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Affirming Dignity in International Development: Prioritizing the Most Promising Practices

Tom Wein
Paul Perrin
Boswell Munthali

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Report prepared for the Pulte Institute for Global Development,
part of the Keough School of Global Affairs, University of Notre Dame

3150 Jenkins Nanovic Halls
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556
(574) 631-2940
Website: pulte.nd.edu
Email: globaldevelopment@nd.edu

Tom Wein
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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Tom Wein is a researcher and consultant based in Nairobi. He is a director at IDinsight, where he leads their Dignity Initiative. He works to advance justice and support citizens through useful research. His areas of interest include feminism, behavioral science, psychology, governance and institutions, conflict, the role of stories, and dignity and development. He believes research is most useful when it grapples with questions of power. Before IDinsight, Tom founded The Dignity Project, a campaign for more respectful development. He has also led the Violence Against Children department at Raising Voices in Uganda. Before that, Tom spent two years with the Busara Center for Behavioral Economics. Previously, he worked in London on a number of research projects on social development, conflict, policy, and behavioral science. Tom led many social science research projects across East Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. Tom holds a Master's degree in Communication for Development from Malmö University in Sweden and an undergraduate degree in War Studies from King's College, London.

Paul Perrin leads the Pulte Institute's Evidence and Learning Division and is an international health, humanitarian, and development research and practice professional with over a decade of work experience in academic, government, and non-governmental settings. To date, his work has largely focused on supporting the conceptualization, design, implementation, analysis, and reporting on monitoring and evaluation and implementation science activities in resource-challenged environments. He has extensive experience in adult education and technical writing, including briefings for senior government officials, peer-reviewed publications, and technical reports. Prior to joining the Pulte Institute, Perrin served as the director for monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning at Catholic Relief Services (CRS). He has also worked as senior technical advisor for health research and evaluation at CRS, and an information officer at the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance within the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). During his tenure at USAID, Perrin served as editor-in-chief for two of the office's annual reports, an information coordinator for the Haiti earthquake response management team, and provided information support to the Europe, Middle East, and Central Asia team. Perrin completed his P.h.D in international health at the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, with a certificate in humanitarian assistance. He also holds a master's in public health and a bachelor's of arts in linguistics from Brigham Young University.

Boswell Munthali is a Senior Associate with IDinsight, based in Lilongwe, Malawi. Prior to IDinsight, Boswell worked as a public health evaluation and research officer at the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation. There he co-authored several academic articles and was in charge of overseeing data management, collection, and analysis for several research protocols. Boswell holds a BSc. in Applied Statistics from the Catholic University of Malawi and is currently pursuing an MSc. in Biostatistics from the University of Malawi.

Affirming Dignity in International Development: Prioritizing the Most Promising Practices

To affirm the dignity of people in receipt of aid, what actions should we take? Faced with a lack of evidence, we employ ‘wisdom of the crowd’ approaches to prioritize among various suggested practices. First, we asked a sample of scholars and practitioners of development who have expressed interest in dignity (n=70) to prioritize among a list of 64 ideas suggested in the literature. The top 10 ideas nominated by this first sample were then presented to a sample of Kenyan respondents (n=251). All ten ideas attracted support, but the most widely endorsed were ‘Providing in-person meetings with recipients to explain the progress of the program and provide updates’ and ‘Supporting community-based organizations to organize the community to speak up or protest in challenging aspects of the program’. A third intervention, ‘Participatory co-design workshops with potential recipients to discuss and provide feedback on the design of the program before it is implemented’, was widely supported by Kenyan respondents and was also forecast to be cost-effective by the scholar and practitioner sample. By selecting the most promising practices, we hope to address a major open research question in the study of dignity and development, inform more respectful aid practice, and identify which practices should be developed and tested further.

Keywords: dignity, respect, forecasting, development

1. INTRODUCTION

Research has shown that dignity is a concept that citizens across the Global South value and are frequently denied (Perrin et al, 2022) and that innovation, learning, and improvement are needed for the social sector to fully respect their dignity (Wein, Lanthorn & Fischer, 2022). We regard these ideas as integral to the right kind of development and social impact practice. Even something as small as changing the language of a program to be more affirmatory has been associated with better development outcomes (Thomas et al, 2020). Evidence also suggests that respectful interactions produce greater well-being and self-efficacy, improved health, better functioning democratic spheres, greater cooperation, and increased service uptake and satisfaction (Wein & Sobti, 2024; Beach et al, 2005; May & Daly, 2024). If this is the case, what practices should organizations working in the global health and development sectors adopt in order to better respect the dignity of those they seek to serve? What should those whom the aid system could bruise and those seeking to reform it call for? Many such actions have been proposed, but the evidence for which of these are most promising in upholding human dignity is patchy, and there is little order to the various ideas. Rectifying this has been identified as an important priority in the Consensus Statement on the Dignity Research Agenda (Wein & Attendees of the Dignity Symposium, 2022).

