect, and safety.

The first measure (“[Project Respect for Participant Dignity Scale](#)”) assesses the extent to which project implementation respects participants’ human dignity. In addition to advancing understanding of human dignity’s role in global development programming, the measure encourages projects to explicitly consider and incorporate dignity-related aspects of interventions into program design.

In parallel, the team developed a second measure (“[Respect for Dignity in Daily Life Index](#)”) that assesses the extent to which project participants’ dignity is respected in their households, communities, and institutions and how much participants respect others’ dignity.

As dignity is inherent in every human being, these tools *do not* measure dignity itself. Instead, they measure [respect for human dignity](#), which varies across contexts, individuals, and programs and which those designing and implementing projects can influence to some extent.

The definitions used for this work are as follows:

- [Human dignity](#) is the inherent value that every individual possesses equally by virtue of being human, independent of one’s abilities, characteristics, or actions.
- [Respect for human dignity](#) is the acknowledgement of that inherent value by individuals, institutions, and society.



Method for Developing the Measures

The following steps were followed to develop the measures:

- 1) **An Advisory Group** was formed to guide the process.
- 2) **An extensive review of the literature was conducted** to identify how affirmation or violation of human dignity is currently defined and assessed across program sectors and traditions.
- 3) **The literature was mapped** to identify how commonly concepts are manifested in different sectors and traditions.
- 4) **A measurement framework was developed**, including selecting priority concepts and a structure for measuring these concepts.
- 5) **The two tools were drafted** by identifying measurement items for each concept, drawing from existing measures and adding items as needed to address gaps.
- 6) **The Project Respect for Participant Dignity Scale was field-tested** in various sectors and contexts in India, Niger, the Philippines and Zambia. The **Respect for Human Dignity in Daily Life measure was field-tested** in the same program in India.
- 7) **The measures were refined** based on statistical reliability and construct validity testing, cognitive interviews and data collector debriefs

Project Respect for Participant Dignity Scale

MEASUREMENT ITEMS

Based on analysis of the data collected during field-testing, the **Project Respect for Participant Dignity Scale** was distilled from 18 to 10 items. (See page 3)

Respondents use a 5-point Likert scale to express to what extent they agree or disagree with these statements concerning their experience with the project.

USES

The scale is designed for program donors or implementers to track the extent to which project activities and staff respect participants' dignity. Results can help those overseeing projects understand participant views on whether project approaches, activities, and interactions respect their dignity. This understanding can guide improvements in how an ongoing project is implemented, and inform the design of new projects, staff training, and systems and processes that help ensure activities are implemented in ways that respect participants' dignity.

Results from the scale alone may not conclusively identify which approaches increase or decrease respect for dignity. However, analysis of results from participants in different projects or different components within a project and the responses to specific items in the measure can contribute to understanding how specific program elements uphold dignity.

Additional qualitative data collection could complement the Project Respect for Participant Dignity Scale, informing interpretation of the quantitative results.



INSTRUCTIONS TO ENUMERATORS [READ ALOUD]

I am going to read you a series of statements, and I want to know the extent to which you agree or disagree with them as they apply to your experience with [ADD NAME OF PROJECT] project activities in the past 12 months. For each of these statements, please share whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree.

I want to remind you that there are no right or wrong answers. Please be open and honest. Everything you tell me will be kept confidential, and we will not share your individual responses. Your responses will not affect your participation in the project.

- 1) The project treated some people worse than other people.
- 2) The project valued you as a person.
- 3) Staff from the project said or did something to humiliate you.
- 4) The activities implemented by the project were open to all groups.
- 5) Staff from the project treated you with respect.
- 6) The project took steps to learn about your community.
- 7) Staff from the project actively listened to you during project activities.
- 8) Staff from the project understood your needs and goals.
- 9) You felt safe from violence or harm while participating in project activities.
- 10) You felt free to express your opinions with project staff without concern of being shamed or humiliated.



ADMINISTRATION

When Should the Measure be Used?

It should be administered after project activities have been implemented for some time because the measure refers to participants' past experiences with project activities.

Who Should be Interviewed?

Respondents should include individuals who have directly participated in project activities. Respondents with repeated or substantial engagement with the project may be best positioned to share their experience with the project's respect for dignity.

How Should the Tool be Administered?

