

Measuring Respect for Human Dignity

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 international humanitarian agency has found that its development efforts are more effective and truly transformative when the human dignity of vulnerable and marginalized individuals is recognized.

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 affect participants’ perceptions of dignity and limits the ability to incorporate human dignity considerations concretely into program design and implementation.

With support from the 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 scientific literature on upholding human dignity](#) in international research.

CRS led discussions involving an external advisory board comprising global experts and an internal workshop to further discuss the most represented dimensions of upholding human dignity, narrowed the list of priority concepts. **The pilot covered the following human dignity dimensions: acceptance, fairness, acknowledgment and validation, respectful interactions, non-humiliation, inclusion, and safety.**

The first measure (the “Project Respect for Participant Dignity”) 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 (the “Respect for Human Dignity in Daily Life”) 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 acknowledging 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” measure was field-tested in multiple project sectors and contexts in India, Niger, the Philippines and Zambia. The “Respect for Human Dignity in Daily Life” measure was also field-tested in the same programs 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” Measure

MEASUREMENT ITEMS

After the method for developing the measures was identified, the “Project Respect for Participant Dignity” measure was distilled into 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 “Project Respect for Participant Dignity” measure is designed to be used by organizations that are funding or implementing projects to track how much the project’s implementation respects participants’ dignity. Results can help those overseeing projects understand how participants perceive approaches and activities respecting their dignity. This understanding can guide improvements in how an ongoing project is implemented, inform the design of staff training, and establish systems and processes to ensure that projects are carried out in ways that respect participants’ dignity.

Results alone may not conclusively identify which approaches increase or decrease respect for dignity. However, analysis of responses contributes to understanding how specific components, approaches, or management affect respect for dignity.

The qualitative data collection complementing the “Project Respect for Participant Dignity” measure also helps inform the interpretation of results.

INSTRUCTIONS TO ENUMERATORS [TO BE READ ALOUD]

I would like to discuss your perceptions of respect for dignity by the [INSTITUTION / SERVICE PROVIDER] that you interacted with. How much do you agree or disagree with the following questions?

PARTICIPANT TREATMENT BELIEFS

- 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 in 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" measure 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 may also be administered as a part of annual monitoring or in exit interviews or other less formal assessments.

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.

Interviewers ask respondents the degree to which they agree or disagree with the 10 statements listed using a 5-point Likert scale:

1) strongly disagree, 2) disagree, 3) neither agree nor disagree, 4) agree, and 5) strongly agree.

Scoring

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

Question 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 recorded 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 is 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 a sum of all items multiplied by two to provide a score out of 100 with a minimum possible score of 10. Since scores of 10-49 indicate that a respondent, on average, disagrees with the statements, these scores are considered a low respect for human dignity.

Scores of 50-69 neither agree nor disagree with the statements and are considered moderate. Scores of 70-100 agree with the statements and are considered high. However, responses to individual items can also be examined to identify programmatic areas of strength or weakness in respecting human dignity.

“Respect for Human Dignity in Daily Life” Measure

While the previous measure asks participants about their experience with a project, the “Respect for Human Dignity in Daily Life” measure looks at the respect participants receive and provide in their households, communities, and institutions.

MEASUREMENT ITEMS

The “Project Respect for Participant Dignity” measure follows the same process as the previous measure.

The “Respect for Human Dignity in Daily Life” measure comprises 24 items divided into four subscales: participant behavior, community member behavior, household member behavior, and institutional service provider behavior.

These items are assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, asking respondents to what extent they agree or disagree with the statements about their experience of respect for human dignity.

INSTRUCTIONS TO ENUMERATORS [TO BE READ ALOUD]

I would like to discuss your perceptions of your personal experience of 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 [TO BE READ ALOUD]

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 [TO BE READ ALOUD]

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 [TO BE READ ALOUD]

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 with the [INSTITUTION / SERVICE PROVIDER] treated you with respect.

“Project Respect for Participant Dignity” Measure

USES

The “**Respect for Human Dignity in Daily Life**” measure is designed to be used by organizations that are funding or implementing projects **to assess respect for the human dignity of others among project participants and to evaluate changes in respect for dignity that may occur because of 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 community members 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 21-24.

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

Scoring

As with the “Project Respect for Participant Dignity” measure, the scoring for the “Respect for Dignity in Daily Life” measure is largely summative, with 5-point Likert scale ratings representing the score for each item added together. However, the “**Respect for Dignity in Daily Life**” measure comprises subscales, which are summed into an overall score.

Questions 11 and 20 must be reverse scored, meaning that low scores signify greater respect for dignity compared to the other items. **These questions must be recorded 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 is 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 preferred approach unless there is a high number of missing values.

SCORING RUBRIC

DOMAIN	SCORING	FINAL SCORE
A. Participant Behaviors Toward Others	(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) by 3 to normalize, then multiply by 10.

TOTAL SCORE WITH OPTIONAL MODULE D: Divide (A+B+C+D) by 4 to normalize, then multiply by 10.

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