Drawing on techniques from the forecasting literature (DellaVigna & Pope, 2016), this research reports which ideas were regarded as the most promising by three groups: a combined sample of academics and development practitioners who have expressed interest in the study and practice of dignity (n=70), and a sample of citizens from Kenya (n=251), a country where there has been limited previous research on dignity but where respondents have expressed an interest in more respectful aid practices (Wein et al, 2022).

We learn from this research that a range of ideas is endorsed to increase people's sense of felt respect for

dignity, but some of the most widely endorsed were 'Providing in-person meetings with recipients to explain the progress of the program and provide updates', 'Supporting community-based organizations to organize the community to speak up or protest in challenging aspects of the program' and 'Participatory co-design workshops with potential recipients to discuss and provide feedback on the design of the program before it is implemented.' Practices such as these should be prioritized for future piloting and testing to determine how to implement them and their potential impact and should be considered by those attempting to implement changes to improve the respect for the dignity of aid interventions.

2. LITERATURE

2.1 DIGNITY

Dignity is an important concept in many moral traditions (Düwell et al., 2014). It underpins the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is widely discussed in international development, and many people receiving aid say that they find it to be an important concept and that they frequently find the delivery mechanisms of aid to be disrespectful of their dignity (Mosel & Holloway, 2019). Moreover, many global development and humanitarian organizations have codified the concept in their strategic frameworks and mission statements, forming their very identity around the idea of upholding human dignity (Perrin, 2013).

Definitions of dignity are varied and contested (Debes, 2017). For this work, we define human dignity as: "the inherent value that every individual possesses equally by virtue of being a human being, independent of one's abilities, characteristics, or actions. Respect for human dignity is the acknowledgment of that inherent value by individuals, institutions, and society." (Pulte Institute for Global Development, 2022). Whether people feel their dignity has been respected is something that may be measured (Wein, Khatry & Bhimani, 2022) and can

provide useful insight into monitoring and evaluation of development efforts (Perrin, 2020).

According to this research, some important associated concepts that have been empirically linked to affirming dignity include independence, autonomy, and agency; fairness; belonging; recognition; acceptance of identity; acknowledgment and validation; transparency and communication; respect; empowerment to participate and local ownership; safety; worthiness; and inclusion (Pulte Institute for Global Development, 2022).

2.2 PRACTICES TO AFFIRM DIGNITY

To reflect on and improve the conduct of aid, two frequent and contrasting approaches are either to describe the liberal political assumptions that prevail in development and the colonial legacies and power imbalances that these replicate (Khan, Dickson & Sondarjee, 2023) or to seek efficiencies in the allocation of funding to optimal interventions through the collection of evidence of impact, thereby removing barriers to development (Banerjee & Duflo, 2012). A third approach locates change in development practitioners' unexamined daily habits and practices. These may greatly affect the outcomes of development research but are often missed by analyses of the wider system of aid (Autesserre, 2014; Fechter & Hindman, 2011; Mosse, 2011; Wein, 2017).

Many such practices have been suggested to increase people's sense of felt respect for dignity. These range from framing non-profit language to be more empowering (Thomas et al, 2020) to improving feedback after research (Schilling et al, 2020), to self-talk and other psychological interventions (Wein et al, 2023a), to using cash transfers rather than in-kind aid (Shapiro, 2019). Other ideas have been tried in early-stage experiments without necessarily yielding promising impacts; these include various changes to consent processes (Wein, Dilshad S, Bwalya, & Mungomba, 2023), using names and providing people with choices about what time to attend an appointment (Wein, Lanthorn & Fischer, 2023). Organizations that have worked to build a culture of dignity have suggested that important to their approach is the way they consult

recipients of aid, who they recruit, the training and messages they give to employees, the physical environments they cultivate, and the time they take to get things right and improve their practices (Wein & Wambua, 2022). In 2022, a group of scholars and practitioners met and generated a long list of possible dignity-affirming practices (Wein & Attendees of the Attendees of the Dignity Symposium, 2022). It is the list, lightly revised by the present authors, which principally underlies the 64 practices studied in this paper.

2.3 FORECASTING AND WISDOM OF THE CROWD RESEARCH

This study employs a multistage 'wisdom of the crowd' approach similar to those employed in Delphi methods (McMillan et al, 2016) and forecasting (DellaVigna & Pope, 2016). These types of approaches allow us to arrive at a consensus, and they have been shown to be useful and sufficiently accurate for making predictions about the future (Tetlock, 2005), about the effect size of social science experiments (DellaVigna, Pope & Vivalt, 2019), including specifically to study dignity (Thomas et al, 2020) and with Kenyan samples (Thomas et al, 2020; Otis, 2021). Even unrepresentative sample sizes as small as ten have been shown to produce sufficiently accurate forecasts (Otis, 2022). Among samples of academics, their precise specialism and experience are not particularly important to accuracy (Otis, 2022), while community samples perform similarly accurately to academics when forecasting matters that they are most familiar with (Otis, 2021). It has been argued that by using these methods to select interventions, we may increase the efficiency of future study designs (Vivalt, 2020).