The Project Respect for Participant Dignity Scale can be administered differently depending on the project's needs. For example, the measure can be integrated into a survey instrument as part of an evaluation event (e.g., final evaluation) or a study. It can also be administered as a part of annual monitoring or in exit interviews or other less formal assessments.

Interviewers ask respondents the degree to which they agree or disagree with the 10 statements listed above. The tool uses a 5-point Likert scale: 1) strongly disagree, 2) disagree, 3) neither agree nor disagree, 4) agree, and 5) strongly agree.

Who Should Administer the Tool?

The measure asks participants to provide feedback about project activities and staff behaviors. To avoid biased responses, interviewers or enumerators should not be the project staff who interact with the project participants being interviewed, and to the extent possible, they should not be directly affiliated with the implementation of project activities.

SCORING

The scoring for this tool is summative, meaning that Likert scale codes represent the score for each item, which are then summed together.

Questions 1 ("The project treated some people worse than other people") and 3 ("Staff from the project said or did something to humiliate you") must be reverse scored, meaning that in contrast to the other items, low scores signify greater respect for dignity. This question must be recoded before calculating the measure's total score. To do this, recode responses of 1 as 5; 2 as 4; 4 as 2; and 5 as 1. Scores of 3 remain unchanged.

In cases where data are not captured for one or more questions, one of two techniques should be adopted: 1) drop the individual from the analysis or 2) calculate the average score of the other response items to impute the missing value. The first approach is preferred unless there is a high number of missing values, which would require dropping many individuals from the analysis.

The final score is the sum of all items multiplied by two to provide a score out of 100 with a minimum possible score of 20. Since scores of 20-49 indicate that a respondent, on average, disagrees with the statements, these scores signify low respect for human dignity. Since scores of 50-69 indicate that a respondent, on average, neither agrees nor disagrees with the statements, these scores signify moderate respect for human dignity. Finally, since scores of 70-100 indicate that, on average, a respondent agrees with the statements, these scores signify high respect for human dignity.



Respect for Dignity in Daily Life Index

While the previous measure asks participants about their experience with a project, the **Respect for Dignity in Daily Life Index** looks at the degree to which human dignity is respected in participants' households, communities, and institutions.

MEASUREMENT ITEMS

The **Respect for Dignity in Daily Life Index** comprises 24 items divided into four domains: participant behavior, community member behavior, household member behavior, and institutional service provider behavior.

As with the Project Respect for Participant Dignity Scale, the items are assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, asking the respondent the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement about their experience of respect for human dignity.



Photo Credit: Philip Laubner

INSTRUCTIONS TO ENUMERATORS [READ ALOUD]

I would like to discuss how you perceive your own personal experience and behaviors related to respect for dignity.

How much do you agree or disagree that the following applied to you in the past 12 months?

PARTICIPANT BEHAVIORS TOWARD OTHERS

- 1) You have invited members of other groups into your house.
- 2) You treated people the same way you like to be treated by them.
- 3) You interacted with members of other groups in your daily activities.
- 4) You behaved respectfully towards other people in your community.
- 5) You behaved respectfully towards other people in your household.
- 6) You made an effort to understand what matters to other people in your household.



INSTRUCTIONS TO ENUMERATORS [READ ALOUD]

Now I would like to discuss your perceptions of respect for dignity by members and leaders of your community. By leaders, I am referring to government leaders, religious leaders, or traditional leaders in your community. How much do you agree or disagree that the following applied to you in the past 12 months?

COMMUNITY MEMBER BEHAVIORS

7) You were able to express your needs without concern of being shamed or humiliated.

8) You were able to express your opinions without concern of being shamed or humiliated.

9) Members of your community valued you as a person.

10) Your community members listened to your perspectives and concerns.

11) People in your community insulted you or made you feel bad about yourself.

12) All groups in your community were able to benefit from available services, such as health and education.

13) People in your community treated you with respect.

14) Leaders in your community treated all people in the community equally.

15) Community leaders made you feel like you belong to this community.

16) Your leaders were good at encouraging people to participate in community meetings.

17) Leaders treated people in your community with respect.



INSTRUCTIONS TO ENUMERATORS [READ ALOUD]

Now I would like to discuss your perceptions of respect for dignity by your household members. Members of your household refer to individuals who regularly share the same dwelling and who have a joint budget with you. How much do you agree or disagree that the following applied to you in the past 12 months?