3. METHODS

3.1 SAMPLE 1: ACADEMICS AND PRACTITIONERS

To reach a group of experts from the development and research domains, we deployed an online survey programmed in Google Forms using a convenience sampling approach that tapped into the existing networks of dignity-aligned researchers and practitioners. The survey asked respondents for consent, then offered a definition of dignity, and asked respondents to picture a

disadvantaged population and tell us what country that population was located in and anything else they would want us to know about that population. It then presented the list of 64 practices, with their order randomized. Respondents were asked to choose ten that they believed would most increase people's felt respect for dignity. After this, respondents were asked to choose 1-3 of the ideas they had previously selected, which they felt would still perform strongly on the basis of cost-effectiveness. They were then asked for any other ideas they wished to suggest. Finally, respondents were asked about the extent to which their work focuses on dignity, whether they principally worked as an academic, practitioner, or something else, their gender, where they were born, and how many years of professional experience they have. Finally, respondents were asked if they would be interested in hearing the results of this study; if so, their emails were recorded.

The survey was distributed through multiple avenues, including through the Dignity Initiative newsletter, using the internal communication platform Slack within IDinsight and the Busara Center, through the Pulte Institute internal email list, on the online networking sites Twitter and LinkedIn, and by email to key allies. Responses were collected from 2 September until 13 December 2023. 70 responses were received, which is sufficiently large for a study of this kind (Otis, 2022).

3.2 SAMPLE 2: KENYANS

Analysis of the results from the first sample provided ten practices that were widely endorsed. These were then presented to a sample of Kenyans. A similar survey was programmed into the online research platform SurveyMonkey. It once more asked for consent, defined dignity, asked respondents to picture a disadvantaged population, in this case in Kenya, and asked them what county the population was based in and what else they would want us to know about them. Respondents were then asked to choose five of the list of ten practices which they thought would be most impactful on people's sense of felt respect for dignity. The order of options was randomized. They were then asked for any other ideas to

improve dignity before finally answering how important dignity is as a value to them, their relationship to receiving aid, and their gender. Finally, respondents were asked if they would be interested in hearing the results of this study; if so, their emails were recorded. Kenyan respondents did not complete the cost-effectiveness exercise.

The survey was translated into Kiswahili and distributed by SurveyMonkey to its existing panel of Kenyan respondents. Data collection took place on 16 January 2024. The SurveyMonkey Audience panel consists of participants recruited through its website and mobile app (ESOMAR-37, 2023). 277 responses were received, of which 251 were complete.

3.3 RESPECTFUL TREATMENT OF THE RESPONDENTS

Research can be inherently consultative in ways that respect people's dignity as knowers of their own lives (Abimbola, 2023)—or it can feel disrespectful, with information extracted by and for the researchers without benefit to the respondents (Mumo et al., 2021). We, therefore, took several steps to act respectfully.

Qualitative and survey evidence on what participants want in order to improve research practice has shown that Kenyan samples particularly request better consent procedures and feedback at the conclusion of a study (Wein, Blair & Mungomba, 2022). Accordingly, we took care to explain the full context and purpose of the study in clear language on the consent screen. Participants were asked to provide their emails if they would like to hear about the results of the study; a draft of this paper and accompanying policy brief have been sent to them. Emails were stored separately from the main analysis files and password-protected.

To thank respondents for their contributions, the authors committed to donating \$2 for each response to the charity Partners in Health, which is noted for its dignity approach (Wein & Wambua, 2022). A donation of \$642 was made in January 2024, dedicated to 'Dignity Survey Respondents'.

The University of Notre Dame Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved the study.

4. RESULTS

4.1 DATA CLEANING, PROCESSING, AND MERGING

We first anonymized the data to remove all personal identifiers. Then, the data was cleaned and analyzed using STATA SE 18.

4.2 SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

The scholars and practitioners sample (see Table 1) were drawn from a range of backgrounds across global development sectors. It contained a large majority (65%) whose work sometimes touches on the concept of dignity. A significant but smaller portion (29%) centralizes the concept of dignity in their line of work. A small percentage (6%) reported that their work does not touch upon the concept of dignity. 47% are involved in research, making it the most common field, while 26% work to implement development programs, and advocacy or policy-oriented roles accounted for 20%. A minority of respondents (7%) belonged to other work areas. Respondents identified as 59% male and 39% female (39%), with one respondent identifying as non-binary. 53% of respondents were born in the Global North countries, while 47% were born in the Global South. Lastly, when looking at years of professional experience, more respondents fell into the 0-9 years category (56%) compared to those with 10 or more years of experience (44%).

The Kenyan sample (see Table 2) had a variety of relationships to receiving aid. 23% had received aid personally, while 49% had observed someone close to them doing so; 28% said that neither they nor someone close to them had received aid. The sample was 49% male and 51% female; no one selected other gender descriptors. 58% of the sample was aged between 18-29, 37% between 30-44, and 4% between 45-60. No one was aged under 18 (in line with IRB requirements) and only one respondent was older than 60.

These descriptive characteristics provide a cross-sectional view of the two samples. This allows for a thorough understanding of the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the respondents in the study. We stress that we do not claim that these samples are representative of any particular population, and note that representativeness of this kind is not required for ‘wisdom of the crowd’ research approaches.

4.3 PRIORITIZED PRACTICES

Of the 64 proposed practices reviewed by the scholars and practitioners sample (see Appendix A), the most widely popular was ‘Participatory co-design workshops with potential recipients to discuss and provide feedback on the program’s design before it is implemented.’ However, endorsements were widely spread, with twenty practices receiving 4% of endorsements and no single practice receiving more than 9%. 44 practices received fewer than 4% of votes. The top 20 practices are displayed in Table 3.

The 10 most endorsed practices among the scholars and practitioners sample were then presented to the Kenyan sample. Dignity was extremely important to this Kenyan sample. Asked how important dignity is as a value to them, on a Likert scale of 1-5, the average response was 4.5. Their responses are displayed in Table 4. All ten practices received some considerable support, ranging from 27-61% of votes, but the most popular were ‘Providing in-person meetings with recipients to explain the progress of the program and provide updates’ and ‘Supporting community-based organizations to organize the community to speak up or protest in challenging aspects of the program.’ The least widely endorsed - while still attracting some considerable support - were ‘Asking explicit permission if you are taking pictures or recording videos’ and ‘Participatory monitoring and evaluation workshops to jointly agree indicators of success to be measured’. This pattern holds true when we restrict the sample only to those who have themselves personally received aid - there is widespread support for all ideas, but the top two and bottom two ideas remain the same. When splitting the data by gender, male respondents echo the general pattern, while the top two practices for female

respondents were ‘Providing in-person meetings with recipients to explain the progress of the program and provide updates’ and ‘Communication of intervention effectiveness and accountability to the community’.

The first sample of scholars and practitioners was secondarily asked which interventions they thought would be most cost-effective - that is to say, the practices they thought would produce the greatest change for each additional amount of money spent to deliver them. We share these results with caution (in Table 5), since we presume that this is harder to estimate with limited information and because in qualitative responses, several members of this sample provided feedback that they did not think cost-effectiveness was the right lens for examining dignity-affirming practices.¹ Having received this feedback, the Kenyan sample was not asked to complete the cost-effectiveness exercise. Some of the practices suggested as most cost-effective by scholars and practitioners include ‘Participatory co-design workshops with potential recipients to discuss and provide feedback on the design of the program before it is implemented’ and ‘Providing a community with choices about the timing of when services or aid should be delivered.’

4.4 OTHER SUGGESTED PRACTICES

When the Kenyan sample was asked about additional ideas to be more respectful, the modal response was that there was nothing more to add beyond the ten ideas presented to them; one said, “there is no other method.”

Many respondents stressed the need to continue to improve the flow of information in both directions and increase transparency, echoing some of the ideas presented in this list. For instance, one suggested “Organize public meetings so that citizens can express their opinions in public,” while another respondent proffered “Talking face to face with those communities about their status.” One participant implored in all capital letters that charities “BE AS CLEAR AS POSSIBLE.” A frequent answer stressed the importance of engaging with governmental and local leaders, though respondents were at pains to suggest that these should be the right leaders. One requested that more NGOs use “non-discriminatory community leaders to help find beneficiaries to welcome them to a meeting at the start of the program.” Indeed, more local leaders were most often recommended, though some asked that MPs be involved. For instance, one said “Seeking participation with the government as well to help fight those situations.” Whichever leaders were involved, respondents asked that charities forestall discrimination. Comments on this theme included “Ensuring all people are treated appropriately without any discrimination” and “There should be equality when the community is helped....there should be no preferences.” Some respondents also worried about reducing corruption, while others emphasized that dignity is economic and can best be guaranteed by jobs, especially for young people.

We asked the same question about additional suggestions from the first sample of scholars and practitioners.

¹ We quote here in full two respondent’s critiques of this approach, to explain why we have set only limited store by these results:

“Quick comment: the premise of cost-effectiveness, should be deeply questioned. Approaching dignity with such a lens, narrows ones focus to what is easily measurable and brings a host of problems with the accounting of value into money. It lends itself to the metrication and reduction of people’s experiences to numbers that, I believe, stems from the same logic that justified the belief that ‘we know best’ and has meant programs remain designed and driven by Western actors with great ignorance for the communities affected. Amartya Sen’s view of development calls for a much fuller reflection of process and how dignity can be included both in the process as well as the outcome of development and what I would focus on here. I need to think further but I believe there is an inherent contradiction between dignity and the fullness of individuals and the effective altruism, cost effectiveness space.”