HOUSEHOLD MEMBER BEHAVIORS

- 18) Your household members valued you as a person.
- 19) Your household members listened to your perspectives and concerns.
- 20) A household member insulted you or made you feel bad about yourself.
- 21) People in your household treated you with respect.

INSTRUCTIONS TO ENUMERATORS [READ ALOUD]

Now I would like to discuss your perceptions of respect for dignity by the [INSTITUTION / SERVICE PROVIDER] you interact with. How much do you agree or disagree that the following applied to you in the past 12 months?

SERVICE PROVIDER BEHAVIORS

- 22) The [INSTITUTION / SERVICE PROVIDER] valued you as a person.
- 23) The [INSTITUTION / SERVICE PROVIDER] provider listened to your perspectives and concerns.
- 24) People in the [INSTITUTION] treated you with respect.



USES

Organizations that fund or implement projects can use the **Respect for Dignity in Daily Life Index** to assess respect for human dignity among project participants and to evaluate changes in respect for dignity that may occur due to the project or other factors. Researchers can also use the measure to study respect for human dignity, interventions that affect it, and how perceptions of dignity interact with different outcomes.

The measure can be used as part of baseline, midterm, and final evaluations or as part of studies. Understanding the extent and types of respect for human dignity that participants experience in various domains can inform the design of programs to be more effective in upholding dignity.

Understanding the dynamics of respect for human dignity in communities where they are operating can also help programs more effectively achieve other objectives. Projects and researchers can also use the measure to evaluate the extent to which specific interventions or approaches bring about changes in respect for human dignity.

ADMINISTRATION

When Should the Measure Be Used?

It should be administered at baseline and again after project activities have been implemented for some time to assess whether and how program activities have led to changes in respect for dignity.

Who Should be Interviewed?

Respondents should include individuals who have directly participated in the project activities, indirect participants, or other members of the community in which program implementation has occurred.

How Should the Tool be Administered?

The measure can be integrated into a survey instrument as part of an evaluation event (e.g., baseline, final evaluation) or study. It can also be administered as a part of needs assessments or other less formal assessments.

Who Should Administer the Tool?

Unlike the program implementation tool, this measure does not ask participants to provide feedback about project activities and staff behaviors. Instead, respondents are asked to reflect on their own behavior and the behavior of others in their community. Therefore, the tool should be administered by enumerators skilled in facilitating this type of reflection, which might be project staff or external enumerators.

What Service Provider Should the Tool Ask About?

When using the measure with a particular population or for a specific project, before data collection, those administering the tool should identify an institution that provides services that many participants interact with. This institution can provide health, finance, education, or other services. The identified institution should be used in questions 22-24.



Photo Credit: Benny Manser

SCORING

As with the Project Respect for Participant Dignity Scale, the scoring for the **Respect for Dignity in Daily Life Index** is summative, meaning that the score for each item is added together. The index comprises four subscale scores, which are then summed into an overall score.

Questions 11 and 20 must be reverse scored, meaning that in contrast to the other items, lower scores signify greater respect for dignity. These questions must be recoded before calculating the measure's total score. To do this, rescore responses of 1 as 5; 2 as 4; 4 as 2; and 5 as 1. Scores of 3 remain unchanged.

In cases where data are not captured for one or more questions, one of two techniques should be adopted:

1) drop the individual from the analysis or 2) calculate the average score of the other domain items to impute the missing value (e.g., if a response to item 3 is missing, use the average score from items 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6, which are the other items in the participant behavior domain).

The first approach is the preferred approach unless there is a high number of missing values.

SCORING RUBRIC

DOMAIN	SCORING	FINAL SUBSCALE SCORE
A. Participant Behaviors Toward Others Subscale	(Sum of questions 1 - 6) / 3	_____ (out of a max of 10)
B. Community Member Behaviors Subscale	(Sum of questions 7 - 17) / 5.5	_____ (out of a max of 10)
C. Household Member Behaviors Subscale	(Sum of questions 18 - 21) / 2	_____ (out of a max of 10)
D. Service Provider Behaviors Subscale	(Sum of questions 22 - 24) / 1.5	_____ (out of a max of 10)

TOTAL SCORE: Divide (A+B+C+D) by 4 to average the subscale scores, then multiply that number by 10. The total score will be out of a maximum of 100.

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