“Much of the discussion in the previous questions are geared toward finding cost-effective ways to enhance dignity, but I would argue that using cost-effectiveness as a decision criterion imposes a particular set of values on participants. Further allow participants to determine the criterion by which dignity-enhancing strategies are selected.”

Table 1. Descriptive characteristics of the scholars' and practitioners' sample

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Relevance of work to dignity</i>		
Centrally on dignity	20	29
May touch on dignity	45	65
Does not touch on dignity	4	6
<i>Work area</i>		
Research	33	47
Development Program	18	26
Advocacy or Policy	14	20
Other	5	7
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	27	59
Female	41	39
Non Binary	1	2
<i>Country of birth</i>		
Global South	29	47
Global North	33	53
<i>Years of professional experience</i>		
0-9 Years	39	56
10+ Years	31	44

Table 2. Descriptive characteristics of the Kenyan sample

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Aid relationships</i>		
I have personally received benefits from a charity	59	23
People who are close to me have personally received benefits from a charity	123	49
Neither I nor people close to me have personally received benefits from a charity	71	28
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	124	49
Female	129	51
<i>Age</i>		
< 18	0	0
18-29	147	58
30-44	94	37
45-60	11	4
> 60	1	0

Table 3. Selected practices ranked in order of forecast effectiveness by scholar and practitioner sample

Selected practices	Frequency	Percent
Participatory co-design workshops with potential recipients to discuss and provide feedback on the program's design before it is implemented	41	9
Treating recipients with dignity as a criterion in staff performance reviews	32	7
Asking explicit permission if you are taking pictures or recording videos	29	6
Polling what types of aid or services people would most welcome	28	6
Participatory monitoring and evaluation workshops to jointly agree on indicators of success to be measured	23	5
Establishing fair rates of pay and benefits across expatriate and local staff	22	5
Providing a community with choices about the timing of when services or aid should be delivered	22	5
Providing in-person meetings with recipients to explain the progress of the program and provide updates	22	5
Providing cash compensation to aid recipients at a fair rate for time spent on work related to the program	22	5
Supporting community-based organizations to organize the community to speak up or protest in challenging aspects of the program	21	5
Conducting a formal procedure to obtain consent from each individual participant at the beginning of a program or intervention	21	5
Offering fulsome apologies	21	5
Providing compensation or reparations when failures occur	21	5
Communication of intervention effectiveness and accountability to community	21	5
Setting quotas to recruit a proportion of project and organization staff from the affected population	21	5
Forming an advisory committee through transparent elections drawn from the community to monitor the program and share feedback	20	4
Providing a means for recipients to send anonymous feedback messages about the program	20	4
Program communications use empowering and respectful text and imagery	20	4
Conducting subgroup analysis and targeted research to understand specific barriers and hear the voices of particular groups	19	4
Providing shade	19	4

Table 4. Practices ranked in order of forecast effectiveness by Kenyan sample

Practices	Frequency	Percent
Providing in-person meetings with recipients to explain the progress of the program and provide updates	156	61
Supporting community-based organizations to organize the community to speak up or protest in challenging aspects of the program	135	53
Communication of intervention effectiveness and accountability to community	126	49
Conducting a formal procedure to obtain consent from each individual participant at the beginning of a program or intervention	116	45
Incorporating treating recipients with dignity as a criterion in staff performance reviews	113	44
Polling what types of aid or services people would most welcome	112	43
Participatory co-design workshops with potential recipients to discuss and provide feedback on the design of the program before it is implemented	110	43
Establishing fair rates of pay and benefits across expatriate and local staff	106	41
Asking explicit permission if you are taking pictures or recording videos	91	36
Participatory monitoring and evaluation workshops to jointly agree indicators of success to be measured	69	27

Table 5. Selected practices ranked in order of forecast cost-effectiveness by scholar and practitioner sample

Practices	Frequency	Percent
Participatory co-design workshops with potential recipients to discuss and provide feedback on the design of the program before it is implemented	17	13
Providing a community with choices about the timing of when services or aid should be delivered	13	10
Incorporating treating recipients with dignity as a criterion in staff performance reviews	9	7
Providing water and food during interactions	9	7
Providing resources such as cash without conditions	7	5
Supporting community-based organizations to organize the community to speak up or protest in challenging aspects of the program	7	5
Conducting a formal procedure to obtain consent from each individual participant at the beginning of a program or intervention	7	5
Polling what types of aid or services people would most welcome	7	5
Forming an advisory committee through transparent elections drawn from the community to monitor the program and share feedback	7	5
Participatory monitoring and evaluation workshops to jointly agree indicators of success to be measured	6	4
Conducting subgroup analysis and targeted research to understand specific barriers and hear the voices of particular groups	6	4
Asking explicit permission if you are taking pictures or recording videos	6	4
Forming an advisory committee drawn from the community to monitor the program and share feedback	5	4
Providing a means for recipients to send anonymous feedback messages about the program	5	4
Communication of intervention effectiveness and accountability to community	5	4
Conducting internal analysis and reflection on power relations and privilege	4	3
Ensuring language represents current thinking on inclusion	4	3
Providing in-person meetings with recipients to explain the progress of the program and provide updates	4	3
Sending short messages to recipients to explain the progress of the program and provide updates	4	3
Providing access to bicycles	4	3

Many responses offered small emendations to the types of ideas already presented, with an emphasis on clear communication in the right languages, truly listening, and (re)shaping programs based on that feedback. The importance of good community meetings to support this - starting punctually and with extra time on offer when needed — was stressed. For instance, one respondent suggested, “Ensuring translation into local languages to ensure that people are able to freely express their thoughts and feelings in their own language.”

Emphasizing that communication must be two-way, many asked that people who may receive aid also be involved, trained, and employed. One suggested a wider point about equity of communication: “Give people opportunity to teach something, share wisdom, etc. — make them givers as well as receivers (not *quid pro quo*).” For a handful of respondents, this focused on removing terminology that invoked power imbalances such as ‘beneficiary’. A few respondents asked that development be better coordinated to reduce burdens, with less double-targeting of programs, more sophisticated systems of referrals, and shorter waits for the most needy. For instance, one respondent put this need as “There must be the framework that must harmonize development programs from donor countries to ensure effective targeting, avoid duplication of development, coordinate international non-governmental organizations and ensure that development is taking place in all dimensions.”

Several called for a ‘golden rule’ of program design, implementation, and communication: “Model it over how you would do it if this was your own community people were coming to see.” A number of responses focused on how such practices could be supported by changes in the culture of organizations delivering aid. For instance, one respondent called for “Mandatory staff training on aid decolonisation, community input into programme evaluation, including reporting to the donor on whether the programme treated recipients with respect and dignity, as well as whether it met the needs of the target population.” Another noted “Policies are only good if they can and will be enforced, so much of the cost-effectiveness calculation depends on this.”

One made a similar point as follows: “A serious commitment by the service delivery organization to reflect on their own position and look at themselves first before they look to their programs. DEI generally fails because it is a surface approach to the larger underlying power disparity.” Finally, one respondent summed up the general tenor of the qualitative comments, setting as the goal of all this that good dignity practices will “Make sure the community feel that they are being recognised.”

5. DISCUSSION

The Dignity Research Agenda Consensus Statement (Wein & Attendees of the Dignity Symposium, 2022) outlines five broad questions: (1) How is dignity to be defined? (2) How can respectfulness be measured? (3) How does dignity and respect operate? (4) What acts increase perceptions of respectfulness, and what are the consequences of that? (5) How do actors and sectors regard dignity and what actions will increase support for a dignity agenda? This article offers some progress towards an answer to the fourth of these questions.

We conclude that at least ten ideas show some promise, but ‘Providing in-person meetings with recipients to explain the progress of the program and provide updates’, ‘Supporting community-based organizations to organize the community to speak up or protest in challenging aspects of the program’ and ‘Participatory co-design workshops with potential recipients to discuss and provide feedback on the design of the program before it is implemented’ may be especially promising. Further research and piloting will help us understand how to adopt these practices in detail and what happens as a consequence (building on the initial review of the consequences of respect for dignity in Wein & Sobti, 2024).

It has been suggested that practices of this kind can be classified by whether they affect the individual, institutional, or systemic levels of aid (Wein & Attendees of the Dignity Symposium, 2022). In this case, these practices might be said to straddle the institutional and individual levels, encouraging a revision of how aid

implementers interact with existing social groups. The second attempt at classification that has been offered in this literature is that by the Pulte Institute, which notes an empirical association between dignity and independence, autonomy, and agency; fairness; belonging; recognition; acceptance of identity; acknowledgement and validation; transparency and communication; respect; empowerment to participate and local ownership; safety; worthiness; and inclusion (Pulte Institute for Global Development, 2022). We tentatively suggest links between these constructs and the three leading interventions (see Table 6). A third form of classification that has been suggested is whether the interventions principally increase people’s sense of recognition, agency or equality (Wein, Lanthorn & Fischer, 2023). These practices do not on the face of it fall neatly into these categories, but we might suggest that ‘in-person meetings’ are particularly associated with recognition, while the other two widely endorsed ideas work more through the pathway of agency. Recognition and equality were also themes in the qualitative comments of both samples, with Kenyans keen to avoid discriminatory practices and scholars and practitioners noting a need to remove demeaning language and to set up relationships of reciprocity. We do not perceive a strong link between any of the three interventions and the dignity-associated concepts from the Pulte review of

fairness, belonging, acceptance of identity, safety, and worthiness - and might speculate that efforts focusing on these dignity concepts could be useful supplements to these three interventions to increase felt respect for dignity.

‘Providing in-person meetings with recipients to explain the progress of the program and provide updates’, and ‘Participatory co-design workshops with potential recipients to discuss and provide feedback on the design of the program before it is implemented’ are widely recommended and at least sometimes practiced in aid already. ‘Supporting community-based organizations to organize the community to speak up or protest in challenging aspects of the program’ is much rarer. This might build on ideas to create new structures such as citizens assemblies, or ideas advanced by thinkers like Arbie Baguios for “Aid recipients’ unions” (The New Humanitarian, 26 November 2020) to shift power in aid - or it may rely on sustaining efforts at localization involving ‘the right leaders’, as qualitative responses from the Kenyan sample called for (Baguios, King, Martins & Pinnington, 2021).

To deliver and sustain improvements in people’s sense of felt respect for dignity, practices must be enacted in the

Table 6. Dignity concepts associated with the interventions

Interventions	Wein, Lanthorn & Fischer, 2023	Pulte Institute, 2022
Providing in-person meetings with recipients to explain the progress of the program and provide updates	Recognition	Recognition, Acknowledgement & Validation, Transparency & Communication, Inclusion, Respect
Supporting community-based organizations to organize the community to speak up or protest in challenging aspects of the program	Agency	Independence, Autonomy, Agency, Empowerment to participate and local ownership, Inclusion, Respect
Participatory co-design workshops with potential recipients to discuss and provide feedback on the design of the program before it is implemented	Agency	Independence, Autonomy, Agency, Empowerment to participate and local ownership, Inclusion, Respect

right spirit. Many similar attempts to reform aid practice have foundered and become absorbed into routine ‘tick box’ practice (Batliwala, 2010). Leaders of organizations that have wrestled with dignity stress that good practice

must be supported by the right organizational culture (Wambua & Wein, 2022). Faced with so little evidence and such demand for dignity, these practices provide a place to start.

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DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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APPENDIX A: CONSIDERED PRACTICES

64 different practices that may lead to people feeling their dignity has been better respected were sourced and presented to the scholars and practitioners sample. This list of 64 was created by the authors based principally on the ideas articulated in the Dignity Research Agenda Consensus Statement (Wein & Attendees of the Dignity Symposium, 2022). The full list of 64 ideas is presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Full list of suggested practices

#	Practice
1	Offering fulsome apologies, including taking responsibility, when failures occur.
2	Committing to procedures to secure and anonymise data during collection, storage, analysis, and reporting.
3	Providing clear signage explaining the processes involved in participating in the program and how to access more information.
4	Providing in-person meetings with recipients to explain the progress of the program and provide updates.
5	Providing shade, temperature control, and comfortable furniture during interactions.
6	Slowing interactions down to create more time for relationship building.
7	Public messaging or signage highlighting the rights and legal protections to which aid recipients are entitled.
8	Detailed permission-seeking and introduction processes with local officials and stakeholders before commencing a program.
9	Polling what types of aid or services people would most welcome
10	Program communications use empowering and respectful text and imagery.
11	Conducting internal analysis and reflection on power relations and privilege.
12	Providing signs or other public messaging to recipients that they are entitled to be treated with respect.
13	Conducting subgroup analysis and targeted research to understand specific barriers and hear the voices of particular groups
14	Setting quotas to recruit a proportion of project and organization staff from the affected population.
15	Recording people's preferred name for interactions and consulting this at the start of an interaction to ensure their preferred name is used.
16	Appointing specific staff to build relationships with specific recipients, as social workers do.
17	Selecting eligible recipients based on a transparent needs-based criterion.
18	Providing a community with choices about the timing of when services or aid should be delivered.

19	Providing access to bicycles, vehicles or public transport.
20	Providing resources such as cash without conditions.
21	Conducting a formal procedure to obtain consent from each individual participant at the beginning of a program or intervention.
22	Training sessions for staff focused on treating recipients with respect.
23	Supporting community-based organizations to organize the community to speak up or protest in challenging aspects of the program.
24	Forming an advisory committee through transparent elections drawn from the community to monitor the program and share feedback.
25	Participatory co-design workshops with potential recipients to discuss and provide feedback on the design of the program before it is implemented.
26	Removing visible markers of status such as uniforms, expensive vehicles or jewelry.
27	Establishing fair rates of pay and benefits across expatriate and local staff.
28	Providing a means for recipients to send anonymous feedback messages about the program.
29	Providing cash compensation to aid recipients at a fair rate for time spent on work related to the program.
30	Messaging and signage making public commitments to values and standards of service.
31	Providing coaching on self-respect and positive self-talk to recipients.
32	Having program staff state to recipients how their position and experiences in life inform their power and privilege.
33	Holding locally appropriate ceremonies to celebrate or give thanks for the delivery of aid.
34	Providing opportunities to share personal stories and specific circumstances, such as through open-ended questions.
35	Setting an organizational policy against harassment, bullying or abuse.
36	Forming an advisory committee drawn from the community to monitor the program and share feedback.
37	Providing and soliciting knowledge and encouragement to a cohort of community members, and encouraging them to spread that among their peers.
38	Organizing bonding and team-building exercises and rituals to bring communities together.
39	Describing aid recipients in all public and internal documents according to the traits of which they might be most proud.
40	Conducting research and discussion sessions focused on the strengths and assets already held by aid recipients.
41	Deliberately recognising the unique contributions and achievements of community and staff members with experiences of marginalization

42	Communication of intervention effectiveness and accountability to community
43	Participatory monitoring and evaluation workshops to jointly agreed indicators of success to be measured.
44	Ensuring language represents current thinking on inclusion.
45	Creating an organizational policy focused on diversity, equity and inclusion.
46	Holding group dialogues for community members to debate and reflect on difficult historical or current issues.
47	Having aid be delivered only by organizations founded and staffed by compatriots of the aid recipients.
48	Selecting eligible recipients based on a transparent randomisation procedure..
49	Messages to staff focused on treating recipients with respect.
50	Incorporating treating recipients with dignity as a criterion in staff performance reviews.
51	Providing training to staff on the importance of preventing harassment, bullying or abuse.
52	Providing water and food during interactions.
53	Ensuring an orderly and calm environment during aid delivery.
54	Holding interactions in a secluded and private space.
55	Providing contact details and access to therapists and counselors for those affected by trauma and mental health issues.
56	Mandating staff to always offer polite forms of greeting and farewell when interacting with recipients.
57	Providing compensation or reparations when failures occur.
58	Speeding interactions up to better respect recipients' time.
59	Providing in-kind gift items as compensation to aid recipients at a value equivalent to a fair rate for time spent on work related to the program.
60	Providing a means for recipients to lodge specific named cases where they believe a failing occurred.
61	Sending short messages to recipients to explain the progress of the program and provide updates.
62	Providing contact details and access to paralegals advice for those facing legal challenges to their right to be present and access aid.
63	Sharing food with local people
64	Asking explicit permission if you are taking pictures or recording videos

APPENDIX B: PICTURED POPULATIONS

Participants were invited to picture a particular disadvantaged population that they were familiar with. This population would be that which the interventions would affect. The scholars and practitioners sample was asked which country the group they were envisioning originated from (see Table 8). Meanwhile, the Kenyan sample was asked to picture a disadvantaged population within Kenya and was asked which county this population was based in (see Table 9). 23 unique countries were pictured, with Kenya, India, Malawi, and Zambia being the most common. At least one Kenyan respondent pictured 44 of Kenya's 47 counties, though its most populous counties - Nairobi, Mombasa, and Nakuru - were most frequently represented.

Table 8. National distribution of disadvantaged populations as pictured by scholar and practitioner sample

Countries	Frequency	Percent
Kenya	19	28
India	10	14
Malawi	8	12
Zambia	5	7
Uganda	4	6
Benin	2	3
Indonesia	2	3
Haiti	2	3
Philippines	2	3
Cote d'Ivoire	1	1
Ecuador	1	1
Honduras	1	1
Jordan	1	1
Kyrgyzstan	1	1
Lebanon	1	1
Libya	1	1
Nigeria	1	1

Sierra Leone	1	1
Somalia	1	1
South Sudan	1	1
Timor-Leste	1	1
Togo	1	1

Table 9. County distribution of disadvantaged populations, as pictured by the Kenyan sample

Counties	Frequency	Percent
Nairobi City	27	75
Mombasa	8	21
Nakuru	7	20
Kiambu	5	13
Turkana	4	12
Kisumu	3	9
Uasin Gishu	3	8
Marsabit	3	7
Kajiado	3	7
Nyeri	2	6
Kilifi	2	5
Tana River	2	5
Garissa	2	5
Kitui	2	5
Makueni	2	5
Baringo	2	5
Machakos	1	4
Nyandarua	1	4
Kirinyanga	1	4
Murang'a	1	4

Nandi	1	4
Bomet	1	4
Kisii	1	4
Kwale	1	3
Taita Taveta	1	3
Embu	1	3
Samburu	1	3
Kakamega	1	3
Bungoma	1	3
Lamu	1	2
Mandera	1	2
Isiolo	1	2
Tharaka-Nithi	1	2
Trans Nzoia	1	2
Kericho	1	2
Busia	1	2
Siaya	1	2
Nyamira	1	2
Wajir	0	1
Meru	0	1
West Pokot	0	1
Elgeyo Marakwet	0	1
Laikipia	0	1
Migori	0	1
Narok	0	0
Vihiga	0	0
Homa Bay	0	0